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Pindell Engineering and H2Out filter: Jefferson County product could change the world

Product sucks water out of air, with many practical applications for hydraulic systems, biodiesel, drying wet computer equipment or cell phones

By Patrick J. Sullivan of the Leader

(This is a highlight story of what Rich Pindell and Pindell Engineering LLC intend to bring to Jefferson County in terms of jobs, and to the world in terms of a green product with practical applications. For the COMPLETE PACKAGE, see our Jan. 26 print edition or e-edition. Single copies of the e-edition are available.)

An invention born on the Port Townsend waterfront is well on its way around the world – and it means manufacturing jobs in Jefferson County.

There are 17 positions planned by the end of 2012, more depending on the success of the company today valued at \$1.75 million, even before it starts mass production.

It almost sounds too good to be true. But according to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and a slew of tests, it is true. Pindell Engineering of Port Townsend has a unique product that saves people money (commercial, recreational and military markets), protects the environment (conserves fuel, hydraulic fluid) and is renewable (a lifespan of years).

It is close to being the item that 6.8 million boats in America need to be legally licensed in 2012 under new Environmental Protection Agency laws.

"There is no product that does what we do," said Rich Pindell, 45, president and founder of Pindell Engineering. "It is a straw that sucks water out of the air."

H2Out (as in water-out) is an in-line filter that keeps air from reaching fuel or hydraulic fluid. It attacks water contamination, which corrodes and fouls motors and gears and increases maintenance costs.

The standard products and systems treat the contaminated fuel. But H2Out Systems filters are

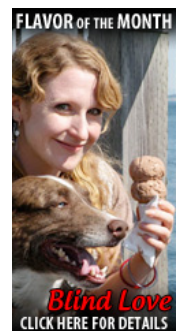
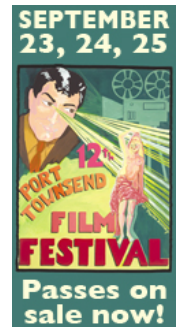
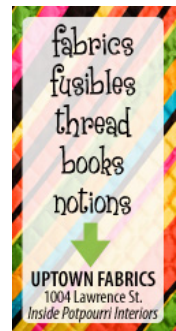


Pindell Engineering LCC is in the world marketplace now with three types of H2Out Systems filters that pull air out of fuel and fluid: a filter for hydraulic systems (left), a large in-line fuel filter and a small in-line filter. These are made in Jefferson County with components brought in from around the world. Photos by Patrick J. Sullivan



Rich Pindell, Port Townsend High School Class of 1983, has a patent-pending invention that could revolutionize how hydraulic fluid and fuel are stored. Pindell Engineering LLC's brain trust includes (from left) Steve Gadbow, Jim Warner, Chris Wood and Rich Pindell. The company manufactures an H2Out product line that could lead to 40 jobs in Jefferson County by 2013, Pindell said.

Visit company at open house Feb. 25



unique thanks to the use of desiccant (silica, a natural dryer) similar to that used in the NASA space program.

The ability to capture water molecules for later release makes the dryer renewable hundreds of times.

"Single-use products are my pet peeve," said Pindell. "This is something you can buy once and use over and over and over."

Manufacturing jobs

Rich Pindell wants his new H2Out Systems to generate manufacturing jobs in Jefferson County, the most elusive of local economic development goals.

Pindell Engineering LLC today has four full-time and one part-time employee, not counting Pindell himself. He expects to hire five more people in the next few months.

"If all goes well, it is quite likely we will need to pull in 40 to 50 employees by 2013," Pindell said, optimistic in the fledgling company's business plan to manufacture special filters and air dryers.

Pindell Engineering LCC hosts a public open house from 2 to 6 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 25 at their office, 40-D Seton Road just off State Route 20 outside Port Townsend. Community members are encouraged to check out the operations and see the H2Out Systems product line.

Attention: No job hunters (must be at least age 18) are sought until Feb. 25. The open house is the time to pick up job applications.

"We want to find people who will be compatible working together in a somewhat stressful environment," said Rich Pindell, company president.

The workplace is ADA compliant and some assembly line work is suitable for workers with disabilities. The company is in such a growth spurt, Pindell noted, that job descriptions are still evolving.

"I don't have any ready-made jobs," Pindell cautioned, ever the entrepreneur. "I have jobs for people who create a position for themselves that brings something to the company."

Time for a boost

"It's time for Port Townsend to have a boost," said Chris Wood, Pindell's president of global operations and a sailor who first came to Port Townsend in the late 1970s. "We haven't seen something boom here in a while."

Indeed, it is rare in Jefferson County for any business outside of the marine trades to create 40 or more jobs in just two years. "We're hiring as many people as we need to satisfy demand," Pindell said. And every day, it seems, the potential demand for H2Out products multiplies.

The Pindell Engineering jobs are mostly assembly line, working with plastic and aluminum components, tubing, screens, clamps, etc. The end result: H2Out filters and air dryers.

Production is being ramped to produce 10,000 filters by the end of February, and then to start making 100 of the aluminum-based hydraulic fluid dryers each week.

Pindell would like to start assembly line workers at more than minimum wage, "because I do not want minimum effort."

"It won't be a glory-filled job," Jim Warner, vice president of research and development, said of the assembly line work. "It is very labor intensive."

Warner is a master craftsman who said he can build everything from a custom home to a 300-foot high-speed stealth catamaran. He now has multiple uses for H2Out technology on the drawing boards, from aviation to heavy equipment to personal computers.

"Someone always has to do something first. Why can't it be us?" Warner said of Pindell Engineering's advancements.

The H2Out Systems products are available online at h2out.com. Locally, Sea Marine at Point Hudson stocks filters, and this spring Pindell hopes to have them at Henery Do It Best Hardware and West Marine.

Good location

Pindell, Wood and Warner do not think being in Port Townsend, near the end of the road and dependent on ferries and bridges, is a limiting location.

"We have low overhead, better air and more peace and quiet," Pindell said of locating a manufacturing business in Jefferson County.



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They have a friendly landlord, Joe Daubenger (the son of Pindell's sailing teacher from the 1970s), and intend to stay at their location at Seton Road and State Route 20 outside Port Townsend. Should time be of the essence for product expansion, "We've checked out all the available properties and there are a lot of options," Pindell noted.

Pindell wanted his product to have American-made components, but he found, with dismay, that nothing he needed is made in America. So Pindell and Wood made direct connections overseas to better guarantee product quality, at a reduced cost.

Those materials are trucked here, assembled into the finished products and trucked out. If production takes off as expected, containers could go by barge from here to be loaded in Port Angeles, Seattle or Vancouver, Pindell noted. Another production operation is being planned in Cambodia to serve the Australian and Asian markets.

"I want to make this company 'generationally' successful," Pindell said of what he hopes is a long-term presence in Jefferson County. "The expansion of our product line makes this possible."

Reader Comments

Posted: Monday, January 31, 2011

Article comment by: **Craig Durgan**

Good. I would like to see more of this. I would also like to see the BoCC and City COuncil get active on finding ways to help business rather than creating barriers like they are doing to Arrow Lumber.

Posted: Sunday, January 30, 2011

Article comment by: **John Hadlock**

Here is a company that this town needs to stand behind work with and help promote. with all of the boats, trucks, buses, ferries and generators the possibilities are never ending.

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