

## New accreditation equals new business for St. Charles-based ELTEK.

Missouri Lawyers Media | April 22, 2011

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If **ELTEK International Laboratories** is a barometer of the nation's economy, things are looking up. The small but renowned laboratory headquartered in St. Charles has clients throughout the world, and in the past most of its business came from clients based in Asia and Europe. That is not the case these days. Today, about 80 percent of **ELTEK's** business comes from U.S. companies; good news for everyone because it means American corporations are investing once again in their research and development departments, according to **ELTEK** General Manager Andrea G. Morse.

We are a sign that the economy is coming back, she said. U.S. industry is banking on the economy turning around.

The electrical testing laboratory is on the verge of seeing even more demand for its services, and not just because the economy is improving.

A few weeks ago the company earned its 17025 accreditation, meaning **ELTEK** became an internationally accredited laboratory.

The International Accreditation Service has awarded this accreditation to a little more than 150 **laboratories** in the world, said company founder and President Edward Van Vooren. He said **ELTEK** is the only laboratory in its field to earn the accreditation.

**ELTEK** serves companies in a broad range of industries, from household appliances to nuclear power. Even before it earned the accreditation, the laboratory was known as the place to go to test electrical insulation materials and electrical insulation systems.

**ELTEK's** reputation earned the business of between 400 and 500 companies, including international corporations such as Siemens and Emerson Electric, Van Vooren said.

Now the laboratory has the credentials to back it up.

This is for people who don't know who we are, he said about the accreditation. Van Vooren said his company, which has only 12 full-time employees, has worked the past four years to earn the accreditation.

Already word about the accreditation has spread. Morse said **ELTEK** is getting inquiries from potential customers located here and overseas.

We were told that would happen when the accreditation was approved, she said.

The company has four **laboratories** in its facility in the Hughes Business Park. One lab can conduct as many as 300 different tests.

Employees joke about how much fun their jobs are because when they arrive at work they get to destroy things, mostly by fire.

Many of **ELTEK's** clients are household names involved in cutting-edge electronic technology. As products get smaller and more powerful, the wires and insulating materials in those products come under more stress.

**ELTEK** does not test products, but instead tests some of the materials used in those products.

Manufacturers want to know the limits of the materials used in their products, and how those materials will stand up to different atmospheric conditions, wear and tear and the ravages of time.

**ELTEK** works almost exclusively with customers' research and development departments, according to Morse. We don't work with production people. We work with tomorrow's production, she said.

Those tests help manufacturers make safer products, Van Vooren said. Often there are no machines that exist to conduct the necessary tests so employees have to build the test equipment.

What we test here is not taught anywhere, so the company has to train its employees, he said.

David Leezer, the city's economic development director, said that in addition to being a successful enterprise, **ELTEK** is an excellent economic development tool.

The best way to get industries to move to St. Charles is to showcase how companies like **ELTEK** can succeed here, he said.

**ELTEK** will celebrate its accreditation this Friday at its St. Charles facility. The company has sent out invitations to city officials and others to join in the festivities and tour the laboratory.

Van Vooren started the company in 1987.

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