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Flexsteel Industries Receives Orion Energy Systems' Environmental Stewardship Award

Furniture Manufacturer Saves Enough Electricity to Power 100 Homes, Displace 682 Tons of Carbon Dioxide Every Year

DUBLIN, Ga., Nov 19, 2009 (GlobeNewswire via COMTEX News Network) -- Flexsteel Industries (Nasdaq:FLXS) was recognized today for significantly reducing its impact on the environment at its Dublin, Ga., facility by reducing electricity consumption, reducing water consumption and reducing waste.

Its efforts earned the furniture manufacturer an Environmental Stewardship Award from Orion Energy Systems Inc. (Nasdaq:OESX). Orion's Director of Corporate Communications Linda Diedrich and Lou Verrone from Southpoint Solutions presented the award today to Flexsteel's President and CEO Ron Klosterman in front of more than 300 city and state officials, employees and utility and energy professionals.

"By incorporating energy-efficient technology as part of a broad environmental initiative, Flexsteel's Dublin manufacturing center is significantly reducing the greenhouse gases that are believed to cause climate change," Diedrich said. "By curbing these emissions, Flexsteel is playing an important role in improving our environment, and that's everybody's business."

Klosterman said that while it was Flexsteel receiving the Environmental Stewardship Award, it was Orion that should be recognized and thanked for its technology and innovation "that helps us all improve the environment."

Klosterman thanked the diligence of the facility's employees for helping improve the environment.

"You're very much leaders in our corporation," Klosterman said. "You're certainly leaders in the furniture industry and, after winning the Keep Georgia Beautiful award, there's no doubt you're leaders in the Dublin community. I'm very proud of all of you."

Earlier this month, Flexsteel's Dublin facility received the Keep Georgia Beautiful Award for its efforts in waste reduction and recycling.

"We are certainly proud to be part of this project, as it helps Flexsteel become a part of the solution to our country's energy crisis," Verrone said. "Flexsteel is raising the bar for companies throughout Georgia seeking energy-efficient initiatives to help improve our environment and to help keep our state beautiful."

By replacing its inefficient, high-intensity discharge lighting with Orion's technology, the Flexsteel facility is expected to reduce its light-related electricity consumption by 53 percent, from 1.9 million kilowatt-hours to 926,025 kwh annually. The reduced electricity is enough to power 100 homes a year and is expected to save the company about \$88,000 annually in light-related energy costs.

As a result of its electricity reduction, Flexsteel will displace 682 tons of carbon dioxide annually, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. The reduction of carbon dioxide emissions is the air-scrubbing equivalent of a 190-acre forest or like saving more than 85,500 gallons of gasoline a year, according to the EPA.

"This is an exciting day for Flexsteel here in Dublin," state Sen. Ross Tolleson said. "The new Orion lighting system is going to reduce costs for Flexsteel and help them make a better profit. It also will have a positive impact on the environment. It's a win-win for both Flexsteel from a standpoint of being more efficient in business and for the environment."

Chuck Huling, vice president of environmental affairs for Georgia Power, was the keynote speaker at the event. Huling directs Georgia Power's environmental stewardship and compliance programs and serves on the advisory panels for Georgia Tech's School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, and the UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

Huling encouraged those in attendance to transfer the energy efficient practices at the Flexsteel facility to their homes, installing compact fluorescent lighting and replacing incandescent bulbs.

"There's a lot of things we can do corporately, and there's a lot of things we can do individually to impact our energy use," Huling said. "There's great potential for energy efficiency."

Kanika Greenlee, program coordinator for Keep Georgia Beautiful, also spoke at the award ceremony, as did Dublin Mayor Phil Best.

"On behalf of the city of Dublin, congratulations Flexsteel," Best said, representing other city leaders in attendance. "This is a great day. You've always been a big part of this community."

Gov. Sonny Perdue, who is out of the country on business, sent a letter congratulating the Flexsteel site, calling the environmental benefits and achievements an "extraordinary success."

Advanced Energy Solutions of Kathleen, Ga., an Orion partner, replaced more than 1,350 inefficient lighting fixtures with Orion's technology at the Flexsteel location.

Mike Ware, sales representative for Advanced Energy Solutions, said the install went extremely smooth and was flawless.

