

## On the mark

### Passaic betters times with lathe

By Justin Boyd

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PASSAIC, N.J.—Passaic Rubber Co. is continuing a modernization and capital investment program with the acquisition of a computer-controlled lathe.

The machine cost more than \$250,000 and can accommodate rolls up to 40 inches in diameter and 240 inches long, according to Passaic President J.D. Mathey.

Passaic also can cut profiles into mandrel-built lengths in the lathe to make endless belts, he said.

The lathe will allow the company to grind rolls to tighter tolerances much more quickly than it could before, Mathey said. "Rolls that used to take half a day, took us four minutes," he said.

The digitally controlled accuracy of the new machine will enable Passaic to pursue new business, Mathey said.

"Maybe a customer needed tolerances of 1/1000 of an inch. Before, I couldn't do that, now I can," he said.

The belting, roller and calendered rubber manufacturer also will add an electric vulcanizer in mid-March, Mathey said.

The company had ordered a smaller electric vulcanizer in late 1999, but took the opportunity to order the larger machine when the first delivery was wrong, he said.

The new vulcanizer will be 60 inches in diameter and 330 inches long, Mathey said. It replaces a smaller steam vulcanizer and gives Passaic electric vulcanizing capability.

New Jersey law requires an operator's presence during steam vulcanization to monitor boilers, he said.

Before, all of Passaic's vulcanization was by steam, Mathey said.

The new machine will enable Passaic to cure products overnight without an operator.

The new lathe also provides the efficiency of operation without constant supervision, he said.

Passaic used to perform its grooving largely by hand, but the new machine does it automatically.

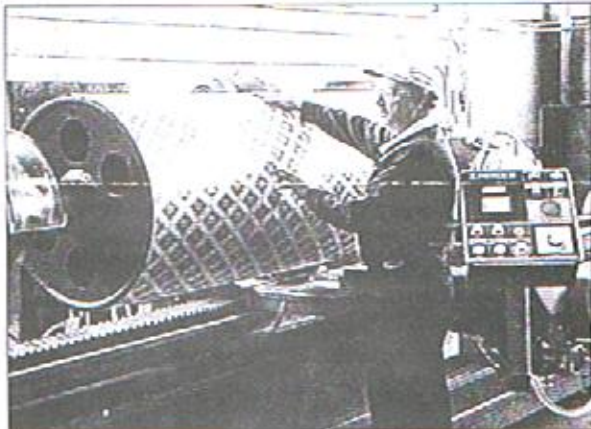
The New Jersey manufacturer is adding major pieces of equipment as part of a modernization and growth program it launched in 1999 and expects more later this year.

In addition to acquiring the lathe and vulcanizer, Passaic is reconditioning its presses, many of which were bought used in the 1970s, the company president said.

The past year's upgrades have caused some delays in Passaic's production, according to Mathey, but he is confident the plan will pay off.

"It's been difficult to maintain production, but for the long haul, we're going to be in a much better position," he said.

Passaic operates from a 70,000-sq.-ft. plant and has about 50 employees.



Bob DeJong, a 20-year roll/belt grinder with Passaic Rubber Co., operates the firm's new computer-controlled lathe. The machine is the latest purchase in a capital investment program Passaic launched in late 1999.