



Newspaper

St. Charles lab specializes in testing electrical insulation.

St. Charles County Business Record, MO | May 30, 2001

Byline: Michelle Kowalski

To say the least, their electric bills, especially in the summer, are "impressive."

"We cry about it," joked Edward Van Vooren, president of ELTEK International Labs in St. Charles.

ELTEK Labs is an independent testing lab that specializes in testing electrical and electronic insulation. Much of the company's electric bill comes from the 50 electrical heated ovens that run constantly between 300 degrees and 450 degrees. The company also runs electric voltage up to 150,000 volts daily.

ELTEK isn't just any testing lab, though. Of the independent labs that do the same testing ELTEK does -- there are only five -- ELTEK is the only one dedicated to the electrical and electronic industry. Van Vooren said there have been several companies that have attempted to do testing to the same level the ELTEK does, but no one has yet measured up.

"There's always a possibility for competition," Van Vooren said.

Van Vooren said ELTEK does more compatibility and systems testing than all other labs in the world.

Not only is ELTEK one of "less than a handful" of testing labs of its kind, but the company has also written testing standards used by the industry and developed new technology and test methods. Furthermore, the company has been certified since 1992 by the International Standards Organization on one of three levels of a quality management program that is service-related.

ELTEK's primary business is to provide comparative information about products and present the data to its customers. Essentially, ELTEK simulates climates, atmospheres and situations that electrical and electronic devices may be in to determine how long something will last.

"We can simulate any place on Earth," Van Vooren said.

For example, ELTEK tested the casing of a circuit breaker switch that had the opportunity to be exposed to rain water. By accelerating the aging process and applying strong stresses, the lab was able to determine how long the casing will last.

In compatibility testing, the company determines what materials work together. For example, ELTEK may test certain components of an insulation system of a television set, appliance or electrical system in a car to help determine what will best keep people safe from electric shock.

ELTEK's clients include companies like Petro Chemical, DuPont, Dow, GE Plastics, BASF, Samsung, several automobile manufacturers, 3M, IBM, AT&T and Solutia (spun off from Monsanto). Most of ELTEK's business comes by word of mouth, but Van Vooren said many companies come to ELTEK because they know their competitors use ELTEK.

Nearly one quarter of ELTEK's clients are based in Europe, and approximately one-fifth in Japan, Korea and China.

"Almost anything electric that you use, we test," Van Vooren said.

Even protective gloves used by telecommunications employees who work on high-voltage lines have been tested at ELTEK.

The 14-year-old company uses five different labs for its long- and short-term testing, compatibility testing, flammability testing and electrical insulation testing. Short-term testing is a project that will take three weeks or less, and long-term usually lasts at least 12 months. The company runs several hundred tests at a time and has at least 85 projects going at one time.

With all that going on, you would think the company was staffed by hundreds of people; however, there are just 15 employees. And although the work is not complicated, Van Vooren said new employees spend at least one year training simply because it's not something the average person does.

"We get challenges quite consistently," Van Vooren said. "But we have a top-notch group of people here."

COPYRIGHT 2003 Dolan Media Newswires. This material is published under license from the publisher through the Gale Group, Farmington Hills, Michigan. All inquiries regarding rights should be directed to the Gale Group.

©2011 Gale, a part of Cengage Learning. All rights reserved. www.accessmylibrary.com

The AccessMyLibrary advertising network includes: womensforump.com GlamBeauty.com