

Khol Co. lands in Great Plains

Company moves about 5 million tons of silica sand a year

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The Great Plains Industrial Park has welcomed another new tenant, the Khol Co. Khol Co. owner Tom Barber said the company mines for silica sand in Mankato, Minnesota.

It is a full logistical company that can do last mile solutions as well as provide quality sand for oil and gas, railroad, foundry and glass interests. The company moves about 5 million tons of silica sand a year.

Silica sand is quartz that has been broken down into tiny particles overtime. It's also called industrial sand, and it has high purity and its size is controlled to provide a precise product to meet specific customer needs.

The mine has been around for years and the company was supplying sand for fracking operations for a long period then diversified and wanted to build a solid point of sand for the foundries.

"It was a bigger animal than what we thought because a lot of the small size foundries don't have direct ship. They've got to truck it in 15 hours. Or sometimes it takes 7 to 10 days to get sand," Barber said. "So, what I did is I kind of built a niche market, and I control the market all the way to their doorstep. I handle the transload. I handle the pneumatics. I handle the rail U.P., as well as mining to give them a consistent sand they can use for finishing molds for whatever kind of parts they are trying to metal for.

"I have a tier one sand you can't get everywhere in the United States. With the purity of the sand and the crush value (ADD) on it, it's a higher quality sand that gives a better finish to people who are making things like John Deere engine blocks."

Barber said this division, which is the Khol Co., was established about a year ago for its transloading side.

They have one transloading facility in Pryor, Oklahoma, but were led by demand to establishing another transloading facility in Parsons.

"Oklahoma and Kansas they haven't seen anybody here to take care of them on the sand or logistics side in probably 10 years. So me coming here, I started working with guys like American Casting, and Star Pipe and Metal Dynamics, and built up. I started looking at their issues and what they wanted and built pre-product sand that is pretty diverse with all the casting companies. Right now I'm probably holding an arsenal of about 28 foundries that we either direct ship or deliver to them via truck," Barber said.

The Khol Co. has positioned itself to be one of the leading transloading facilities in the United States. With the Great Plains Industrial Park's access to the Union Pacific rail system and high priority highway corridors, Khol may be in a prime location for industries seeking those resources in their backyard.

Barber said he only anticipates their business growing in this area when the oil and gas market comes back in Kansas and Oklahoma, as sand is a commodity in fracking. Sand for 3-D printing holds growth potential, too.

Great Plains Industrial Park Director Brad Reams said the Khol Co. has located in the 1600 area. They already have rail cars on location, have worked with the Union Pacific and have loaded out of the facility here.

“We were on deadline. We had less than 10 days to make this happen with Parsons. It was going to take eight days for rail cars to get here and then transload with the U.P.,” he said.

Barber said they will also use the facilities in Parsons for storage.

“We also have some larger equipment that from time to time, if there’s jobs up north, or we have a J.D. with another company, that they’ll store there and be able to ship out via rail,” Barber said.

The transloading facility here will employ about five or six people. Barber said he is looking for a local CDL driver.