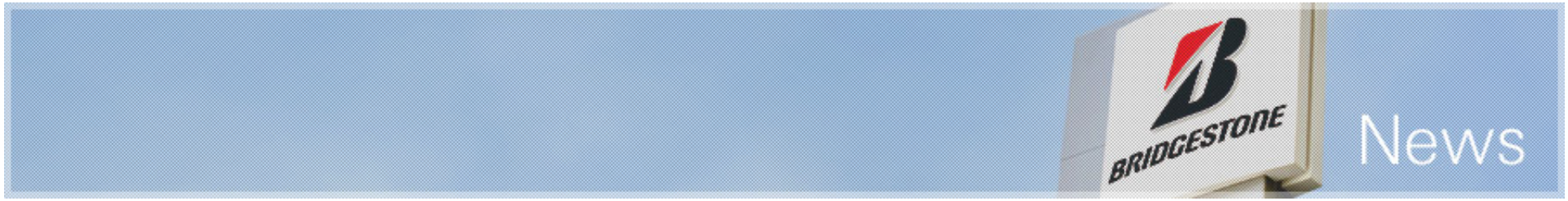
BRIDGESTONE
Your Journey, Our Passion



News

Bridgestone Begins Producing Natural Rubber in Mesa, Arizona

Company, community and local government leaders celebrate grand opening of first Biorubber Process Research Center

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (Sept. 22, 2014) – Bridgestone Americas, Inc. (BSA) is one step closer to its long-term environmental goal of developing a new, domestic and commercially-viable source for natural rubber. BSA, a subsidiary of the world's largest tire and rubber manufacturer, Bridgestone Corporation, today announced the grand opening of its Biorubber Process Research Center in Mesa, Arizona.* The 10-acre research and innovation campus is the center of Bridgestone's efforts to extract natural rubber from guayule, a shrub native to the southwestern U.S.

At a ribbon cutting celebration this morning, Bridgestone said it expects to have preliminary guayule rubber samples produced at the Biorubber Process Research Center within the next month. Guayule rubber has qualities almost identical to those of natural rubber harvested from hevea rubber trees, making it a potentially valuable source for tire-grade rubber in commercial applications. Currently, more than 90 percent of the world's natural rubber supply comes from hevea rubber trees grown in southeast Asia.

Philosophy
Diversity Statement
Human Rights Stance
Who We Are
Supplier Diversity
Executive Bios
History
Social Media
News
2014
2013
2012
2011
2010
2009

2008
2007
2006
2005

“The opening of the Bridgestone Biorubber Process Research Center is a significant milestone in Bridgestone’s journey to develop a new and domestic source of natural rubber,” said Bill Niaura, Director of New Business Development, Bridgestone Americas, Inc. “Through this innovation project and others like it, Bridgestone is positioning itself to meet the constant, anticipated growth in demand for natural rubber, while also moving closer to achieving its long-term vision of manufacturing products from raw materials that are fully renewable and sustainable by 2050.”

Home to more than 30 researchers and technicians, the Biorubber Process Research Center site includes an 8,300-square-foot single-story office and laboratory building; a four-platform, 3,500-square-foot shrub prep building; a 5,500-square-foot, two-level process building for rubber extraction, co-product and solvent recycling; and a 3,100-square-foot mechanical and electrical building. The center was designed by Wadsworth, Ohio-based architectural firm, Louis Perry and Associates and was built with advanced materials from Bridgestone subsidiary, Firestone Building Products, which contribute to energy efficiency.

“It’s phenomenal to see innovation projects like Bridgestone’s Biorubber Process Research Center finding their home here in Mesa,” said John Giles, Mayor of Mesa. “We hope this is the beginning of an entire industry taking root that will provide jobs and opportunities for our community.”

“Southeast Mesa has become a hub for science, technology, engineering and mathematics-related businesses,” said Mesa’s District 6 Councilmember Scott Somers. ”Bridgestone in Mesa brings high-tech, high-wage jobs to the district, raises the profile of the entire area and helps get Mesa closer to the goal of 100,000 high-paying jobs.”

Bridgestone will supply the Biorubber Process Research Center with biomass for rubber production from guayule grown on its 281-acre Agro Operations Research Farm in nearby Eloy, Ariz. The Agro Operations site includes two greenhouses, an equipment storage building and a main research and laboratory building. Bridgestone employs a team of scientists at the farm who research the genetic improvement of guayule, optimizing agronomic practices for growing the crop and supplying biomass for the Biorubber Process Research Center.

Guayule rubber produced at the Biorubber Process Research Center will be sent to Bridgestone’s technical centers in both Akron, Ohio and Tokyo, Japan. At those facilities, engineers will work to optimize rubber performance within Bridgestone’s product line and explore the full potential for next-generation tires.

**This project is executed by Bridgestone Americas Tire Operations, LLC, a BSA subsidiary, in collaboration with Bridgestone Corporation. Bridgestone Corporation is providing the funding and strategic insights for the project, while the Bridgestone Americas team is responsible for operating the pilot farm and process research facility.*

About Bridgestone Corporation:
Bridgestone Corporation (BSJ), headquartered in Tokyo, is the world's largest tire and rubber company. In addition to tires for use in a wide variety of applications, it also manufactures a broad range of diversified products, which include industrial rubber and chemical products and sporting goods. Its products are sold in over 150 nations and territories around the world.

About Bridgestone Americas, Inc.:
Nashville, Tenn.-based Bridgestone Americas, Inc. (BSAM) is the U.S. subsidiary of Bridgestone Corporation, the world's largest tire and rubber company. BSAM and its subsidiaries develop, manufacture and market a wide range of Bridgestone, Firestone and associate brand tires to address the needs of a broad range of customers, including consumers, automotive and commercial vehicle original equipment manufacturers, and those in the agricultural, forestry and mining industries. The companies are also engaged in retreading operations throughout the Western Hemisphere and produce air springs, roofing materials, and industrial fibers and textiles. The BSAM family of companies also operates the world's largest chain of automotive tire and service centers. Guided by its One Team, One Planet message, the company is dedicated to achieving a positive environmental impact in all of the communities it calls home.

About Bridgestone Americas Tire Operations:
Nashville, Tenn.-based Bridgestone Americas Tire Operations (BATO) is a business unit of Bridgestone Americas, Inc., whose parent company, Bridgestone Corporation, is the world's largest tire and rubber company. Reporting into the BATO business unit are the company's Latin American tire operations; the U.S. and Canadian consumer tire businesses; the U.S. and Canadian commercial tire businesses; and Bridgestone Retail Operations, LLC, which operates the largest network of company-owned automotive service providers in the world. BATO develops, manufactures and markets Bridgestone, Firestone and associate brand tires. The business unit is focused on retail, wholesale and original equipment markets, supplying passenger, light truck, commercial vehicle, off road, motorcycle, agricultural and other tires, as well as retreads, to its customers in the Americas.