PRESS RELEASES

Mar 4, 2004

Ecolab Expands Commitment to Minnesota and Downtown St. Paul

ST. PAUL, Minn.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--March 4, 2004--Ecolab Inc. announced today that it has expanded its commitment to further growth in Minnesota and reinforced its commitment to downtown St. Paul as its global corporate headquarters.

Ecolab said today it has entered into an agreement (subject to due diligence) to purchase the former headquarters of Cray Research, in Eagan, MN. The purchase will allow Ecolab to move and thereby continue the expansion of its corporate Research and Development (R&D) center from its current facility in Mendota Heights, where the company has exceeded capacity. Ecolab will vacate and sell the Mendota Heights facility, moving all R&D operations to the new facility; the company will also vacate and sell a small data center in St. Paul's Thomas-Dale neighborhood. Ecolab will retain its corporate headquarters and campus in downtown St. Paul.

Allan L. Schuman, Ecolab's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, commented, stating, "We have literally run out of room at our current R&D facility in Mendota Heights, and expansion options at that site were very limited. Given our aggressive growth plans, we needed appropriate space in which we could sustain our expansion needs through the foreseeable future. The facility will provide us ample room for our technology group's future expansion in Minnesota for many years to come and enable us to continue providing the most innovative and technologically advanced products, systems and customer support that are crucial to maintaining Ecolab's industry leadership.

"We made our decision and it is to stay right here. There is no question Minnesota is our home and St. Paul is our global headquarters - now and for the long term. We began in St. Paul 81 years ago and our roots are firmly planted here. We expect to add over 400 people over the next five years to our Minnesota employment base, and we now have the room to do so. With the growth plans we have in store, this action will enable us continue to expand our management and marketing ranks at our global headquarters in downtown St. Paul and our corporate R&D and support areas at our new facility in Eagan. We will continue to grow Ecolab's presence in both our city and state as we grow our business around the globe."

With 2003 sales of $3.8 billion, Ecolab is the leading global developer and marketer of premium cleaning, sanitizing, pest elimination, maintenance and repair products and services for the hospitality, foodservice, institutional and industrial markets. Ecolab shares are traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol ECL.

Ecolab news releases and other investor information are available on the Internet at www.ecolab.com.

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Back to Press Releases