

New digs at Marinette Marine cap \$74M upgrade

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Marinette Marine Corporation finishes \$74 million ...: Marinette Marine Corporation celebrates the completion of \$74 million in renovations to their shipbuilding facilities on Monday.



MARINETTE —The clank of steel on steel resumed shortly after the speeches faded as workers returned to the task of building structures for one of the U.S. Navy's future Littoral Combat Ships.

Marinette Marine Corp. and area officials on Monday celebrated the completion of a \$74 million investment at the shipyard with the dedication of a 29,000-square-foot building. The upgrades are aimed at streamlining production and increasing efficiencies.

Marinette Marine Corporation President and CEO Chuck Goddard speaks during the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Grand Module Construction Building, Monday, May 20, 2013. H. Marc Larson/Press-Gazette Media

The building, the Grand Module Construction building, is one of the yard's five newly built or expanded facilities since 2010. Its completion marks the end of the improvement project.



Marquette Marine Corporation holds a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Grand Module Construction Building, Monday, May 20, 2013. H. Marc Larson/Press-Gazette Media

Many of the changes at Marinette —nine buildings were razed to make way for the new construction —were made to support the U.S. Navy’s Littoral Combat Ship program.

“This allows us to build the two LCSs per year the contract requires,” said Chuck Goddard, president and CEO of Marinette Marine Corp.

Changes in the yard have removed about eight miles of travel for the pieces that make up a Littoral Combat Ship.

The yard already has delivered a pair of the ships to the Navy —the USS Freedom and USS Fort Worth —for prime contractor Lockheed Martin. Four others are under construction or in preparation for construction.

The upgrades give the yard additional flexibility in securing other work.

“It allows us to go compete for future work so we’re not totally dependent on LCS,” Goddard said after the ceremony. “We have the Offshore Patrol Cutter for the U.S. Coast Guard that we have a design in for and hope to get the award for this summer to be one of the three companies developing a design.

“This allows us to have the facility here to go build those ships.”

Francesco Valente, president and CEO of Fincantieri Marine Group, said improvements over the past three years have increased the amount of covered and enclosed work space, expanded the work force by more 60 percent and trimmed the per-ship cost of the LCS.

Production is under way on variants of the ship produced by Lockheed Martin and Austal USA. Marinette Marine could build as many as 10 of the Littoral Combat Ships under the current contract. Additional ships could be awarded when that contract is up.

The Navy has said it could buy more than 50 of the Littoral Combat Ships.

“Ultimately, Fincantieri are shipbuilders,” Valente said. “Our vision has become a reality because we came here not for the short-term financial investment, but for a long-term industrial partnership in, and with, America.”

Fincantieri Marine Group also has invested almost \$25 million more in Bay Shipbuilding Co. in Sturgeon Bay since it bought both Bay Shipbuilding and Marinette Marine from The Manitowoc Co. in early 2009.

Upgrade work at Marinette Marine got under way in March 2010 with expansion of the building where the bulk of the ship is assembled. Other upgrades include a new panel fabrication building, a pre-outfitting building and a new paint building.

Some of the buildings torn down to make way for the new production facilities dated to the 1940s.

Marinette Marine employs about 1,400 people and is hiring for 25 positions, including welders and ship- and pipefitters.

Wisconsin State Sen. Dave Hansen, D-Green Bay, said the investment in the yard has a wide impact on the region.

“Everybody in northeast Wisconsin gains,” he said. “It’s not just about the ships being built, but also the supply chain, all the things that are produced here, that will bring back jobs throughout the state of Wisconsin.”

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