

Rubber & Plastics News

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Trexel to expand licensing program

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Trexel Inc. plans to expand licensing of its MuCell foaming process for thermoplastic vulcanizate profiles.

The privately funded company is in active licensing discussions with three new seal makers each from the U.S. and Europe, and expects to close at least a couple of additional licenses by the end of September, said President David Bernstein. The company delivered a technical paper on the technology at the Automotive Elastomers Conference.

Until now, Jyco Sealing Technologies Inc. has been the sole U.S. seal maker licensed to use the process for TPV extrusions. But its 18-month exclusivity agreement has expired.

The Jyco license and others granted to two unnamed seal makers in Europe and Japan, a Japanese electronics company and a non-automotive U.S. company were pilots, Bernstein said. Trexel deliberately licensed the process on a very selective basis to understand the markets. The company isn't heavily pursuing additional licensing in other industries, but there now is a clear demand for it in vehicle sealing applications, he said.

"The market has already become fairly skeptical about the alternative foaming technologies in the weatherstrip foaming

area," Bernstein said. "As we understand it, the chemical blowing agent foaming and water foaming fall short in a couple of areas, particularly in the water absorption testing," but also in compression set, appearance and insulation.

Trexel claims its foaming technology, which uses supercritical fluids—carbon dioxide and nitrogen—provides a superior, closed-cell surface for less water absorption and better appearance compared to competing foaming processes. It will enable the use of TPVs for dynamic sealing applications in the automotive industry, Bernstein said.

"Of course this is the auto industry and skepticism is very high," Bernstein said. "We know that (the TPV foamed seals) are going to continue to be tested, but we know that it overcomes any of the other obstacles that the others have come up against."

Additional licensing of the product is not a threat to Jyco, President Sam Jyawook said, given the company's developmental lead. "In this business, if it's successful you know everyone will use it," he said.

The Ann Arbor, Mich.-based company is doing long-term testing on seals produced with the MuCell process and hopes to make "a big announcement" by November.