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Ideal Industries breaks ground on new facility

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Caption
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SYCAMORE – A new chapter of Ideal Industries started Thursday afternoon as several managers, contractors and architects kicked off the construction of a [new 220,000-square-foot facility](#).

David Juday, retired chairman of the board of Ideal and the grandson of J. Walter Becker, who founded the company in 1916, said the building located in the 235-acre Sycamore Prairie Business Park would replace some of the company’s aging facilities in DeKalb and Sycamore. It also will bring efficiency and provide opportunities for some of the company’s new products such as ratcheting wrenches and lighting control systems.

“It’s a family business,” Juday said. “When you sign up for a family business, you sign up for life, and that’s kind of where we are.”

At the groundbreaking ceremony, several stakeholders, local officials and company employees donned blue hard hats and posed for photos with shovels next to an open field where the facility will be built.

Becker founded the company in Chicago in 1916 and later moved operations to Sycamore. Since then, some of its key products have been electrical parts, Shkordoff said.

Juday said the building project is expected to cost \$18 million and will be finished by the end of the year. Initially, he said the company will only transfer operations and relocate employees from facilities in Sycamore and DeKalb.

“We fully expect to hire people over time,” he said. “This particularly won’t cause it. Some of the new products may very well. ... This reflects success of the business. The success of the business will lead to more employment.”

Nick Shkordoff, electrical group vice president for Ideal, said he hoped the new facility would allow for increased manufacturing opportunities and create more jobs.

“So we are going to use the 11 acres now, but we have a lot of land that we can expand it to,” he said. “We are really pumped about it, but again, I think the real thing is to get us out of the old facility and to provide a much better working environment for employees.”

About 85 percent of employees from the Sycamore facility and all of the employees from the DeKalb facility will be moved to the new building once its finished, Shkordoff said. A lot of the Sycamore facility will be then demolished, he added.

Rockford-based Cord Construction Company has already begun the construction process, said Craig Erdmier, president of Cord Construction.

“It’s state of the art, it’s tall, it’s got some manufacturing, it’s got some warehousing, it’s got an office in it,” he said of the new building. “It’s just unique, it’s not just a distribution center, it’s an office, manufacturing and distribution center.”

Sycamore Mayor Ken Mundy said the new facility would solidify the company’s campus and would help to boost the local economy.

“Just the jobs, the tax revenue, the goods and services provided, especially with the newer technology that they are going to be rolling out is very exciting, very promising,” he said. “I have a whole lot of hope for Sycamore and DeKalb County and the whole region.”

As Ideal prepares to celebrate 100 years since its founding by J. Walter Becker in 1916, Juday said it was neat have the facility to come to life.

“It’s not a culmination of anything, it’s just sort of a restatement,” Juday said. “And it’s another stake in the ground after nearly 100 years.”