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Klein Steel adds to Syracuse operations

Rochester-based firm is 'seizing more market share'

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Klein Steel Service, Inc. employees chain up a load of steel in the company's newly expanded space in Salina. The business supplies steel for customers ranging from large manufacturers to small fabricators. Klein Steel employs about 200 people.

SALINA - Klein Steel Service, Inc. of Rochester has expanded its Syracuse-area warehouse and has plans to push its business into other states as well.

The company supplies steel for customers ranging from large manufacturers to small fabricators. The company employs about 200 people, including seven in Syracuse.

In addition to selling steel, the company also provides services such as cutting, sawing, and milling. It is those services, in addition to the company's varied catalog of steel, that has helped it grow, says John Batiste, president of Klein Steel Service.

"In a recession like this one, we find that some of our competition is on hard times," he says. "We're seizing more market share. To us, this is a great opportunity."

Growth was the main reason for the move to larger facilities in Syracuse, Batiste adds. Klein Steel relocated to a 20,000-square-foot warehouse at 1 General Motors Drive in the town of Salina, the same complex in which the company's old warehouse was located.

The new facility is about 35 percent larger.

"Business is growing," Batiste says. "We needed more space."

The plan is to expand staff in Syracuse as demand warrants, he adds. The company recently hired a new employee for the office.

Steel supply is traditionally a "low-tech" industry, Batiste says. Companies in the space generally just sell steel.

Klein Steel, he argues, stands out because of the investments it has made in technology. The company owns an automatic warehouse storage and retrieval system and advanced processing gear such as laser, plasma, and water-jet cutting equipment.

"We're not [low-tech]," Batiste says. "We've spent the money and invested and it's paying off for us."

In addition to its expansion in Syracuse, Klein Steel opened a sales office in Albany on June 22. The company may also add a warehouse there in the future.

Batiste says the company saw a void in Albany it could fill.

"We found that there was no Klein Steel-like service center there," he says.

Klein Steel also has a location in Buffalo.

The firm works in the Binghamton area as well, serving the market from its sites in Rochester, Syracuse, and Buffalo. The company could eventually open an office there, mainly as a stepping stone to Pennsylvania.

Expansion outside New York is definitely part of the plan for Klein Steel, Batiste says. The company eventually wants to work in Massachusetts and Vermont as well.

"At some point, this recession will end," Batiste says. "We think when it does, we're going to be in a good position to take advantage of it."

Klein Steel Service began in 1971 and has a total of 360,000 square feet of space across its three cities.

The company declined to disclose its revenue information.

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