

HOSIERY TECHNOLOGY CENTER.NEWS



TESTING 2004 Testing Assignments Doubled Previous Year

By the end of October, the laboratories at the Hosiery Technology Center had doubled the volume of tests completed in 2003, according to records at the center.

Quick turnarounds and attention to detail has made the testing laboratory the top choice of retailers, manufacturers and brand companies seeking to upgrade their hosiery products.

The testing center has observed a trend toward verification of content and color fastness, with more requests for moisture control tests. The goal of the center in 2005 is to acquire sophisticated equipment for high-performance testing in areas of thermal transport and anti-microbial.

Since the N.C. General Assembly authorized the center to retain fees, the testing programs are self-supporting.

EDUCATION/OUTREACH

March Dates Announced For Hosiery 101, 102

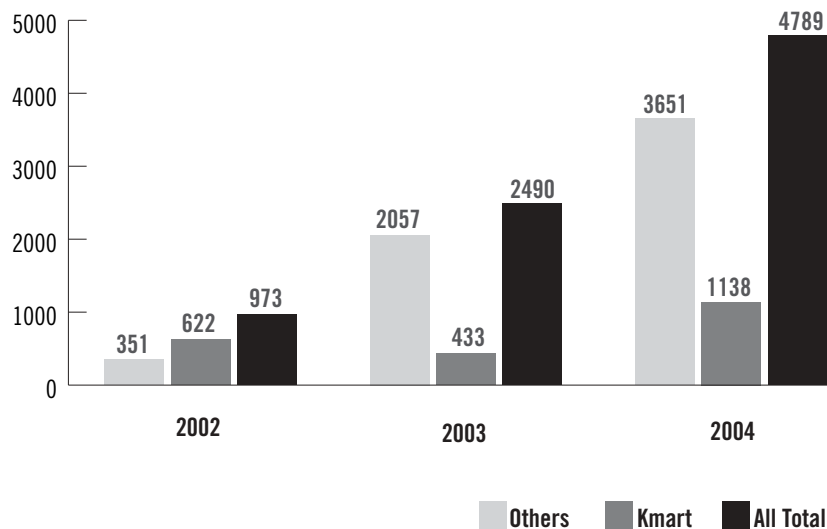
The first 2005 session for Hosiery 101 will be held March 16, followed by the advanced Hosiery 102 class on March 17. Both sessions will be held at the Hosiery Technology Center operations on the campus of Catawba Valley Community College in Hickory, N.C.

The last sessions on December 8 and 9 attracted a maximum attendance of retailers and manufacturers from across the United States. A trend is the registration of people planning to start-up hosiery manufacturing.

The HTC expects the 2005 outreach program to include more in-plant training sessions on lean manufacturing and supply chain strategies.



Number of Tests Invoiced for the HTC Testing Lab-Yearly (Through October 2004)





R&D Development Of Products For Diversity Goes Forward

At any given time, the staff of the Hosiery Technology Center of North Carolina is working on development of new products that could offer opportunities for manufacturers.

Ideas accepted by the center for research and development range from new ways of applying embroidery to renewable yarn prototyping. Some 10 to 12 requests are directed to the HTC every month – from craftsmen across the country, manufacturers and sophisticated yarn producers.

The work of the center has enabled some companies to find pay dirt, according to manager Dan St. Louis. It doesn't even have to be a hosiery article. Even non-hosiery products have resulted in big sales for some hosiery manufacturers.

TRAINING

The past year had Rick Small, the Hosiery Technology Center's head instructor, traveling all over North Carolina as well as out of state teaching classes. Training has always been utilized by the larger mills, but in 2004 a developing trend was seeing the smaller mills taking advantage of the customized classes.

"Companies are operating very lean and will become leaner in the future," according to Small. "This doesn't necessarily mean companies have new equipment but they are becoming more efficient and effective in the operation of machinery they do have. Companies of all sizes are trying to get the competitive edge."

Looking ahead to 2005, Small sees companies taking a hard look at the difficult task of finding and attracting experienced employees. He sees more and more companies looking to the Center for ways to train employees quicker and "get them from point zero to ready to run a line."

Instead of the basic ground level training, classes in 2005 and beyond will see the request for more specialization as the companies expect their employees to attain more technical knowledge on their equipment. The future for training will see the HTC branching into other areas as the diversification continues.

MARKETING Made-In-America Catalogue Involves HTC-SEAMS Apparel

Any hosiery manufacturer willing to fill small orders – two or three dozen pairs – could find strong marketing support from a catalogue being developed by SEAMS Apparel, a South Carolina-based organization now working with manufacturers nationwide in the development of a "Made In The USA" catalogue.

The N.C. Hosiery Technology Center is working with SEAMS to identify and help hosiery manufacturers who are willing to participate and ship small orders to independent, family-owned retailers. Interested companies should contact Dan St. Louis, manager of the HTC.

The marketing services of the center more recently have involved helping hosiery companies include credit-card capabilities on their websites. More mills are selling direct to consumers through the internet, it is reported.

A growing marketing service is the matching of manufacturers to government agencies purchasing hosiery products. Dean at the HTC Randolph Community College operations monitors government purchasing bids and helps companies register to do business with state and federal procurement agencies.