Sonoco Introduces UltraPeel(TM) Retort Membrane End

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First Retortable Membrane Convenience Closure Manufactured in Americas Gives Consumers A Convenient Way to Safely Heat and Enjoy Processed Foods

HARTSVILLE, S.C., Jul 26, 2007 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- Sonoco (NYSE: SON), one of the largest diversified global packaging companies, continues to make life easy for consumers and consumer product companies with the launch of its UltraPeel(TM) retort membrane end, a robust, peelable membrane closure designed specifically for heat-and-eat food applications. The UltraPeel retort membrane end is the first such closure manufactured in the Americas, delivering enhanced convenience to consumers while accommodating the rigors of thermal processing.

Sonoco Phoenix, Sonoco's leading technology ends and closure manufacturing division, is producing the UltraPeel retort membrane end in a 211-diameter with plans for 307- and 401-diameter ends using proprietary technology. This new product is the result of Sonoco's combined technical expertise in retortable laminated structures and convenience closures.

The UltraPeel retort membrane end is a membrane structure heat sealed to an aluminum ring. The closure has lower opening forces than conventional scored convenience ends, has no sharp edges and utilizes current double-seam technology requiring minimal seamer modifications.

According to Howard Coker, Sonoco Phoenix division vice president and general manager, the UltraPeel retort membrane end gives consumer product companies and food processors a new high-performance, peelable closure option for the fast growing heat-and-eat food category.

"This category is defined by convenience, making it easy for people to safely enjoy their favorite soups, pasta entrees, meats and seafood in packages that double as serving containers. Our challenge was to deliver a membrane end capable of withstanding the rigors of a retort process that has over-pressure. The robustness of our offering survives the challenge of pressure fluctuations typical of many over-pressure controlled retort processes," Coker said. "Our customers are excited about the UltraPeel end because it allows them to deliver an innovative consumer offering while not sacrificing manufacturing efficiencies. This closure can be seamed at high speeds and on existing equipment with minor modifications and processed in conventional retorts utilizing overpressure."

The low opening force of this end is a significant benefit to consumers. Less force is required to remove the UltraPeel retort membrane end than ring-pull ends, making it simpler for children, older adults and those with physical conditions like arthritis to remove from the container. Additionally, the folded rim and pliable membrane offer the ultimate in cut protection. Sonoco Phoenix can print random and registered graphics on the UltraPeel retort membrane end using up to eight colors. This creates opportunities for branding, promotional messages or instructions.

Sonoco Phoenix is among the world's largest producers of aluminum, steel and peelable membrane closures used to add convenience to metal, plastic and rigid paper cans and containers. The business operates seven manufacturing facilities in the United States and Brazil.

About Sonoco

Founded in 1899, Sonoco is a $3.7 billion global manufacturer of industrial and consumer products and provider of packaging services, with approximately 330 operations in 35 countries, serving customers in some 85 nations. For more information on the Company, visit our Web site at http://www.sonoco.com/.

SOURCE: Sonoco

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