

Business communication

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Umicore completes construction of new US germanium substrates production facility

Materials technology company Umicore has completed the construction of its new germanium substrates production facility in Quapaw, Oklahoma, USA, adjacent to the existing site.

The 40,000 square foot facility is now undergoing process start-up and qualification runs. The new substrate facility is located on the same campus as the Umicore germanium optics and high purity chemicals operation for the US market and will be integrated in the existing ISO14001, 2004 system in the course of 2010. This allows for a completely integrated supply chain operation, emphasizing prompt internal recycling thereby minimizing inventory stocking requirements of the valuable germanium metal.

The production operation itself is modelled on the Olen facility in Belgium which has successfully supplied millions of substrates for space and terrestrial photovoltaic applications. The new facility in Quapaw embodies proven state-of-the-art equipment and an advanced product tracking system.

“With Quapaw in addition to Olen, our total installed annual production capacity stands at 1 million germanium wafers (4” eq). With our two Ge wafer plants in Europe and the USA, we’re now in an excellent position to meet market demand for the foreseeable future,” says Carl Quaeyhaegens, General Manager of Umicore’s worldwide substrates business line.

Germanium wafers are a core component of triple junction (III-V) high-efficiency solar cells used on the vast majority of all satellites launched today. Triple junction (III-V) solar cells based on germanium wafers are also widely applied in terrestrial Concentrated PV systems (CPV), an emerging, highly promising, and ultimately lowest electricity cost technology of all PV technologies, for areas with high direct sunlight irradiation (DNI).



Picture : Side view of Umicore’s new facility for germanium wafers in Quapaw, OK, USA.



For more information

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Umicore profile

Umicore is a materials technology group. Its activities are centred on four business areas: Advanced Materials, Precious Metals Products and Catalysts, Precious Metals Services and Zinc Specialties. Each business area is divided into market-focused business units, be it in products that are essential to everyday life or those at the cutting edge of new technological developments.

Umicore focuses on application areas where it knows its expertise in materials science, chemistry and metallurgy can make a real difference. Umicore generates approximately 50 % of its revenues and spends approximately 80 % of its R&D budget in the area of clean technology, such as emission control catalysts, materials for rechargeable batteries and photovoltaics, fuel cells, and precious metals recycling. Umicore's overriding goal of sustainable value creation is based on this ambition to develop, produce and recycle materials in a way that fulfils its mission: materials for a better life.

The Umicore Group has industrial operations on all continents and serves a global customer base; it generated a turnover of € 6.9 billion (€ 1.7 billion excluding metal) in 2009 and currently employs some 13,700 people.