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EARTH TECH

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EARTH TECH Has A New Plant

By RONNIE BLAIR
The Tampa Tribune

SHADY HILLS When a shortage of concrete and other materials started to hamper Earth Tech Inc.'s work, company president Ron Broadrick decided it was time the company became its own supplier.

About six months ago, Earth Tech opened a plant on Hudson Avenue where the company can manufacture the grout it uses to stabilize sinkholes.

"This is our final step in being self-sufficient from a materials standpoint," Broadrick said.

The grout is a mixture of water, sand, cement and fly ash. Company literature describes it as similar to the mortar used to hold bricks together.

Earth Tech employees inject the grout into the ground where a sinkhole is a problem. The grout helps fill voids in the limestone and sandy soil that lie beneath the surface.

Some of the company's sinkhole work is preventive, but most of it is remedial, meaning clients have already spotted problems — such as cracked walls or doors that don't close properly.

Those signs don't necessarily mean there is a sinkhole, so the first step homeowners or business owners take is to have an engineer-

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ing firm conduct tests to determine whether a sinkhole is the culprit.

If so, companies such as Earth Tech can come in to attempt to stabilize the soil.

Broadrick said part of what his company does is to educate consumers about sinkholes.

For many people, the prevailing sinkhole images are of the large ones that open suddenly and swallow a house or a portion of a road.

Most sinkholes, though, develop more gradually, Broadrick said. Earth Tech lets worried homeowners know that, while the situation is serious and shouldn't be ignored, "it's manageable," he said.

Broadrick founded the company 17 years ago. Initially, it was a tiny operation and he worked out of a spare apartment bedroom off Hines Avenue in Tampa.

The company has since grown to employ about 70 people and is headquartered in Land O' Lakes.

The company performs most of its work in Pasco and Hernando counties, though it also takes on some jobs in Pinellas and Hillsborough.

When it came time to build a plant to manufacture the grout mixture, Broadrick said he was happy to be able to find a spot on Hudson Avenue in the Shady Hills area and keep the operation in Pasco County, where most company employees live.

The plant also is in a good location for quick access to Spring Hill in Hernando County, where a number of jobs for the company arise.

Three people work at the plant. A dozen truck drivers come and go during the course of a day, transporting the grout to about six to eight projects that Earth Tech might be working on at any one time.

Earth Tech doesn't advertise. Instead, the company relies on referrals from engineering firms, insurance companies and previous customers, Broadrick said.

He said over the years, the need for Earth Tech's services has grown along with Pasco County.

"We're obviously in a good area for what we do," Broadrick said.

More information about the company is available at www.floridasinkhole.com.

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Tribune photo by FRED BELLET

The new Earth Tech batch plant is located at 15924 Hudson Ave. The company performs sinkhole stabilization and produces grout materials that are used in soil stabilization.