



S.A. robot company files to develop facility near airport

Manufacturer Xenex is preparing to expand as it finds new markets and customers for its germ-zapping robots that use ultraviolet light to kill microbes, including the virus that causes COVID-19.

The San Antonio company recently filed for a license to redevelop a nearly 22,000-square-foot building near San Antonio International Airport, with an expected completion date in early 2021, according to documents filed with the request. Executives declined to discuss details of the expansion, but the company has grown rapidly since the coronavirus pandemic exploded in the U.S.

Sales of the \$100,000-plus robots have skyrocketed 600 percent, according to Xenex CEO Morris Miller, as the company has widened its initial focus on hospitals to other businesses, such as hotels, in need of regular sanitizing. One of the company's first customers outside of health care was Houston hotel development and management company Pearl Hospitality.

On ExpressNews.com: [For most businesses, coronavirus is a threat. For San Antonio robot makers, it's an opening](#)

"The business has continued to expand," Miller said. "We've seen a huge pickup in demand in places we never expected — so hotels, schools, pro sports, corporate headquarters, most recently a luxury residential high-rise."

Xenex, which employs about 125, is on track to exceed \$100 million in sales this year, the company said. As demand for the robots has grown, the company has converted surplus office space into manufacturing space, Miller said.

The need for office space decreased as employees began working from home.

"We just kept on converting other space that we had left over for the current needs," he said. "So some of the corporate offices are now storage rooms. When you have a crisis, you just have to move fast and do what you need to do."

The company produces thousands of the machines annually, Miller said. Xenex's international segment has increased to about 30 percent of the company's business, he said. Japan, Spain, Italy, France, South Africa and Ecuador account for most of its international deals.

'Ghostbusters' of disinfecting

In addition to manufacturing, the company operates a disinfecting service. Like a "Ghostbusters" for infectious disease, vans full of robots and Xenex workers in personal protective equipment cruise around Texas zapping microbes.

The Strikeforce UV mobile service provides cleaning on an as-requested basis for customers that, so far, include restaurants, car dealerships, smaller schools and banks, Miller said.

“It’s been a huge relief for a lot of businesses that they just need somebody to come out today to take care of a problem because one of their employees was COVID-19 positive,” he said. “They don’t want to take a risk of the rest of their workers becoming ill.”

To date, Miller said, the robots have disinfected more than 24.5 million rooms worldwide, or about one room every 4.3 seconds.

The robots use broad-spectrum, high-intensity ultraviolet light to destroy pathogens, according to Miller. Once started, the mini-fridge-sized robot scans the room to ensure people aren’t present, then raises its round head to nearly 6 feet, exposing the pulsing light.

The devices clean rooms in five minutes, according to Xenex.

“In a post-pandemic world,” Miller said, “the public is going to have a focus on disinfection the same way that there was a focus on security after 9/11.”

Source: <https://www.expressnews.com/business/local/article/SA-robot-company-files-to-develop-facility-near-15547960.php>

September 7th 2020