

## Ramapo:

**Glass and window industry supplier moves distribution operation to Charleston and manufacturing may follow.**

**By Shelia Watson**

According to company officials, the Port of Charleston was a key factor in Ramapo's decision to relocate its headquarters from Fairfield, N.J., and create a distribution hub in the Charleston area.

"One of our main suppliers is located in Italy, so we rely on a productive and efficient seaport," says General Manager Jason Douglas.

"This port offers everything we need in terms of freight handling and logistics support."

Founded in 1979, Ramapo Sales & Marketing launched its national sales effort seven years ago and has quickly expanded across the United States. The company currently has warehousing and distribution points in Atlanta, Dallas, San Francisco and New Jersey. In addition to the new Charleston distribution center, Ramapo plans to add additional distribution points in other key markets over the coming years. The company anticipates a significant growth in sales this year due to greater market penetration.

The company manufactures machinery and distributes a wide line of I.G. components, hardware, sealants, desiccants and machinery parts for the glass and window industry and also imports supplies for that industry.

The company does most of its manufacturing in New Jersey, but Douglas said that it hopes to phase in manufacturing here.

Ramapo has moved its operations to Goer Drive in North Charleston, bringing seven employees from the New Jersey office, and the company expects to create up to 15 new jobs over the next five years.

Douglas notes that the company considered a number of other East Coast locations for this relocation, including Savannah.

"We ultimately selected the Charleston area because the quality of life here is unbeatable," he says.

Exactly how does the quality of life in the Lowcountry differ from

Ramapo does not operate its own trucks to move products in and out of its distribution facility. Instead, the company relies on trucking companies.

"ABX Logistics we've found to be very fast," Douglas says. "And others as well for our freight, such as Old Dominion Freight, Yellow Transportation. They've all performed extremely well."

According to Douglas, a service center has been opened in Clifton, N.J., so service to customers in the Northeast will not be disrupted.

"Moving was necessitated by a tremendous expansion in our customer base," Douglas says. "This precipitated a need to increase the number of our distribution points. Charleston was chosen for our headquarters because it is a major commercial city, offering superior land transportation and seaport support."

The company's North Charleston facility has more than 25,000 square feet of warehouse space, and will eventually include manufacturing a full inventory of window and insulating glass supplies. The company's total warehouse space among all its facilities is approximately 75,000 square feet.

"Several of our suppliers are European firms, so an efficient seaport city is necessary to meet the ever-growing demands of our U.S. customers," Douglas says. "The port in New York I had no problems with. But we did a lot of research on the Port of Charleston, looking at everything from software to mechanics, and the efficiency of Charleston's port was certainly noted. It seems to be a particularly well-run port."

Douglas says the company expects to start manufacturing here within two to three years. Ramapo currently is doing light processing in the Charleston facility.

Ramapo's primary market is the window manufacturing industry, with about 95 percent of sales going to domestic markets. Most of the company's export sales are in Canada and Mexico.

Asked about the company's anticipated growth over the next several years, Douglas notes that, "a lot of market factors that go into the equation. I can say that the average growth over the past five years has shown an increase of about 25 percent per year. And this year's growth is very strong."



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that in the Northeast?

"The pace is definitely slower," Douglas notes, "but that's mostly a personal leisure thing. In terms of doing business, I have found the companies we're working with here to be fast and efficient. And the service is very good—absolutely equal to anything we've experienced in the Northeast."

