



Cold call

Michael Kreitner, business manager for quick change mold systems and emergent technologies with mold tooling specialist D-M-E Co., talks about the company's liquid silicone rubber cold runner system at a recent trade show. The firm introduced its molding technology in North America recently after years of success in Europe. Find out more about D-M-E and advances at other companies in a special section on machinery starting on page 10.

RPN photo by Brad Dawson

D-M-E cold runner system now in N.A.

By Brad Dawson

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MADISON HEIGHTS, Mich.—Mold tooling specialist D-M-E Co. has introduced a cold runner system for molding liquid silicone rubber—already popular in Europe—in North America to help meet growing need in the market.

Customers familiar with D-M-E and its hot runner systems—used more often in plastic molding—had been querying the company about the availability of cold runner systems in North America, said Michael Kreitner, the firm's business manager for quick change mold systems and emergent technologies.

"They kept asking and asking for this product, so we decided to work with our colleagues in Europe to bring it here," said Kreitner, who discussed D-M-E's LSR cold runner system at the Medical Design & Manufacturing West show held in January in Anaheim, Calif. "We've done a lot of market research, and we're seeing potential 10- to 15-percent growth in this market in North America."

Many of the company's customers have struggled to create their own elastomer-processing equipment and the system allows them to operate efficiently and focus on their own core competencies, Kreitner said.

The increased demand also is based on the properties of LSR and high-temperature vulcanized silicone materials holding up better than many other elastomers in medical, electrical, automotive and high-temperature applications, he said.

D-M-E's cold runner technology was introduced in Europe in the early 1990s, and its proven track record includes 650 systems working out in the field since then, Kreitner said. The difference with the LSR system is that—unlike plastics injected at high temperatures and cooled inside the mold—the elastomer is injected at a cooler temperature and cured as the mold temperature is heated.

D-M-E believes the cold runner will be a big driver in North American revenues, and the firm has sold several systems thus far since the product's introduction to the market earlier this year, Kreitner said. Several medical customers who have used D-M-E's hot runner system to mold parts approached the company and asked if they could help them with the silicone end of the market as well, he said.

"We're known first on the thermo-plastic side, but we're diversifying ourselves to provide some new solutions for every type of application our customers may have," he said. "We can provide as much of a molding system as they'd like

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RPN photo by Brad Dawson

Michael Kreitner (right) discusses the cold runner system with a potential customer at the D-M-E booth at the Medical Design & Manufacturing West show, held in Anaheim, Calif., in January.

us to do.”

The Madison Heights-based company believes it has to increase its product line and become as full-service as possible because that’s what its customers want, Kreitner said. The company also offers components for the system so it can be designed and customized as needed for multicomponents tools.

“We don’t want to be just a supplier to a customer, but a solution provider,” he said. “They don’t just want a product, they want the service and support behind it, especially on higher-end engineered products like the cold decks and hot runner systems. They want to make sure that when they get the product from us, everything is 100-percent ready for them to go into production themselves.”

One of the real benefits of the cold runner system is the decrease in wasted

material, Kreitner said. D-M-E has found that where customers traditionally don’t use a cold deck, anywhere from 60 to 80 percent of each shot they produce is waste, where the silicone material cannot be reused, he said.

This system is helping those companies improve production efficiency so that they end up with a part that doesn’t require additional secondary work like trimming or flash removal. “They get a finished part off the mold that can be used in an assembly process or is a finished product on its own.”

While D-M-E has North American manufacturing sites in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Ontario, in the short term the LSR cold runner system will be produced in Belgium, where D-M-E Europe is based, Kreitner said. As sales and demand increase, production could be moved to North America as well, he said.