

## Freezer to get warm reception

By SCOTT AUST / Telegram Staff Writer

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SCHUYLER - Though construction started in the spring, a ground-breaking ceremony will be held Friday on a 90,000-square-foot cold storage facility on 26 acres of land directly west of the Excel meatpacking plant.

Nor-Am, of Le Mars, Iowa, will construct the multimillion-dollar facility that will be used by Excel and other producers in the area.

A cold storage facility is a public warehouse for any customer who has a need to store rugged or finished goods in a temperature-controlled environment, according to Greg Brandt, president and chief executive officer of Nor-Am.

"Basically, we receive product, store it, freeze it, prepare it for export, whatever our customer requests, that's what we do," Brandt said. "We're a total customer service business in that we produce nothing. We don't have a product. When our customer says please receive this product ... our goal is to store it in the conditions they want and return it to them in the condition we got it."

According to information on its Web site, Nor-Am is a full-service, public refrigerated warehouse operation that can arrange for storage, shipment and delivery of product anywhere in the country.

The company's specialty is freezing, cooling, dry storage and distribution. Its services include freezer and cooler storage, custom packing, blast freezing, labeling and stamping product for export, tempering, cross-docking and load consolidation, order picking, transloading, USDA import/export inspections, pork trichinae certification, and total logistic services such as booking trucks, searching freight rates and arranging loading and delivery.

The general contractor, Global Engineering of Sioux City, Iowa, began construction of the Schuyler plant in the spring and experienced some weather-related delays. Brandt said the goal is to be open by Nov. 1.

The facility will have 20 employees to start, with the possibility of adding more in the future as the business grows. Brandt wouldn't say specifically what the plant costs.

"It's a good-sized plant; this is no small deal. It will service that Excel plant very well, and other area customers," he said. "We're going to measure capacity in pallet spots. We're going to be able to store 8,000 pallet spots, approximately 400 truckloads of product."

The Schuyler facility will be similar to the Nor-Am facility in Le Mars, which is about 25 miles northeast of Sioux City. Nor-Am, which also has an 18,000-square-foot processing plant in Le Mars, opened its original plant in March 1999.

"We're young and growing," said Brandt, who has been in the cold storage business since 1984. "Young and growing and getting older every day."

Jerry Kracl, economic development director in Schuyler, said the cold storage facility will be a big benefit for the community.

"It's the biggest thing that's happened in years," Kracl said. "What's interesting here is with that highway bypass coming in and the interchange at Excel, it's just making that a real good area for future development. Hopefully, getting this freezer there will bring in other food processors."

Friday's groundbreaking is set for 4 p.m. at the site. Afterward, there will be a reception at the Schuyler Golf Club hosted by Excel and the Schuyler Chamber of Commerce for people to meet and welcome representatives of Nor-Am.

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