"The install went very well in part due to Flexsteel's cooperation and the ease of installing Orion's technology," Ware said. "We were able to replace approximately 100 fixtures every day and were able to install the technology very quickly. After all, when it comes to energy-efficient technology, time is money. Like Flexsteel, we hope other Georgia companies take advantage of the opportunity to reduce their carbon footprints while reducing their energy costs."

While the retrofit project significantly benefits the environment, the new lighting also improves conditions for the approximately 340 employees at the Dublin facility, according to General Manager Marcia Dixon.

"While it was the energy reduction and environmental benefits that drove this project, another benefit was a better working environment for our employees as a result of the better lighting," Dixon said. "The employees have supported this project throughout the installation and their support is indicative of the culture within this facility - supporting initiatives that affect not only the employees, but their families and the community as a whole."

Orion's technology on average increases light levels by 50 percent and provides a natural color of light, which is proven to increase morale and productivity. The high-intensity fluorescent technology also turns on instantly. High-pressure sodium and metal halide lighting like those replaced at Flexsteel take upwards of 15 minutes to warm up and typically produce an orange hue.

"I was overwhelmed by the amount of brightness and almost natural looking light throughout this facility," Klosterman said after receiving the award. "I've never seen a facility that's as well lit as this facility."

Flexsteel's electricity-reduction initiatives have broad implications, as the company contributes to permanent distributed load reduction, or PDLR. PDLR deploys energy-efficient technology at the point of use, permanently reducing the need to generate, transmit and distribute electricity.

Through PDLR, the end-user realizes energy-cost savings while utilities gain capacity, relieving stress from the already strained electricity grid. The result can be cost stabilization for ratepayers as the utility reduces the need for expensive upgrades needed to deal with increased capacity.

Flexsteel's Dublin facility has a number of environmentally friendly initiatives, according to Human Resources Manager John Chappell. Since 2008, Flexsteel's Dublin facility has reduced the amount of waste it sends to the local landfill by 64 percent, reduced its water consumption by 12 percent and reduced its overall electricity consumption 7 percent, according to Chappell.

As a result of its environmental initiatives, Flexsteel in September received its Enhancing Furniture Environmental Culture - EFEC - registration from the American Home Furniture Association, Chappell said.

EFEC is a voluntary environmental management system, developed by the AHFA, to assist furniture companies' efforts to improve their environmental stewardship.

Orion has deployed its energy management systems in 5,082 facilities across North America, including 120 of the Fortune 500 companies. Since 2001, Orion technology has displaced more than 477 megawatts, saving customers more than \$710 million and reducing indirect carbon dioxide emissions by 6.1 million tons.

Flexsteel Industries Inc. (Nasdaq:FLXS) is headquartered in Dubuque, Iowa, and was incorporated in 1929. Flexsteel is a designer, manufacturer, importer and marketer of quality upholstered and wood furniture for residential, recreational vehicle, office, hospitality and healthcare markets. All products are distributed nationally. For more information, visit its Web site at www.flexsteel.com.

Advanced Energy Solutions provides industrial, commercial and public facilities with environmentally sound plans that decrease fixed operating expenses and improve facility safety, appearance, and functionality. Advanced Energy Solutions' services include energy and efficiency audits, performance analysis, lighting upgrades and rebate procurement. For more information, visit www.advancedes.net.

Orion Energy Systems Inc. (Nasdaq:OESX) is a leading power technology enterprise that designs, manufactures and implements energy management systems, consisting primarily of high-performance, energy-efficient lighting platforms, intelligent wireless control systems and direct renewable solar technology for commercial and industrial customers without compromising their operations. For more information, visit www.oesx.com.

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SOURCE: Orion Energy Systems, Inc.; Flexsteel Industries, Inc.

CONTACT: Orion Energy Systems
Linda Diedrich, Director Corporate Communications
(920) 482-1988

ljd@oes1.com

www.oesx.com

2210 Woodland Drive
Manitowoc, WI 54220

Flexsteel Industries Inc.

Marcia C. Dixon, General Manager
478-274-5102

mdixon@flexsteel.com

www.flexsteel.com

701 Industrial Blvd.
Dublin, GA 31021-1730

Advanced Energy Solutions

Mike Ware

478-225-2383

Cell: 478-957-7466

mike@advancedes.net

www.advancedes.net

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