

NEWS

From GEORGIA TECH'S ENGINEERING EXPERIMENT STATION

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TECH HELPS INDUSTRY SOLVE

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TOUGH TECHNICAL PROBLEMS

For Immediate Release

ATLANTA, GA....What does an appliance manufacturer do when his products are being returned by his customers because of mysterious defects?

A Georgia company faced this problem recently when clear plastic components of its products suffered severe discoloration.

Management called Georgia Tech for assistance and three days later Tech engineers came up with an answer: the plastic components lacked a chemical material to protect them from ultraviolet light rays. With this information, the manufacturer corrected the defect immediately.

"That's one of our real successes," remembers Eric O. Berg Jr. of Georgia Tech's Industrial Extension Division (IED). "It's a good example of how we can help a small business quickly and cheaply when management is stumped by a tough, technical problem."

Tech's industrial outreach staff has helped many Georgia manufacturers out of tight spots since the program began in the mid-1960's. Today, a team of 22 technical extension specialists aid established companies as well as beginning businesses. Tech's assistance is not solely confined to engineering questions; the staff routinely handles problems involving most areas of business.

"We're generalists," explains Berg. "Most of us are engineers and we're mainly problem solvers. Everyone in our division has had actual business or industrial experience."

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IED engineers help companies get financial support and advise them on how to meet government safety regulations. They also offer energy conservation recommendations to industry along with suggestions for improving plant productivity.

A good example of this work is a project sponsored by the Elberton Granite Association aimed at increasing productivity and reducing noise pollution in the industry. With association backing, Tech is designing a water jet which can cut through granite with virtually no detectable sound at several times the speed of conventional methods.

But technical assistance comprises only half of the division's mission. IED also works to bolster local economies in Georgia. The staff helps communities get industrial parks, advises development groups on strategies for attracting industry and then helps Georgia cities to sell themselves to companies in the process of relocation.

To carry out these activities, IED maintains eight field offices in the following cities: Savannah, Gainesville, Rome, Douglas, Carrollton, Augusta, Macon and Albany. Berg believes these outreach stations offer small companies the best of two worlds: resident field engineers familiar with local needs and back-up support from a research institution with extensive technological resources.

While most of the short term problem solving help is provided at no cost to the company, extended assistance programs from IED are usually done on a contract basis.

Berg sees this service as a particular benefit to the small business community in the 1980's. "With our economy entering harder times," he says, "manufacturers need an extra edge to keep their heads above water."