

Chromalloy Completes \$27 Million Casting Plant

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Turbine parts manufacturer Chromalloy, Orangeburg, N.Y., has transitioned its Tampa, Fla., investment casting operation into a new \$27 million facility.

The new plant, which was begun in May and in full production by Oct. 21, represents a divergence in strategy for Chromalloy. The OEM announced in Spring 2009 it would invest \$16.5 million in improving its former investment casting operation.

“We were approved to expand the existing facility, which is 124 miles from this one,” said Tom Trotter, the facility’s general manager. “But as we started to prepare that facility for the expansion, [we realized] it was a tired building and none of the equipment was in the proper sequence of flow.”

According to Trotter, the new plant has allowed Chromalloy to install the proper continuous flow arrangement, upgrade the shell molding line and automate selectively, as well as increase capacity by three.

“People tend to over-automate or under-automate,” he said. “We automated the parts of the process that are subject to significant human variation. In the shell manufacturing, we have taken the automation another step. That is an area where superior control is really important.”

Trotter said the new 115,200-sq.-ft. facility would be capable of pouring up to 1 million lbs. of nickel- and cobalt-based castings (primarily blades and vanes for high-heat aerospace and industrial turbine applications) per year over the next several years. Some of the casting production will go to outside customers, in addition to the parent company. The Tampa location currently employs about 200, a number Trotter expects to double in no more than three years.

“Having been in this business for 30 years now, I know companies often wait until they get busy to expand capacity,” he said. “What Chromalloy decided to do instead was utilize the time when it was slow. From a business standpoint, I think we made the right decision.”

Chromalloy, which was purchased by private equity firm the Carlyle Group, Washington, D.C., several years ago, also operates a casting facility in Carson City, Nev.