



nerej

Electric Boat: A cornerstone of Quonset Business Park

June 12, 2008 - Rhode Island

The Electric Boat Corp., one of the Quonset Business Park's cornerstone residents has seen significant growth in the last three years taking full advantage of the park's blend of waterfront, rail and robust infrastructure improvement. Expressing confidence in its ability to work with the Quonset Development Corp. (QDC) and in the capability of its Quonset facility, Electric Boat has invested millions of dollars at the business park.

With the recent approval of congress to begin producing two Virginia class submarines each year, and the issuance of over \$500 million in early procurement funds, Quonset is poised to play a key role in Electric Boat's growth.

Although the defense contractor has been at Quonset since November of 1973, it only recently began shifting more of its manufacturing work to the Rhode Island facility. And now, according to Electric Boat, much of the early work on the subs is being done at Quonset before they leave for final assembly in either Groton, Conn. or Newport News, Virginia. The shift started three years ago, and coincided with QDC's infrastructure improvement program that included road construction and improvement, rail upgrades, building demolition and waterfront improvements. For its part, Electric Boat invested over \$30 million in improvements to expand and create efficiencies in its submarine construction process at the business park.

Those investments included a new manufacturing facility at Quonset that gives the submarine manufacturer the ability to make major submarine components on site using design data transmitted from Groton directly to digital machines at Quonset. Electric Boat also chose Quonset as its site to implement unique fabrication capabilities allowing it to produce submarine hull cylinders up to 42 feet in diameter. The completed submarine hull cylinders are outfitted with tanks, propulsion and auxiliary machinery before being barged from Quonset to Connecticut or Virginia for completion. Now, according to EB, work that takes an hour to finish at Quonset would take three hours at Groton, or eight hours once the boat is in the water.

At the dedication of Electric Boat's new facility and one of the largest capacity sheet metal storage facilities in the United States, governor Carcieri said, "This new facility will further enhance Rhode Island's defense industry. With its high-tech capabilities, it is paving the way for us to be home to the best sheet metal shop in the United States and it is enabling employees to have the latest skills."

With contracts for submarine maintenance and repair, design and modernization, and production and engineering in place, Electric Boat is gearing up at Quonset. Last year the defense contractor added 300 jobs to its work force, for a total of 2,200 employees at Quonset. Electric Boat had been building one Virginia-class attack submarine a year, but Congress accelerated that schedule to two a year in 2012, then pushed that up to 2011, and now is considering moving it up again to 2010. Already the 2008 Defense Appropriations bill includes \$588 million for advanced procurement of additional equipment and material for the second Virginia class submarine and \$7 million of that will

be used for labor costs at Quonset Point with the expectation that the workload will continue to increase significantly in future years.

In April 2007 Electric Boat celebrated its firm tradition of submarine building at Quonset as it marked the official keel laying for the New Hampshire- the fifth Virginia-class submarine. Electric Boat's confidence in its Quonset facility and its investments here, meant the sub was finished a year ahead of schedule. We look forward to Electric Boat's continued expansion and success. Its decision to invest in Quonset pays tribute to our state's strong work force and acknowledges the quality of the Business Park.

Steven King, P.E., is the chief operating officer for Quonset Development Corp., North Kingstown, R.I.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540