

The Plastics Industry in Georgia

Plastics is a major industry in Georgia and it is growing. Georgia plastics companies provide 43,400 jobs and have grown within the state by an impressive 30.5 percent in the last five years. Annual shipments from the 587 companies total \$10.6 billion. These figures rank Georgia 13th in the nation in plastics employment and ninth in the nation in plastics shipments.

Because of the importance of the plastics industry to the state's economy, the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education and Quick Start have a focused effort for meeting the training needs of the industry. Through DTAE's network of 34 technical colleges, a wide range of training programs are available. At selected technical colleges, Plastics Technology is available in both degree and diploma programs. Mold-Making Apprenticeship provides technical training combined with hands-on experience through a European-style apprenticeship program. Operator Training is available in a variety of processes, including injection molding, extrusion molding, blow molding and thermoform molding.

At each of Georgia's technical colleges, Certified Manufacturing Specialist provides certification in manufacturing skills. Applied Manufacturing Technology, Electronics Technology, Industrial Maintenance Technology, Machine Tool Technology, Quality Control Technology and many more programs help meet the training needs of the industry. Management and Supervisory Training offers career growth opportunities through specialized training in supervisory skills. Customized training to meet specific company requirements is available through each technical college.

Quick Start provides high-quality training at no cost. Quick Start, Georgia's award-winning economic development incentive training program, provides customized training as part of a partnership between the expert training staff at Quick Start, the local technical college and the company.

The next step in training opportunities to the industry will be the Plastics Training Center, part of Griffin Technical College's expansion plan. The Center will provide entry-level training as well as career enhancement opportunities



Bill Thielemann at the National Plastics Exposition in Chicago.

designed with industry input to meet training requirements. Programs will include introduction to manufacturing and introduction to plastics for new employees; operator training in injection, extrusion, thermoform and blown film; technical training in plastics technology and industrial maintenance; and apprenticeship programs in mold making and set-up technician. The Center also will accommodate specialty programs in ISO/QS 9000, as well as seminar presentations on timely topics. Groundbreaking for Griffin Tech's expansion is scheduled for fall 2001, with classes starting in fall 2003.

DTAE and Quick Start are committed to ensuring growth and expansion of the industry within the state. Quick Start works closely with the Georgia Plastics Industry Council, Society of Plastics Engineers, Society of Plastics Industries, and American Plastics Council.

We presented the Quick Start message of industry opportunities in Georgia to the National Plastics Exposition (NPE) in Chicago last summer and will take the message to Plastics K 2001, the world's largest plastics show in Dusseldorf, Germany, this fall. The goal of these efforts is a world-class workforce to meet the needs of the plastics industry now and into the future.

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Plastics apprentice David Worley has improved his skills at Piolax with training from Appalachian Technical College.