

Dura-Line

Dura-Line has is a manufacturer and worldwide distributor of communication and energy infrastructure products and systems.

Headquarters	114000 Parkside Drive, Knoxville, Tennessee
Year Established	1971
NAICS	335930 - Wiring device manufacturing
Employees	80
Major Expansions	2016
Exports	US, Asia-Pacific, EU
Parent Company	Orbia
Other Locations	Manufacturing - Gravenhurst, Manufacturing - Temaskaming

Headquartered in Knoxville, Tennessee, Dura-Line established a Canadian manufacturing facility in Bracebridge, Ontario, through its acquisition of Gravenhurst Plastics Limited in 2016. Dura-Line has established an international reputation as a manufacturer and distributor of communication and energy infrastructure products and systems. The company’s products are designed to enable fast and safe installation of communication networks, power cables, and pressure pipes for a wide range of industries.

Dura-Line was founded in Middlesboro, Kentucky in 1971, and originally manufactured a simple water pipe for the water market. Over the next decade, the company began improving its water pipe manufacturing efficiency and expertise. During the early 1980s, a telecommunications company inquired about the possibility of designing a pipe through which a cable could be run. In response to this request, Dura-Line became the first manufacturer to develop a conduit that could be used for the installation and protection of fibre optic cables. Another innovative product, SILICOREä, drastically reduces the friction that occurs when cables are inserted into conduit. Dura-Line patented this process, thereby developing a reputation for innovation and becoming a major supplier to the telecommunications market. Since the 1980s, Dura-Line has continued to grow and expand internationally by consistently investing in research and development to create new products.

In addition to being the industry’s leading supplier of conduit, Dura-Line also specializes in the production of MicroDucts. After acquiring Gravenhurst Plastics, Dura-Line invested in an upgrade of the facility’s equipment, allowing it to manufacture its high-quality products locally. To be successful manufacturers of conduit, cable-in-conduit, and pipe, firms must meet the highest standards of product quality. The inside and outside diameter of the products must meet exact specifications in order to work and seal properly, so

scanners at the facility monitor and track all product specifications throughout production, triggering an alarm if measurements are even slightly off. The quality of raw materials used in production is also tested at the facility to ensure that all products are of superior quality.

All products manufactured at Dura-Line are sold to customers within Canada. Dura-Line's two major markets for products are data-communications and telecommunications; primarily selling to phone companies, municipalities, and cities.

Customers value Dura-Line's high-quality and unique products, as well as its exceptional customer service and open communication. One of the main reasons that Dura-Line acquired Gravenhurst Plastics was to further improve its customer service by establishing a local presence for its Canadian customers. Moreover, the company established a network field engineer team at Dura-Line, dedicated solely to providing training on installation techniques and network design.

Customers also value the option to utilize Dura-Line's test centre, which is a resource unique to the Canadian facility. In this area of the facility, customers can bring samples of their products to determine if they are compatible with any of Dura-Line's existing products, or if the company is capable of developing a new product that will fit their needs.

Dura-Line successfully retained 98 percent of Gravenhurst Plastics' employees after the acquisition by prioritizing effective communication and making sure everyone was apprised of all changes. Importantly, management still maintains this level of open communication, allowing employees to contribute input. Further, Dura-Line's managers believe that providing employees with opportunities for growth and skill development is a necessary and beneficial investment. All of the firm's technicians are trained in house, either in Canada or in the United States, and the production team is trained on-site at the Canadian facility.

Given that Dura-Line runs three eight-hour shifts a day, five days a week, attracting enough new employees has been a challenge. Yet, prior manufacturing experience is not required to work at Dura-Line Canada (outside of management roles); this allows the company to hire local individuals who are willing to be trained internally when the company is looking to expand its workforce.

Another key challenge that Dura-Line continues to address is the implementation of its strict safety standards across all departments. Given that 98 percent of current employees were previously employed at Gravenhurst Plastics, adjusting to Dura-Line's heightened safety regulations has been a long process for some of the long-tenured workers. However, all employees see the value and benefit of improving the facility's safety performance. Dura-Line is assisting employees with this transition by posting signage throughout the facility with safety rules, reminders, and regulations, and conducting regular internal and external safety workshops.

Over the past two years, Dura-Line has been able to establish a positive relationship with the municipal government in Gravenhurst. In addition to serving as a member of the Bracebridge Chamber of Commerce and being involved with municipal initiatives, Dura-Line strives to support its local community. Company management is currently developing a "Give Back" initiative to drive local support for the community. Dura-Line also demonstrates its desire to give back to the community by promoting and supporting all charitable employee initiatives.

Dura-Line has achieved substantial growth since its acquisition of Gravenhurst Plastics. The firm plans to continue expanding its product portfolio by soliciting feedback from customers. This commitment to

customer service and innovation will help satisfy existing customers by creating products that address their needs, as well as attract new customers with new product development. Dura-Line is capable of providing for a diverse range of industries, and makes a deliberate effort to reach out and establish relationships with customers in industries that it has not yet serviced.

Rather than continuing to sell products to Canadian customers from the United States, Dura-Line began manufacturing products within Canada because it was confident in the country's manufacturing capabilities. By consistently reinvesting in new technology and using data analytics to track various performance metrics, the company will be able to further improve its manufacturing efficiency and product quality; doing so will help Dura-Line achieve its long-term goal of expanding sales from its Canadian manufacturing facility into western Canada.