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FEATURED

This new Burley warehouse is too cold for humans. That's where the robots come in.

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\$3 FOR FIRST 13 WEEKS



Site Manager Derek Bedke gives a tour of the facility Friday at NewCold in Burley. The facility is set to begin

May

BAT CITIES UNLIMITED NEWS

BURLEY — Burley’s new high-tech facility that uses robots to stack pallets in a sub-zero warehouse is weeks away from starting operations.

NewCold, a Netherlands-based company, built a \$90 million, 25 million cubic-foot cold storage warehouse west of its largest client, McCain Foods.

The new warehouse dovetails with McCain Foods’ \$200 million expansion that was completed last fall. The company’s expansion created about 180 new jobs.

NewCold has two facilities in Australia and one each in France, Poland, Germany, the United Kingdom and Tacoma, Washington.

The warehouse is also next to Watco Transportation Services’ short line rail facility, which it will also use for shipping.

“This is a remarkable thing for our community,” Burley economic development director Doug Manning said. “I don’t know yet what other economic developments this company will spur in the community. I see it spurring whole new industries in the region, which will use high-tech warehouses for frozen storage.”

The target date set to begin operations is May 16, but if everything is ready they may launch earlier.

“To have a company like this in Burley is just amazing,” NewCold site manager Derek Bedke said.

The warehouse, towering 140 feet high, is the height of three conventional storage warehouses stacked vertically.

The building resembles a big white cube and the bright white color was selected for its reflective properties to help with energy efficiency, Jonas Swarttouw, U.S. manager for the company, said in a previous *Times-News* interview.

The building's design has a smaller floor and roof, better insulation and cooling than older warehouses and it uses half the energy of older designed facilities.

Bedke said McCain Foods' frozen product will be shuttled to the warehouse, where it will be stored for a month on average.

McCain Foods is expected to use about 80 percent of the storage capacity, but the rest will be leased to other companies, Bedke said.

When NewCold is in full operation, Bedke said, there will be 75 to 100 employees working in 12 hour shifts around the clock.

Jobs include managers, planners who coordinate the loads, operators who make sure the product is moving properly, maintenance workers to keep the machines in operation, drivers and forklift operators.

Some of the employees were sent to the Tacoma, Washington, facility for five weeks of training and others were sent to Belgium.

The automation starts at the customer's production

facility with conveyor systems that are put in place to automatically stage pallets that are loaded onto an automated trailer. Truck loads are then shuttled to NewCold and unloaded automatically.

Pallets of product are scanned when they arrive and leave.

The storage and retrieval of pallets in the high bay of the warehouse is performed by seven automatic stacker cranes. The storage capacity in the high bay, which is equipped with a racking system, is 90,000 pallets.

When the warehouse is ready to begin storing frozen product, the temperature in the high bay will be lowered to 5 degrees below zero Fahrenheit and special equipment will reduce the oxygen level 16.5%.

The low oxygen level is used as a method of fire suppression. Where employees are stationed, traditional fire suppression will be used.

Although a person could enter the high bay with the low of oxygen level, Bedke said, the oxygen would be too low to work in.

The high bay is also kept dark because there are no people working in the area, he said.

When there is a breakdown of machinery in the high bay, trained employees will put on harnesses and safety gear along with self-contained breathing apparatuses to make repairs.

The pallets are dispatched and operations are

monitored by staff in what is called the low bay area. There is also a pick floor where pallets can be broken apart and custom orders put together.

“Everything here is automated except for the pick floor,” Bedke said.

When the product leaves the warehouse by truck or rail, it is shipped to customers like the food service industry and sometimes it is taken to other warehouses, Bedke said.

Less than 15% of the product is expected to be shipped by rail.

“It’s hard to say what the impact of a company like NewCold will have on the area in the next 20 to 30 years, but I think it will be significant,” Manning said.



