

Firm makes testing limits its business



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Cincinnati Testing Laboratories' Paul Braun (left) and John P. Kahles look over plans.

Lab shaking up things with its coming move

By Mike Boyer

mboyer@enquirer.com

FOREST PARK - The folks at Cincinnati Testing Laboratories (CTL) Inc. at 417 Northland Blvd. like to bend, twist, shake and stretch things until they break.

It's not that they're destructive. It's their business.

"Companies have a natural need to understand the mechanical properties of the materials they use," said John Kahles, president of Metcut Research Inc. in Oakley, the employee-owned metals testing lab that acquired CTL in 1998.

Although not widely known in Cincinnati, Metcut, which employs about 100 at its labs on Rosslyn Drive as well as CTL's 50 employees, is considered the world's largest independent materials engineering and testing labs. Metcut also has a small satellite lab in France.

The company draws manufacturing clients from 26 different countries. Its customer list includes military and government agencies such as NASA and corporations such as General Electric, Pratt & Whitney, Boeing, Airbus and their suppliers.

With revenues approaching \$20 million annually, Metcut, which specializes in metals testing, and CTL, which focuses on non-metals such



as plastics and composites, have traditionally had a heavy concentration of aerospace customers, but Kahles said the company has been expanding its customer base to include more automotive, industrial and bio-medical clients.

"We're in the business of helping companies make their products better and safer," Paul Bran, CTL vice president, said.

CTL's employees are about to get a lot more room to practice their destructive ways. The company will break ground March 21 on a new \$4 million building on about 7 acres in the Carillon Business Center, the business park being developed by Union Central Life Insurance on the property behind its headquar-

ters off Waycross and Mill roads in Forest Park.

The 43,000-square-foot building is about 75 percent larger than the 25,000 square feet of leased space CTL now occupies spread over three buildings.

Kahles said the company, whose lease on the CTL space expires next year, spent a lot of time looking at buying a building versus constructing a new one in both Ohio and Kentucky before deciding to stay close to its existing location in Forest Park.

The new site "is convenient to I-275 and Winton Road, and it will mean minimal relocation for our employees," Kahles said. Metcut received an eight-year, 75 percent tax abatement from Hamilton County for the relocation.

The expansion will free up room at Metcut because a couple of its labs will be relocated to CTL's new building. The new building, to be built by Unit Buildings Services, should be completed by fall, but CTL won't be fully moved until next spring.

The company has an array of sophisticated measuring and testing equipment as well as machine tools to prepare testing specimens weighing up to 2,500 pounds. Kahles said moving the company's equipment will cost about \$2 million.