

Portacool Rebuilds After Devastating Fire, Invests in Plastics Production Facility

Just two years after a catastrophic fire destroyed its main manufacturing plant, Portacool breaks ground on a new state-of-the-art Plastics Production Facility.

CENTER, TX, UNITED STATES, April 17, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On the scorching afternoon of June 17, 2023, the first call crackled over the Center Fire Department's radio: [Portacool's](#) manufacturing facility was ablaze. Within minutes, columns of black smoke towered over the north side of Center, marking the start of a harrowing battle that would last more than 16 hours. Local firefighters - assisted by units from seven nearby communities - united to contain the inferno, protecting nearby buildings and homes from the encroaching flames.



On June 17, 2023, fire claimed Portacool's 300,000-square-foot production facility and the ability to make Portacool's unique housings - which had helped sustain more than 400 local jobs.

From a distance, stunned Portacool employees and neighbors watched as firefighters tirelessly fought the blaze. Fortunately, the plant was empty that Saturday afternoon, and no injuries were reported. Yet the damage was immense: Portacool's main production building, once a hub of their rotational molding capabilities, was reduced to ashes. In a single day, Portacool lost one of its greatest assets: its 300,000-square-foot production facility and the ability to make Portacool's unique housings, which had helped sustain more than 400 local jobs.

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Ben Wulf, CEO of Portacool

A Determined Comeback

News of the catastrophe reverberated throughout Shelby County. After 30 years of history, many wondered if Portacool's future had gone up in smoke. In the immediate aftermath, company leaders pledged to safeguard their team and community, promising additional updates once the

ashes settled. Yet behind the scenes, the situation was anything but certain. Faced with mounting questions from customers and employees alike, Portacool's leadership worked around the clock to reconfigure complex operations. It was a massive undertaking that demanded unwavering commitment from every level of the organization. By rising to the challenge, Portacool preserved the trust it had earned over three decades and laid the foundation for a remarkable recovery.

By June 2024, Portacool had already made remarkable progress.

"While we watched thirty years of history go up in flames," said Ben Wulf, CEO of Portacool, "we also witnessed the beginning of the new Portacool. We moved with tremendous speed and precision, making decisions without hesitation or fear of failure."

With that determination and creative problem-solving, the company had reorganized existing facilities, launched a new product line, outsourced certain processes and ensured orders continued to ship. Yet the core of Portacool's operations - rotational molding of plastic housings - remained missing, prompting the search for a permanent solution.

Decision to Rebuild

Before any final decisions were made, the company spent months charting a clear path forward. Drawing on nearly 100 combined years of management experience in plastics rotational molding, Portacool ultimately moved forward with an ambitious plan to build a 75,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art Plastics Production Facility on its primary campus in Center, replacing the original building destroyed by the fire.

Developed with crucial support from CEDCO, the City of Center, and Shelby County, this new facility demonstrates the power of public-private partnerships. Local entities aided in streamlining permitting and securing job-creation incentives, paving the way for Portacool's return to in-house rotational molding and reinforcing the company's commitment to the local community.

The Groundbreaking

Portacool formally launched construction of the new facility at its groundbreaking event on April 16, 2025. Designed to bring every step of production - from powder dosing to demolding - under one roof, Portacool will improve product quality, innovation, and on-time delivery. The company also plans to create 35 new full-time jobs and retain an additional 15, reinforcing its commitment to the local economy.

In addition to the new plastic molding facility, Portacool is also investing in a new 40,000-square-foot assembly and operational support building, upgrading stormwater drainage systems, and reorganizing campus operations to increase efficiency. Once this project is completed, the

expanded campus will position Portacool as the largest rotational molder in Texas, cementing its role as the world's leading provider of [portable evaporative coolers](#).

Building a Stronger Future

Now, nearly two years after the fire, Portacool stands prepared for a bright future. The new rotational molding facility not only represents technical innovation, but also the unwavering spirit that carried the company - and the community - through adversity. While a fire can destroy brick and mortar, it cannot extinguish the determination of those who refuse to give in. With construction slated for completion by spring 2026, a revitalized Portacool continues to stand as a proud, enduring pillar of the City of Center and Shelby County, Texas.

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