

Opportunities in the Air

Air Liquide Korea, a provider of gases for industry, health and the environment, has experienced consistent growth



In its 17 years, Air Liquide Korea (ALK) has established multiple production plants on 12 sites in Korea. As numbers go, that's pretty impressive. Then again, considering the founders of Air Liquide invented the air-separation process at the turn of the 20th century, it's no surprise their successors are still innovating worldwide today.

ALK, part of Air Liquide Group, a world leader in the manufacture of industrial gases, was established in Korea in 1996. The France-based Air Liquide was drawn to the growth potential of Korea's industries and made its first investment in Gumi, to supply products to a local electronics manufacturing company. ALK has since invested in new facilities every year, with its flagship plants being in Dangjin and Yeosu.

The company recorded sales of KRW 438 billion (USD 383 million) in 2012. Their largest customers are in the electronics, chemicals and steel markets, three of Korea's largest and fastest-growing.

"If you can think of an industry in Korea or anywhere globally, chances are you're going to find at least one of our products is used to support those industries," said Christopher Clark, President and Representative Director of ALK. "So there are very diverse applications for our products."

In the last couple years, ALK has seen significant new developments. The company last year opened its first research facility in Korea. Located on the Yonsei University campus, the center will focus on the development of advanced precursors (innovative molecules used in the manufacture of semiconductors)

Christopher Clark,
President and
Representative
Director of Air
Liquide Korea



for the electronics market. New production facilities are also slated for startup in 2013.

At its Dangjin plant, ALK supplies gaseous products to an adjacent major steel company customer and also makes liquid oxygen, liquid nitrogen and liquid argon. These liquid gases are distributed to customers ranging from the medical and pharmaceutical to construction industries.

At its Yeosu facility, ALK makes and supplies hydrogen, carbon monoxide and steam for various industries in a local industrial complex. The company constructed pipelines for these gases that run throughout the Yeosu basin.

"The fact is, the products that we make, with few exceptions, really don't travel very far. We can't make our products let's say, in China, and ship them to Korea for steel or petrochemical companies to use. We generally have to build the plant near the customer site," said Clark.

Major customers for ALK include BASF Korea, KPX Fine Chemical, Samsung, SK Hynix, LG Chem, GS Caltex, Kumho Mitsui Chemicals, Dongbu Steel and YK Steel.

Through an affiliate called Vitalaire Korea, Air Liquide also provides respiratory care products and services to more than 3,000 patients in the home healthcare market. This service is particularly important considering Korea's rapidly aging population.

By providing a reliable supply of gases and diverse services, ALK has helped customers enhance their competitiveness in the global market, said the president. Of course, the company has also helped create jobs in Korea, especially for engineers.

"We still see a lot of dynamic growth in Korea, and we're very pleased to be able to help our customers in Korea develop, because when our customers grow, we expand with them," said Clark.

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Did you know?



- Air Liquide Korea has factories in 12 cities: Bucheon, Icheon, Cheonan, Dangjin, Sangju, Gimcheon, Gumi, Busan, Gunsan, Iksan, Jeonju and Yeosu.
- Air Liquide Group posted €15.3 billion (USD 19.7 billion) in revenue in 2012.
- Air Liquide Group has 50,000 employees in 80 countries.