OXFORD

New home for network access firm

General DataComm moves from Naugatuck

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Brian A. Pounds / Hearst Connecticut Media
Network engineer Jose Lopez uses a microscope to diagnose repairs needed on a circuit board at General Datacomm's new offices in Oxford on Tuesday.

OXFORD — Jose Lopez, a network engineer with General Data-Comm, looked through the microscope while he tried to troubleshoot an interface card.

His goal was to figure out the reason why the card, which connects a device to a network, had failed. Around him, the usual buzz of workers was missing. Most of his colleagues were out in the field Tuesday working with customers.

With clients including the U.S. State Department, the Department of Defense and NASA, as well as most major telecommunications carriers, General DataComm has been busy designing, manufacturing, testing and providing support services for network access systems throughout the world.

"Every time you swipe a card to get on the subway (in New York) it's going through our system," said Frank

Giannone, vice president of operations for the company. "Every time you get on an airplane, the network for the (Federal Aviation Administration) all utilizes GDC equipment."

The company also recently worked on a product for a large air-traffic-management network in Vietnam.

Previously located in a much larger facility on Rubber Avenue in Naugatuck, the company moved to a 13,000-square-foot space on Christian Street last month, a year after a group of Texas-based investors acquired the company's assets and gave new life to the lean operation. The company was founded in 1969.

"We were in search of a space that would improve the work environment of our employees," said Mark Johns, chief operating officer for General DataComm, in an email. "Also, by right-sizing the space we are able to significantly improve utilities and occupancy costs, while improving efficiencies in test and final assembly."

Johns noted the move was targeted for July 1, but was completed ahead of schedule on June 22.

Giannone said General Data-Comm provides its customers with flexibility by allowing network cards to be interchangeable. Still, as with any electronic or telecommunications system, problems can arise.

At one end of the warehouse are a number of completed systems that are used to duplicate a client's problem to help them figure out how to solve it.

"They're mission-critical systems," Giannone said. "Everything has to be concise. When there's a problem, you need support right away. It's not just about selling products. It's about supporting customers. That is critical."

The company provides network systems for customers around the world, and it can take two to three months to create a system. "Every system is a little bit different," Giannone said. "It's very sophisticated equipment."

General DataComm has 17 employees in its Oxford facility, many of whom have decades of experience in the telecommunications industry. It also has sales staff in Dallas and southern California, support personnel in Minnesota and engineers in Tennessee.

"This is kind of a new start for us and the employees," said Johns of the acquisition and move. ktorres@hearstmediact.com; 203-330-6227