

# Window manufacturer expanding in Odell

## Housing highest bar to meeting worker needs

By Mark Gibson  
Columbia Gorge News

Cardinal Glass Industries in Odell is growing. The large industrial facility, built on the site of a former lumber mill, specializes in insulated glass windows that incorporate two panes of tempered glass sealed with an air space between them.

In early June, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown toured the facility, which is growing both physically with a planned 145,000 square foot plant expansion and internally, with 370 employees currently working multiple shifts — the facility runs 24 hours a day, six days a week. Currently, an additional 30 employees are needed and when the expansion is complete an additional 50 jobs will be created.

Plant Superintendent Sorn Reppen told the governor the company has been working with high schools and community colleges in the Gorge area to train and find workers. “We want local people,” he explained, noting worker housing is a major issue in recruitment. The company pays well, he added, starting workers at \$18 an hour with benefits. Many of the available jobs are open to high school graduates with no college training. Promotion within the company is done internally, so there are opportunities for advancement.

“The number one hurdle is housing,” he said of the struggle to find workers.

A lot of local employers are competing for the same workers, he added. Some employees remain unavailable due to the pandemic, he added, because they are staying home to take care of their families.

Gov. Brown noted the tight job market was not likely to change soon. “The market was tight even before the pandemic,” agreed Gov. Brown. “The pandemic has

made it worse, and my advisers suggest there is going to be a tight market” as the state reopens.

Brown added that beginning June 19, Oregon workers on unemployment would again be required to document their efforts to find work. “That might change the dynamic a little bit,” she said.

“The [job] market was tight even before the pandemic. The pandemic has made it worse, and my advisers suggest there is going to be a tight market” as the state reopens.

Kate Brown  
Governor of Oregon

### Supply and demand

Reppen told Brown the company, like many in Oregon, has been having supply issues during the pandemic. “We are having some issues. No show stoppers yet, but it has been very touch and go.”

Maintenance Manager Shane Thoms said “on time, complete deliveries is our business model, and that’s been a real challenge.”

On a tour of the facility, Thoms pointed out large stacks of windows packaged and ready to ship. “This will all be going out on tonight’s truck,” he said. “There is nothing built up, it’s all going out.”

•••

Thoms noted Cardinal IG in Odell is just one of the company’s glass manufacturing plants. “We have invested heavily in research and development,” he said. The company has one site dedicated to robotics and automation.

Thoms noted the company plans a long future in Odell. The plant was developed with support from the state’s Brownsfield program, an on-going program which helps



Oregon Gov. Kate Brown pauses by racks of window separators with Plant Superintendent Sorn Reppen during a tour of Cardinal IG in Odell. The company manufactures insulated windows and is planning to expand their local facility. At right, Brown speaks with a worker during the tour.



landowners evaluate and cleanup former industrial sites, and is a perfect location for manufacturing sealed, insulated glass. “We are 700 feet above sea level, and that is perfect,” Thoms said. Once sealed, the windows shrink and expand with elevation. Sealed in Odell, they can be shipped almost anywhere without imploding or exploding do to changes in air pressure between the panes of glass. “The glass swells and shrinks with altitude,” he explained.



Oregon Governor Kate Brown, seated at left, meets with leaders at Cardinal IG in Odell. The company manufactures insulated windows and is planning to expand their local facility. Pictured left to right are Brown, Maintenance Manager Shane Thoms and Plant Superintendent Sorn Reppen.

## CARDINAL IG



The expansive, well-lit plant operates 24/7, six days a week.



Mark B. Gibson photos

**BREATHE HEALTHIER  
LIVE BETTER**

WHAT'S YOUR REASON TO QUIT SMOKING?

TALK TO YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM  
A TOBACCO CESSATION SPECIALIST IS READY TO HELP!

**ONE COMMUNITY HEALTH: HR 541-386-6380  
ONE COMMUNITY HEALTH: TD 541-296-4610  
MCMC: 541-506-5819**

**Father's Day Special!**

Join the GAC Fitness Family in June with  
**50% Off Enrollment,  
10% Off Membership Dues**  
through 2021.

Offer for New Members for Fitness Only Memberships through June 20, 2021.

**Gorge Athletic Clubs**  
Hood River | 541.386.3230  
The Dalles | 541.298.8508  
email info@gorgeathleticclubs.com

**www.GorgeAthleticClubs.com**