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CATHY HANLIN / Americhem director of research and development



Americhem research and development technician Brian Thompson of Stow inspects bottles for imperfections.

Americhem facts

- **What:** Makes custom color and additives for other manufacturers. Markets include synthetic fibers; building products, such as decking and roofing; automotive and transportation; packaging; resins; and plastic films and sheets.
- **Headquarters:** Cuyahoga Falls.
- **Employees:** About 700 worldwide.
- **Revenue:** About \$200 million annually. Company is privately held.
- **President and Chief Executive:** Richard Juve.
- **Facilities:** Eight manufacturing plants worldwide; new research and development center at Cuyahoga Falls headquarters; sales offices in Luxembourg, Mexico City and Shanghai.



Color concentrate pellets used to enhance products are tested at Ameritech's 35,000-square-foot state-of-the-art research and development center off Broad Boulevard in Cuyahoga Falls.

Color keeps future bright

Americhem opens new test center in Cuyahoga Falls

By Jim Mackinnon
Beacon Journal business writer

There's a lot of science that goes into making sure that each plastic bottle of Mountain Dew turns out the same shade of green.

Same thing for the bright colors of Tide to help each detergent container stand out from the competition on supermarket shelves.

A lot of that kind of global research is taking place at the growing Cuyahoga Falls home of Americhem.

You could say the color additives company is tickled pink over its latest achievements.

The specialty chemical and polymer company just opened a 35,000-square-foot state-of-the-art research and development center at its headquarters off Broad Boulevard, across the street from Schwebel Baking Co.

Call it, among other things, a playground for scientists. And it's a showcase for privately owned Americhem and its customers that speeds up the process of developing products and getting them to worldwide markets.

"It's a combination of new space

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Center

Americhem can do final testing at facility

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and converted manufacturing space," said Richard Juve, Americhem president and chief executive.

Construction began about a year ago, said Cathy Hanlin, director of research and development. "We were planning for probably another year before that."

A big portion of the new space simulates customer manufacturing, Hanlin said. "Basically, this is all the equipment our customers would use to make their final products."

That includes machinery that can do injection molding and inflate plastic bottles, make carpet and textile fiber, make synthetic wood-grain deck boarding and house siding, and roll out plastic sheet and film materials, Hanlin and Juve said.

"The whole point here is, we are able to try things out to make sure it's going to work on their line, so they don't have downtime trying to do their development on their lines," Hanlin said. "It's much, much quicker for them to work with us in this kind of an environment."

Americhem also can do final testing of products at the facility, she said.

"No surprises would be our goal," she said. "We're really trying to take the surprise out of it all."

Sections of the facility hold weathering, analytical and end-use laboratories and processing facilities.

"You can get the feedback right away, see what's working,



PHIL MASTURZO/Akron Beacon Journal

Americhem President and Chief Executive Richard Juve stands outside the headquarters off Broad Boulevard in Cuyahoga Falls. The company has manufacturing plants and sales offices worldwide.

what's not working," Hanlin said. "It really does help us design a better product."

Headquarters project

With this latest expansion, Americhem, founded in 1941, shows it intends to keep on working in Cuyahoga Falls. In addition to its Falls headquarters and new R&D center, the company has eight manufacturing plants worldwide and sales offices in Luxembourg, Mexico City and Shanghai. Company revenue is about \$200 million and it has about 700 employees, according to Juve.

Part of the \$2.3 million R&D and headquarters project involved \$361,700 in city and state funding to upgrade the roads and entranceway to Americhem. The project helped retain about 90 high-paying jobs, including 35 working in research science in the R&D center.

"Cuyahoga Falls is great to work with," Juve said. "They really get it as far as community and business working together to benefit both. We try to contribute a lot to the community and they contribute a lot to us."

Americhem's headquarters is in a great location because it is near the University of Akron's polymer science college and the regional polymer industry, Juve said.

Other changes have been taking place at Americhem. The company revamped its Web site (<http://www.americhem.com>) in December and earlier this year unveiled a new brand, including updating its logo.

While the new R&D center has been open for several weeks, the renovating of Americhem's headquarters is probably four to five weeks away from completion.

"We really have four main industries that we service," Hanlin

"We like to tell people it's like making Kool-Aid," Hanlin said. "All the really good stuff is in the concentrate. The color, the additives that will give it the properties, whether the physical properties or properties for weather, things like that. . . . There's all kinds of teeny little nuances that really do matter."

Color and performance

Americhem develops and uses a lot of technology, Juve said.

"We're not only making the color, but we're putting physical properties into the product," Juve said. That can include such things as an "oxygen barrier" for plastic bottles to help preserve whatever the container will hold, he said.

In another example, Americhem helped develop fabric for sport shirts that wicks away body moisture, Juve said.

"We're not only making good color, but we're helping (customers) with the performance of the product," Juve said. Americhem is helping customers develop polymer roofing materials

that look good and can withstand extreme weather over long periods of time, he said.

The center also helps Americhem with its own manufacturing, Hanlin and Juve said.

"This is like pilot scale, like what would be in one of our manufacturing plants, as far as making concentrates," Juve said.

Products for packaging and building materials industries are Americhem's fastest-growing segments, Juve said. Customers want their package colors to "jump" off shelves, he said. Polymer roofing also is a growing segment, he said.

"It really comes down to continually developing new products for customers," Juve said. "That's really what we bring to the table. We have to be doing that to continue the growth rates and success. It's really the main purpose of this facility. It's all about bringing new products and accelerating that to customers so that they can develop new products and can compete globally."

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