

## Bekaert expanding U.S. operations

Racing series **BUSINESS**

Date 2009-10-05

By David Reininger - Motorsport.com

Like everyone else, racing teams are trying to stretch their dollars.

Many teams and engine builders send certain high-performance parts out to have special coatings applied to them to decrease friction and make them last longer. Racing teams in Europe have used a Belgium-based company, Bekaert, for this for about 15 years. The company, which employs 23,000 worldwide, has been involved in American motorsports for about five years, and its presence in America is growing.

Founded in 1880, the company's advanced materials coatings business is a natural counterpart to another one of its core businesses - steel-cord products, which are used to reinforce one in every four tires in the world.

Prior to establishing a facility devoted to motorsports in Research Triangle Park, N.C., Bekaert focused its motorsports program on Formula One, supplying coatings to all but one team. When the Grand Prix circus began cutting costs by requiring engines to be used in more than one race, expanding to the United States to serve NASCAR's elite was a logical step for Bekaert.

While Bekaert has signed non-disclosure agreements with many of its customers, the secret is out. It's safe to say that many teams in NASCAR's premier division are using Bekaert's Diamond-Like Coatings (DLC). They are being employed by teams with in-house engine programs as well as teams that have their engines delivered to them.

Bekaert also works directly with engine component manufacturers to deliver high-quality coatings for the parts they use.

As the number one supplier of engine coatings in Formula One, rallying, DTM, Formula 3 and NASCAR, Bekaert is expanding its U.S. operations again. Originally opened to serve NASCAR, the North Carolina facility has expanded its machinery and its capacity, and the company is seeking new markets. It is especially interested in working with more drag racing teams, as well as teams that compete in smaller series. It says one of its goals is to allow smaller teams to tune their engines with the same technological innovations used by Formula One teams.

"We're focused on ensuring our technology is as cost-effective as possible so that teams of all sizes can get the best possible performance from their engines," said Mark Boghe, Bekaert's product market manager.

The folks at Bekaert are quick to point out that one of the best ways to survive the current economy is to make engine components last longer. Advanced coatings on pistons, cams and valves, making them resistant to wear, adds to their longevity. They're coating much larger parts too.

Making parts last longer makes good sense. Reducing friction increases performance.

Appealing to an engine builder's pocketbook is enticing.

Appealing to his competitiveness is exhilarating.