Kennebec Technologies Named 2013 Maine MEP Manufacturer of the Year

Award Honors Augusta Firm’s Growth from Small Garage Shop to World-class Manufacturer

Augusta, Maine: The Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP) today announced that Kennebec Technologies has been selected as the 2013 Manufacturer of the Year. The Augusta-based firm has grown from a small shop equipped with manual machines to a world-class manufacturing operation specializing in complex high-precision components for aerospace, defense, alternative energy, medical, semiconductor and telecom applications.

Kennebec Technologies is a model for manufacturing success in Maine. “It is very gratifying to see a company in one of Maine’s traditional industries reach its full potential,” said Governor Paul R. LePage. “I congratulate Kennebec Technologies for its innovation and growth and for demonstrating that Maine is open for business. My administration will continue its efforts to make Maine as competitive as possible so more businesses and employees can enjoy the same kind of success.”

“For two decades Kennebec Technologies has steadily expanded its operations by developing new products, expanding into new markets and finding ways to improve the efficiency of its production processes. This spirit of innovation, combined with a relentless focus on quality control and lean manufacturing, has led the firm to its position today as one of Maine’s premier high-tech manufacturers,” said Muriel Mosher, president of Maine MEP.

The Manufacturers of the Year award is given each year to a Maine company that demonstrates the leadership, vision and manufacturing excellence that characterize Next Generation Manufacturers. This year the Maine MEP award is being presented in conjunction with National Manufacturing Day, a nationwide celebration of America’s manufacturing excellence.

The award ceremony will be held at Kennebec Technology’s facility in Augusta at 1:00 p.m. today. The award will be presented by Maine Economic and Community Development Commissioner George Gervais. Participants will include top state economic development officials, local state legislators and representatives from the Maine congressional delegation offices.

Kennebec Technologies began in 1972 as a small tool and die shop operating out of a garage in Augusta. In 1978 it won its first contract to manufacture skin dies for Boeing. From that beginning, it expanded into manufacturing aerospace parts, initially for space shuttle fuel cells, and then into an ever-wider array of industries, including defense, energy and medical devices. The company’s spirit of innovation was matched by a continual focus on process improvements, investments in new technologies and employee training in advanced manufacturing techniques.

“The key to Kennebec Technologies’ success has been its ability to move forward by developing new products, identifying new ways to produce them more efficiently, and invest savings back into the company so that it could expand and create new jobs,” said Maine Department of Economic and Community Development Commissioner George Gervais.

Maine MEP began working with Kennebec Technologies more than a decade ago, and over that time has provided technical and operational assistance that has enabled the company to become a next generation manufacturer, Mosher noted.
After achieving ISO 9000 certification in 2000, Kennebec Technologies partnered with Maine MEP in 2003 to implement major upgrades to its facilities and manufacturing processes to meet ISO 9001:2001 standards. Maine MEP delivered lean principles training for all associates and helped create Kennebec Technologies first value stream map. In succeeding years Maine MEP provided training in skills such as shop math, blueprint reading and quality inspection techniques. It later delivered advanced “All Shop” training in Lean Six Sigma application, trained all supervisors and engineers in Team Improvement Problem Solving (TIPS), led multiple kaizen sessions to identify areas for waste reduction, and conducted train-the-trainer sessions for senior machinists and supervisors.

Maine Economic and Community Development George Gervais praised Kennebec Technologies for transforming itself into a world-class manufacturer.

“One of the chief factors contributing to Kennebec Technology’s success has been its focus over the years on continuous improvement,” stated Commissioner Gervais. “Continuous improvement lies at the heart of lean manufacturing, but it can be hard to sustain for many small and mid-size manufacturers. For Kennebec Technology, it’s been a notable distinction. The company has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment by updating its quality management systems, identified ways to cut energy usage and lessen its environmental impact. It’s created internal lean champions and provided lean training throughout the workforce. In the markets where Kennebec Technology competes – in aerospace and defense and semiconductor and medical devices – quality is critical, and Kennebec Technologies has demonstrated by its success that it can meet the highest quality standards.”

Kennebec Technologies President Wick Johnson noted the results that his company has achieved by partnering with Maine MEP and thanked the organization for recognizing it as the 2013 Maine Manufacturer of the Year.

“Kennebec Technologies is honored to be selected as the Maine MEP Manufacturer of the Year,” said Johnson. “Over the years we have called upon Maine MEP many times when we were looking to upgrade our systems, improve our production processes and deliver new training to our employees. The bottom-line impacts of these projects have been substantial. We’ve improved our productivity by 50 percent, doubled our sales revenue and been able to invest our capital in new technologies. This award is recognition of the success we’ve achieved by partnering with Maine MEP and of the hard work and commitment of our employees.

About Maine MEP

Maine MEP is a program of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development and an affiliate of the NIST MEP under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP is a network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to smaller manufacturers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through MEP, manufacturers have access to more than 2000 manufacturing and business “coaches” whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits, and enhanced global competitiveness. For more information on the Maine MEP program call 1-800-637-4634 or visit www.mainemep.org.