



MIDWEST

[www.mfchose.com](http://www.mfchose.com) / HQ: St. Paul, Minn. / **Specialty:** Hose, fittings and formed tube assemblies / **Will Stewart, president:** "Our sales staff is highly technical and very well-educated."



MFC FABRICATES AND DISTRIBUTES A RANGE OF FLUID CONVEYANCE PRODUCTS AND CAN FABRICATE HOSE/TUBE COMBINATION ASSEMBLIES.

## FLEXIBLE STRENGTH

MINNESOTA FLEXIBLE CORP.'S SALES AND OTHER STAFF ARE KEY TO THE COMPANY'S SUCCESS. BY JIM HARRIS

**Minnesota Flexible Corp. (MFC)** believes in always putting its best foot forward when it comes to serving existing customers and attracting new business. "Our sales staff is highly technical and very well-educated," says Will Stewart, president of the St. Paul, Minn.-headquartered company. "They really know our products."

Sales training is a high priority for MFC to maintain its culture.

"We hire people who have no prior industry experience, but are bright and well-educated, and train them in our industry and product line," Vice President of Sales Andy Larsen notes. "The end result is that we have sharp

people who are well-versed in our products and industry."

MFC's extensive training programs extend beyond its sales staff to its manufacturing floor, where staff has regular weekly meetings to discuss aspects of their jobs, Vice President of Operations Terry Kelly notes. The company takes great pride in the work of all its staff members. "We have the kind of people we're proud to say work for us," Stewart says.

Several of MFC's staff members have worked there for five, 10 or 15 years. "There's a lot of talk in the industry about finding and retaining talented people, and that's what

we've been blessed with," Larsen adds. "We're a fast-paced company with people who work very hard, but we have a lot of fun doing it."

### A WIDE BREADTH

Founded in 1969 as a manufacturer of metal hose assemblies, the company today fabricates and distributes a wide range of fluid conveyance products including formed tubing, hydraulic hose, Teflon hose, industrial hose and HVAC products.

"The breadth of our product line sets us apart," Kelly says. "There are not many companies that cover as many hose products as we do."

The company can also fabricate hose/tube combination assemblies. "Many distributors that carry these assemblies have to buy them from another vendor, but we have the capacity to make them in-house," he adds. Its other services include managing inventory for clients, field engineering services, assembly, testing and certification and custom kitting.

MFC serves a range of OEM customers, resellers and maintenance, operations and repair (MRO) customers in most industrial markets. Approximately 70 percent of the company's sales are to the OEMs of power generation, paint spray, agricultural and construction equipment.

In addition to its ISO 9001-certified main manufacturing facility in St. Paul, MFC operates branches in Grand Rapids, Minn.; Galesburg and Peoria, Ill.; and New Berlin and Appleton, Wis.

The Grand Rapids location is located near a customer's manufacturing site and specializes in fabricating, stocking materials and managing inventory for that client. "We make sure they have everything they need for production that day," Kelly says.

MFC gained the locations in Illinois

and Wisconsin following acquisitions of other companies. In addition to allowing the company greater reach into those states, the locations offer services including warehousing, fabrication and hydraulic cylinder repair.

**‘A BETTER ENVIRONMENT’**

The company moved into its 75,000-square-foot St. Paul facility last year. In addition to giving the compa-

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ny more space and allowing for better workflow in its production area, the new facility offers better lighting and higher ceilings than its previous headquarters. “This is a better environment for our employees,” Larsen says.

The new facility enabled MFC to add to its tube bending capabilities. The company uses CNC tube-bending equipment to bend both round and square tubing.

MFC’s other manufacturing capabilities include hose fabrication, crimping, assembly, welding and brazing. Each of its jobs is tracked through an efficiency management system that records the amount of time each manufacturing process takes and measures that against the company’s productivity goals, Larsen notes.

All of the company’s products undergo extensive tests including pressure/

burst testing, helium testing, vacuum testing and dimensional testing. “We are being pushed by OEMs to produce zero-defect products,” Kelly says. “We constantly look at how to improve our processes to get there.”

MFC works with domestic and international suppliers who help it maintain the high quality of its products. All incoming materials are inspected and tested as part of the company’s incoming quality control program, and MFC personnel regularly visits international supplier facilities.

“We keep our list of international suppliers small,” Larsen says. “We have a strong relationship with the ownership group that controls those companies, and can go straight to the top to resolve any issues we may have.” **mt**



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