



BMS Logistics to expand in Davenport

By Jennifer DeWitt

A Missouri-based company that specializes in packaging and distribution for the food industry has opened a facility in north Davenport.

BMS Logistics is operating out of a 300,000-square-foot facility in the River Cities Industrial Center, which is the former Caterpillar plant near Mount Joy. The warehouse is the eighth facility for BMS Warehousing, the parent company headquartered in St. Joseph, Mo.

Chuck Henson, plant manager of the Davenport operation, said the company is a co-packer for Nestle Purina, which represents about 80 percent of BMS' business. He said Nestle Purina ships truckloads of its canned pet food to BMS, which repackages it for sale. The company also develops and produces contract packaged products for its clients.

"The reason we decided on the Quad-Cities is because it is geographically located in the middle of all our main customers," said Henson, who joined the company when it expanded to Davenport.

He said the company serves Nestle plants in St. Joseph and Jefferson, Wis., as well as Davenport. He also credited Nestle with suggesting BMS look at the Davenport area for a new facility about 18 months ago.

"It's working out so well," he said, adding that BMS is picking up additional work in eastern Iowa from Nestle and other customers.

Henson said the warehouse employs about 150 people, most of whom work in production, assembly and as forklift operators. But with anticipated workload increase, he said the operation is expected to grow to about 300 by year's end.

"Optimistically, we could double our space and employment in the next year and a half," he said.

Though the company offers incentive-based pay, he said pay averages out to about \$10 an hour.

BMS is working with Scott Community College to develop a program to train slip sheet truck drivers, a job similar to driving a forklift. He said in the food business, product is transported on a slip sheet, or corrugated cardboard, as opposed to wooden pallets, which requires a different skill to pick up. "This area doesn't have a lot of training in it," he said.

The arrival of BMS in late June fills a large space at the industrial center that once was occupied by Petersen Warehousing, said Roger Leese of NAI Ruhl & Ruhl Commercial Co.

Leese, who has represented the property for about a decade, said the center has seen many tenants since its days as the Caterpillar plant. The BMS operation leaves only about 130,000 square feet of available space at the 1.8 million-square-foot facility.

The property's owner, Petersen Properties LLC, also owns the Riverbend Industrial Center in East Moline, the former John [Deere](#) Foundry, and has larger spaces available, he said.

Leese said the River Cities site had sat vacant for six to nine months before BMS arrived. "With that size of space, you can have long vacancy periods," he said, adding that nine months is about average.

"BMS is a good company. It was a good fit for the building and the configuration, and it brings a new company to town. It was good for the community," he said.

Jennifer DeWitt can be contacted at (563) 383-2318 or jdewitt@qctimes.com. Comment on this story at qctimes.com.