

## PalletOne Plant Gears Up for Heat-Treating

### Mocksville, N.C. Plant Adds Kiln-Direct System in Order to Supply Heat-Treated Pallets

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MOCKSVILLE, N.C. — Larry Draughn is both an investor in and a plant manager for PalletOne Inc.'s pallet manufacturing facility in Mocksville, N.C.

PalletOne, with headquarters in Florida, was formed in 2001 and has a total of 13 manufacturing facilities in nine states. The company's operations stretch from Maine to Florida and as far west as Wisconsin and Texas.

New pallets have been manufactured at the Mocksville plant since it was started by its original owners in 1956. Larry has been connected to the plant for almost 25 years. "I started here in '79, packing lumber out of high school, and progressed as the years went by." Larry has been plant manager at Mocksville since 1998.

As the ownership of the business has changed over the years, so has its focus. The company originally manufactured new pallets exclusively. The plant now also does pallet recycling and mulch. Recycled pallets and mulch account for about 20% of the business for PalletOne's Mocksville location.

Adjusting rapidly to the changes in the wood products industry requires keeping one eye on the competition and the other eye on customer needs. With International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) phytosanitary standards taking hold around the world, more and more pallet users want to make sure that their pallets meet prescribed methods for heat treatment or fumigation.

"The European Union requirements for exported wood packaging have forced customers to have heat-treated pallets," said Larry. With the deadline for U.S. adop-



*Loading pallets into Kiln-Direct heat-treating chamber*

tion of the IPPC requirement looming (some other nations already have adopted it), time is short. "It's staring us in the face right now," said Larry.

"Heat-treatment or fumigation," said Larry. "We looked at this thing and knew the regulations were here to stay."

Even though a lot of customers probably will wait until they must comply with the IPPC standard, PalletOne knew it was important to be ready to supply treated pallets as soon as requests for them began to escalate. Last year the company invested in pallet heat-treating equipment from Kiln-Direct. PalletOne's Mocksville plant also can supply fumigated pallets on request; it arranges for pallets to be fumigated with methyl bromide at an off-site location.

The Kiln-Direct system is a "turn-key unit," said Larry. It has a capacity of 600 48x48 pallets, or a truckload. The number of pallets treated at one time may vary, de-

pending on the size of the pallets.

The Kiln-Direct unit is loaded directly with a forklift without using carts or other time-consuming procedures. That is "one of the things I liked about it," said Larry, because it is "a plus for us" to be able to load with the forklift.

"Volume, ease of operation and efficiency of the unit" are among the top reasons the company chose Kiln-Direct, said Larry. There are other benefits, too. "The software that controls the unit" deserves special mention, he added. "It's real user friendly. You just point and click. It's very simple."

Not only is operation an easy matter, but set-up is, too. "We poured a cement slab," said Larry. The kiln was assembled before it arrived and there was a "really quick installation."

Kiln-Direct tailors components and configuration to the needs of each customer. Kiln-Direct owner and founder Niels



*Kiln-Direct heat-treating chamber from rear of chamber.*

Jorgenson has built his business on the concept of allowing the customer to independently price each component and purchase individual parts from the least expensive supplier. In the beginning of 2002, Niels saw a need for a better turn-key pallet kiln that would be delivered as one unit. Kiln-Direct has sold more than 20 units, and PalletOne is the company's first repeat customer. "We consider it a great vote of confidence in our design and company," said Niels.

Tapping his abundant experience in dry kiln construction and operation, Niels began his own dry kiln company, developing computer controls for fans, heat sensors and so on. His company is structured on a dual premise. First, many wood products companies want the ability to pick and choose the components of their kiln. Second, they also want to achieve maximum flexibility with the equipment. Consequently, the turn-key kiln solution that Kiln Direct sells can be used both to heat-treat and to kiln-dry pallets. Niels asked the question, "Why wouldn't you purchase a kiln that can both heat-treat and dry pallets?"

The standard pallet kiln from Kiln-Direct has up to 4,985 cubic feet of space. The wide door, which spans almost 13 feet in the biggest option, allows for easy loading. The kiln is big enough for a forklift to drive in with a full stack of pallets more than 9 feet high.

Heating and ventilation equipment is mounted in the unit. No extra space is required for an adjacent boiler or

**other equipment.**

Kiln-Direct is headquartered in Burgaw, N.C. The company emphasizes the utility of its Web site ([www.kiln-direct.com](http://www.kiln-direct.com)) as a place to obtain basic information about kilns and their operation as well as the services provided by Kiln-Direct.

The Mocksville PalletOne plant is in the process of gearing up its pallet heat-treating services. "A small percentage of pallets are heat-treated currently," Larry explained. The additional cost of heat-treating means that many customers will wait until deadlines for complying before they begin to buy heat-treated pallets, he said.

The PalletOne Mocksville plant buys hardwood cants and rough lumber. The material is cut-to-length with a Cornell

multi-trim saw and resawn with a Cornell gang saw. Finished pallet parts are stacked automatically by a Cornell stacker. The plant has several Viking nailing machines for automated pallet assembly.

Scrap pallets and residual material from the cut-up operations are fed into a Rotochopper grinder, and a Becker Underwood system and colorants are used to produce colored mulch. The company's most popular colors are red and black. The company makes a trademarked wood fiber material — oftOne™ — for playground surfaces.

Mocksville is located in west-central North Carolina. It is the county seat and has a population of about 3,400 people.

For Larry, the day-to-day opportunity to be "building something" makes his work always interesting. When he started cutting lumber at the Mocksville plant, he found he enjoyed the work and the possibilities. He actually started at the company in an after-school position. Discovering a professional niche he enjoyed, he stayed with it.

"I just liked it," said Larry. "Cutting lumber just sticks with you," he explained, because it's possible to envision the future of the product being made and the important paths the products take.

"We have a good group of employees here," said Larry. The plant has 101 employees, and many have 20 years of service or more.

The contribution of the employees has been extremely important to the success of PalletOne, said Larry. "I put a lot of emphasis on our team," he said.

As plant manager, Larry gets satisfaction in "seeing things flow well and staying organized."

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