

SEKISUI Aerospace Wins Gold In Kaizen Competition and Heading to Kyoto Japan

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SEKISUI Aerospace (SA) Orange City Operations won Gold at the 30th annual SEKISUI AMERICA CORPORATION (SAC) North America Regional Kaizen Competition on November 3, 2022, with the team's "Beavertail Fairing Scrap Reduction" entry. The first-place finish earns the team the Kaizen Cup trophy and an invitation to compete in the SEKISUI Chemical final global competition hosted in Kyoto, Japan in 2023.

Kaizen is a Japanese philosophy translating to 'change for the better,' and entails the continuous improvement and efficiency of all business functions from CEO to production line employees. Japanese culture and ideology are fundamental to SA operations owing to their Japanese parent company SEKISUI Chemical, a high-performance plastics corporation with 190 locations in 20 countries. Prior to the regional competition, Orange City Operations won first place in SA's first internal kaizen competition in October 2022.

Orange City Operation's winning beavertail fairing presentation evolved from a critical scrap problem countering the company's Zero-Defect culture. A beavertail fairing is an integral part of the aircraft engine, demanding a complex thermoset composite compression molded technology. Taking a unique, "CSI"-esque approach, the kaizen team of 17 employees led by Craig Kallemeyn, Safety and Continuous Improvement Manager, executed a 9-step kaizen process. Utilizing *Ishikawa* ('cause-and-effect' or 'fishbone diagrams') generated 67 potential reasons for part failure. The team was able to narrow down their investigation, based on correlations found by using root cause analysis, to three possible causes: humidity, cure method, and invalid testing. The team developed a test plan of control and countermeasures which were analyzed weekly with a defined grade scale to capture data variances and/or patterns. This led to discovering the eventual solution to the beavertail scrap problem: adding additional carbon to the part and excluding the exaggerated and false porosity inspection data, the team ascertained were being recorded at inspection. During this forensic process, beavertail scrap in fact increased from 75% to 85%. However, the exhaustive and intricate work paid off. Within two months, scrap dropped 2%-3% below target, supporting SA's already rigorous sustainability and environmental initiatives. The team also saw 38+ hours a month in reduced labor, \$130,000 in cost savings, an increased employee engagement score, and a new business contract—all over two months ahead of the deadline. Orange City Operations has since integrated its new process into a standard operating procedure (SOP) and updated work instructions.

Cameron McKinney, Supply Chain Manager, shares, “A lot of cross-functional activities occurred with this team to help make this a success. It was fun to have ideas come up throughout the process we tried and didn’t work because it showed we were willing to persevere through new ideas and systematically find the right one that worked for this program.”

Linda K. Moseley, Sr. Director of Human Resources comments, “This competition was tough and included entries from every other North American SEKISUI company. We are so proud to have this amazing team from Orange City represent our company in not only the work we do, but the collaboration and spirit with which we do it.”

The 56th Annual SEKISUI Chemical Group Kaizen Activity Convention will take place at SEKISUI Chemical’s Kyoto R&D Laboratories, where 14 groups will compete for the global title and monetary prizes. Teams are given 12 minutes to present followed by a 5-minute Q&A. Winners will be announced on January 20th. There has never been a SEKISUI North America Company to place at this competition. The Orange City Operations team is preparing for the finals and aiming to be the first.

About SEKISUI Aerospace: SEKISUI Aerospace has been manufacturing and engineering products for the commercial aerospace and defense markets for over 32 years. SEKISUI Aerospace is a leading designer and producer of composite structures, systems, and engine components using advanced thermoset and thermoplastic technology for the global aerospace, military, and medical industry. Headquartered in Renton, Washington, SEKISUI Aerospace has additional facilities located in Sumner, Washington, and Orange City, Iowa with 500+ employees.

About SEKISUI America Corporation: SEKISUI America Corporation (SAC), located in Secaucus, NJ, serves as the regional headquarters for SEKISUI’s North American companies. SAC’s parent company is SEKISUI CHEMICAL CO., LTD, headquartered in Japan. Its 26,000 employees work in over 200 companies in 21 countries, aiming to improve the lives of the people of the world and the earth’s environment. The group conducts business in the fields of residential and social infrastructure creation and chemical solutions. Since its founding in 1947, SEKISUI CHEMICAL CO. LTD. has dedicated itself to contributing to social development and environmental improvement and was recently selected as one of the Global 100 most sustainable companies. SAC represents the commitment, strength, and principles of SEKISUI CHEMICAL CO. LTD. products and people in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

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