



ASK Chemicals Raises Prices for Cold-Box, No-Bake Binders

FA is an organic compound used to formulate resins that foundries use as binder chemicals, to form sand molds.

ASK Chemicals LLC cited a substantial shortage of several key raw materials for its recent increase in prices for its cold-box and no-bake binder systems. The price increases took effect June 1.

The company called the price increases “inevitable to allow ASK Chemicals and its affiliates to continue offering high-performance products and services.”

ASK Chemicals is one of the world's largest suppliers of foundry chemicals,

specifically sand binders, mold coatings, feeders, filters and release agents. It also supplies metallurgical products including inoculants, Mg-treatment and inoculation wires, and master alloys for iron casting.

The particular shortage prompting the price increases concerns furfuryl alcohol (FA), an organic compound that is used as a base for forming resins used by foundries as sand binders, for forming molds. According to ASK, stricter environmental regulations imposed on Chinese FA manufacturers have limited the global availability of the chemical.

Price increases also will affect ASK's supply of methylene diphenyldiisocyanate (MDI), a basic ingredient in mold curing agents. ASK indicated its “key suppliers for MDI” blame that shortage on technical issues in the production of the chemical.

In its announcement ASK did not indicate the specific range or duration for the increase in its prices. It stated it is undertaking “ongoing and strong efforts to optimize costs in order to offset these rapidly escalating raw material prices.”

Specialty Foundry Opens U.S. Branch



Sakae Casting, a Japanese company that specializes in precision casting of pipes and mold forms, recently opened a U.S. location in Idaho Falls, ID. There it intends to work with the University of Idaho, Idaho National Laboratory (INL), and firms involved in nuclear and advanced manufacturing, supporting their research capabilities and building a U.S. base for its capabilities.

With a headquarters in Tokyo, Sakae Casting has aluminum-alloy sand casting and copper-alloy diecasting capabilities. Its products include molds for forming automotive urethane sheet and seat upholstery.

The company also has a proprietary vacuum molding technology and a “pipe casting” process for forming solid aluminum parts with internal channels for stainless steel pipe.

“It is my mission to create job opportunities in Eastern Idaho to support their strong science, research and education sectors,” stated president and CEO Takashi

Suzuki. “Additional employment opportunities will be created as we expand our business by working with our Japanese partner Ohzen to connect Japanese services and technologies with U.S. markets.”

Ohzen is a precision machining specialist producing parts in cast iron, stainless steel, and specialty metals, used in ultra-high precision devices like 3D measurement equipment and the electron microscopes.

Sakae Casting's U.S. operation opened in early April.

Mahle expands footprint in China, opens new compressor plant



Germany's Mahle Group is expanding its presence in China, its fastest growing market. Last week, the company officially opened a new plant for automotive compressors in Changshu, China, aiming to strengthen its positioning in the climate

compressor business — a fast-growing market segment.

“With our new compressor plant in Changshu, we are further expanding our Mahle's presence in China, the market with the strongest growth opportunities,” said Wolf-Henning Scheider, chairman of the Mahle Management Board and CEO. “The new investment is evidence of our confidence in the future growth of the Changshu plant and the automotive compressor business as a whole,” added Dr. Jörg Stratmann, responsible for Thermal Management in the Mahle Management Board.

The new plant for automotive compressors in Changshu originates from an existing site in Suzhou. With the move to Changshu, Mahle's production capacity has doubled. Construction of the new plant started in August 2015.

Thus far, Mahle has invested around 24 million euros in production facilities at the location in the Changshu industrial park. It plans further investments for this site in the years to come. Currently, around 330 employees work at the plant. The number of employees is also expected to increase within the next years.

The Mahle Group's growth in China in the past six years has been quite impressive with a compounded annual growth rate of 21 percent, making China the fastest growing market for the company. Since 2011, the number of people employed by Mahle in China has also doubled. In 2016, there were over 7,800 employees in China.