

Front Lines

12/1/2021

Border Concepts: Making More in the U.S.

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The Border Concepts manufacturing and distribution facility in Lexington, North Carolina, is about to get a whole lot bigger. The company is working on an expansion plan that includes 120,000 sq. ft. of additional manufacturing space under roof, along with 20,000 sq. ft. under T-shed for storing, shipping and receiving, COO Chris Bednar said.

The goal is to increase manufacturing capacity of multiple products for lawn and garden, as well as for commercial distribution. Those items include steel products like landscape edging, carts, displays and decorative wrought iron products. The company is also investing significantly in automation to combat labor shortages and bring more of the manufacturing process back in-house versus outsourcing.

"We believe in U.S. manufacturing, we always have and always will," he says. "What we wanted to try and do is go out and create supply for the growing demand."

Ironically, construction of the manufacturing facility is waiting for a steel package that's currently expected to arrive in January (it was ordered seven to eight months ago). All the other building materials have been secured, the concrete pad and foundation have been poured, and electrical and plumbing done, so once the steel arrives the rest can go up.

The building is expected to be finished by May of 2022, but the company isn't waiting for that to begin implementing the automation part of the expansion. The automation is expected to arrive in November and those will be incorporated into the manufacturing process right away. Once the new facility is done, work will shift over in phases so it won't disrupt customer orders.

And the orders are coming. "I would say there's been an uptick in our core manufactured products for 2022 from what we saw late fall 2021, so we're certainly excited about that," Chris says. "There are strong trends in lawn and garden that are going to be nice tailwinds for the business for the foreseeable future." **GP**