LANXESS acquires U.S. bladder producer TCB

- Rhein Chemie expands global network for bladders
- Mobility megatrend underpinning demand for tires
- Third acquisition in the USA within six months

Leverkusen, Mannheim, Little Rock (AR) – LANXESS is strengthening its position as a premium supplier to the tire industry. The specialty chemicals company’s wholly-owned subsidiary Rhein Chemie has acquired USA-based Tire Curing Bladders LLC (TCB) – a leading manufacturer of bladders for the tire industry. Financial details were not disclosed. The transaction will close with immediate effect.

Privately-owned TCB is based in Little Rock, Arkansas, and operates a bladder production facility with an annual capacity in excess of 400,000 units. The company achieved sales of USD 21 million in 2011 and employs approximately 100 people. TCB serves primarily the North American market.

“The acquisition of TCB is a further cornerstone in our strategy to position Rhein Chemie as a global producer of high-quality bladders,” said Rainier van Roessel, Board Member of LANXESS. “We are gaining capacities to serve our growing list of tire customers and we also gain access to bladders for tires of trucks, off-road and agricultural vehicles, as well as building machines.”

“We are delighted that Rhein Chemie will give our committed workforce the platform to achieve even more success through its global reach and well-known brands,” said TCB’s former joint owners Vernon Almon and Mark Nutt.

Rhein Chemie gained access to bladder production last year through the acquisition of Argentina’s Darmex. Rhein Chemie bladders are marketed under the Rhenoshape brand.
"Rhenoshape bladders, together with our comprehensive portfolio of environmentally friendly Rhenodiv release agents, provide tire manufacturers worldwide with premium solutions for significantly increasing their efficiency and quality. Our future developments will continue to expand these competencies," said Anno Borkowsky, Head of Rhein Chemie.

Bladders are used in the manufacturing process of tires. A non-vulcanized tire is placed in a press. Once the press is shut, the internal pressure forces the tire against the internal wall of the tire mold. This is done using a butyl rubber bladder that is then inflated under high pressure and at high temperatures to give the tire its final shape.

The demand for bladders is expected to grow parallel to global tire production, which is expected to grow on average by five percent per year in the coming years. The megatrend of mobility is underpinning this growth, driven by a growing middle-class in countries such as Brazil, China and India.

In addition, an increasing number of tire companies are outsourcing their bladder production in order to optimize productivity and take advantage of the higher quality offered by bladder specialists. The size of the global bladder market is estimated at more than EUR 300 million.

Rhein Chemie achieved sales of roughly EUR 280 million in 2010 and employs about 1,000 people worldwide. Founded in 1889, Rhein Chemie is based in Mannheim, Germany, and has production sites in Belgium, USA, Uruguay, Brazil, India, China, Argentina and Japan.

The purchase of TCB is LANXESS’ third acquisition in the USA within six months. LANXESS acquired, in October last year, the phthalate-free plasticizers company Unitex in Greensboro, North Carolina, and one month later the biocide material protection specialist Verichem in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
“North America remains a very important market for specialty chemicals and technology-driven solutions developed by LANXESS,” said van Roessel.

LANXESS is a leading specialty chemicals company with sales of EUR 7.1 billion in 2010 and currently around 16,100 employees in 30 countries. The company is at present represented at 47 production sites worldwide. The core business of LANXESS is the development, manufacturing and marketing of plastics, rubber, intermediates and specialty chemicals. LANXESS is a member of the leading sustainable indices Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) World and FTSE4Good.

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Forward-Looking Statements.
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Information for editors:

You can find further information concerning LANXESS chemistry in our WebMagazine at http://webmagazine.lanxess.com.