



Unifrax shifting Falls' operations to Tonawanda

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Unifrax is shifting its Niagara Falls-based operations from the Cataract City to the Riverview Solar Technology Park in the Town of Tonawanda.

The deal comes as other states were courting Unifrax to move some of its operations out of the state. An incentive package including cutting edge solar technology offered by Riverview's developer, TM Montante Development, helped secure the deal.

Unifrax, which manufactures high temperature insulation products commonly found in industrial applications, employs 96 people locally and plans to add 15 more workers in the next two years. The firm signed a long term lease with TM Montante to occupy a 44,000-square-foot that will house a research and development lab and head office operations.

"Unifrax's presence and value to our region is tremendous," said Tom Montante, TM Montante president, founder and namesake. "We are pleased to see solar energy make its way toward center stage, as it has done here."

Montante said Unifrax project could serve as local template for how solar energy can serve as an economic development incentive.

TM Montante, beginning in December, will install a solar array on the roof of Unifrax's new building. The system, the third such in Riverview, will generate more than 100,000kWh of solar power annually for the building.

"When experiments and new product development activities are underway the lab is a significant electric power user," said Dr. Paul Boymel, Unifrax vice president of worldwide technology. "Discounted solar energy played an important role in the decision making process for us."

TM Montante has agreed will purchase Unifrax's current 33,000-square-foot building near the Whirlpool Bridge in Niagara Falls and is working on a redevelopment game plan for the facility.

Unifrax, which has more than 334 employees statewide, is expected to move into the Riverview building by early spring.

James Fink covers real estate, commercial development and government