

New plant will help AeonClad deliver novel nanotech coatings

CHRISTOPHER CALNAN

CCALNAN@BIZJOURNALS.COM | (512) 494-2524

Nanotechnology company AeonClad Coatings LLC has expanded with a new laboratory in North Austin that will test high-tech coatings that promise to make products from electronics to automobiles run smoother or last longer.

The Austin-based company's new 12,000-square-foot production laboratory off Dessau Road, which will be staffed by 12 workers, gives AeonClad the bridge it needs between development and a full-scale production capacity in New Mexico, President Tony Taylor said.

"It's a pilot facility to create initial runs of the material for product launches," he said. "It's pivotal, in that it will enable AeonClad to supply customers with materials for initial market launches and also provide data for additional scale-up design."

AeonClad Coatings, which was founded about five years ago by Richard Timmons and researchers at the University of Texas in Arlington, employs about 20 workers in Austin. The company provides nanocoatings to a range of industries, but workers in North Austin are specializing in consumer and industrial materials, executives said.

Taylor said the first mainstream product using AeonClad's approach will be "readily visible" next month, but he declined to disclose more details.

Nanocoatings and nanoadhesives are used in a variety of applications that include medical and health care, electronics, energy and transportation. The market for nanotechnology in coatings and adhesives is projected to rise from \$3.7 billion in 2010



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AeonClad President Tony Taylor (left) and Emergent Technologies Inc. CEO Thomas Harlan are excited about the many applications for their high-tech coating.

to nearly \$19.2 billion in 2015, according to Massachusetts-based BCC Research LLC.

AeonClad Coatings is a portfolio company of Emergent Technologies Inc., an Austin life sciences venture firm founded in 1989. In 2007, ETI closed its \$27 million Fund IV dedicated to the University of Texas System.

Companies financed by the fund include Mimetic Solutions LLC and Beacon Sciences LLC. ETI reports more than \$85 million in investment funds under its management and 15 companies in its portfolio.

Emergent CEO Thomas Harlan said the firm's business model depends on linking with industry partners to develop the best

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uses for the technology developed at UT. Proving the technology on a smaller scale at the new facility is expected to remove some of the risk associated with investing in such new technology, he said.

In 2009, AeonClad Coatings — which doesn't release financial details — launched AeonClad Biomedical LLC, a division focused on biomedical applications. The division was formed to utilize the company's AeonCoat dry coating technology to coat and encapsulate drugs or active pharmaceutical ingredients. The product is designed to enable custom-made coatings for improved dissolution of poorly water soluble drugs, as well as modified or sustained release, company officials said.

But the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval is much slower than the time needed to produce for the material sciences. As a result, AeonClad's technology is ready to be used as a flame retardant or to waterproof materials, Taylor said.

"The verticals are about endless," he said. "If it's a solid material, we can coat it."