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## THE PAST IS THE FUTURE FOR CEDAR RAPIDS SQUARE D FACILITY

### SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC'S NORTH AMERICAN OPERATING DIVISION'S PLANT CELEBRATES 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

In 1955, an article with the headline "Research Is Key to Future of Square D" spoke volumes about the role the newly built Cedar Rapids facility would have in fostering the company's development and continuing its success as a global leader in the electrical industry. Fifty years later, the headline remains as accurate as ever. Innovative design, dedication to research and development, and constant forethought and reinvention continue to define the Cedar Rapids plant, just as it did when it first opened its doors.

Throughout the Square D history, the company has committed itself to providing its customers with ground-breaking products to efficiently distribute electrical power while providing maximum protection and safety.

"A lot of people aren't aware that the Cedar Rapids plant contains North America's premier circuit breaker lab testing facility and design center," said David Petratis, president and CEO of Schneider Electric's North American Operating Division. "Research, development and innovative design, as well as manufacturing, has been the mission of the facility, and that is a pivotal example of why the Square D brand of Schneider Electric leads the industry."

#### Facility history

When the facility was built by Square D Company in 1955, a significant amount of capital was spent in the design and construction of the 112,000 square-foot facility. Central air conditioning was considered to be an important component in controlling



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manufacturing variables. In addition, worker safety, efficiency and aesthetics were all important elements that were taken into account when this state-of-the-art building was designed to accommodate the modern QO<sup>®</sup> circuit breaker production lines.

“When Square D first developed the QO circuit breaker, we knew it would be successful,” said Jim Vaughan, who served as Cedar Rapids plant manager from 1959 to 1965. “But we had no idea it would become the industry standard.”

The QO circuit breaker has significantly evolved since its inception with the introduction of the single-pole version in 1955, the two-pole breaker 1956, the Qwik-Trip<sup>®</sup> feature in 1958, the Visi-Trip<sup>®</sup> Indicator in 1968, the 15-30 amp Ground Fault Interrupter (GFI) in 1972, Switching Duty (SD) and High Intensity Discharge Lighting (HID) ratings in the 1980s and 90s and the most recently developed Arc-D-tect<sup>®</sup> line of arc-fault circuit breakers. Thanks to this constant product evolution, the QO circuit breaker continues to be considered one of the highest quality circuit breakers in the world and millions are sold every year.

Constructed in 1959, Square D’s first high power testing lab enabled the company to expand its circuit breaker line including the F-, K-, L-, M- and P-frame circuit breakers. It also resulted in the development of the world’s first ground-fault protection equipment and current-limiting circuit breakers.

The facility expanded in 1980 with a second high power testing lab to help launch Square D into the large circuit breaker business with the SE power circuit breaker, released in 1985.

### **Testing labs fuel quality**

The testing facility, now known as a global Schneider Electric Center of Excellence, has played an integral role in the development and testing of circuit breakers that are more user-defined, being individually designed for venues such as hospitals, schools, shopping malls, hotels, industrial factories and homes.

“Inside the labs, endurance tests push our products above and beyond what our customers would expect them to be capable of,” Petratis said. “The result is a safer product with better overall quality.”

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The facility is playing an active role in the development of the Masterpact® series – the world’s first circuit breakers specially designed to provide arc flash protection. An arc flash occurs when a tremendous amount of concentrated energy explodes outwards from electrical equipment, creating pressure waves and a superheated ball of gas. With temperatures as high as 35,000 degrees Fahrenheit recorded in arc blast research, severe burns, serious ear damage and death can result. Arc flashes can also melt metal and send pieces of equipment flying through the air, which also pose dangerous safety risks.

The Cedar Rapids facility also develops and tests products for the Schneider Electric markets in Europe and Asia, both of which have different electrical standards than North America.

### **Community presence**

Now at 270,000 square feet, Square D Cedar Rapids employs 400 individuals. Many workers hold advanced degrees in areas ranging from engineering to business and marketing.

“Our employees are highly skilled, and they’ve worked very hard throughout the past half century to enhance the Square D brand product line,” Petratis said. “Every department in this facility contributes to the company’s success in some way.”

Included is a labor force in which employees have an average of more than 30 years experience in the circuit breaker industry.

“Hundreds of people have contributed to industrializing Square D’s product line since we came to Cedar Rapids 50 years ago,” said Deb Westhues, plant manager. “The role they’ve played in establishing product assembly lines and fabrication processes has been invaluable to our company.”

Generations of several local families have worked at the Cedar Rapids Square D facility. In fact, three generations of one family have worked at the plant, with the first family member starting in 1960. Three of the adult children and a grandchild have also worked at the plant over the years.

In addition to supplying the community with quality employment opportunities, Square D gives back to Cedar Rapids through a variety of charitable organizations and civic group sponsorships. Included is the United Way of Eastern Iowa, Big Brothers Big Sisters, the African American Historical Museum, Science Station, Children’s Miracle

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Network, Tanager Place, the Cedar Rapids Symphony and Theatre Cedar Rapids. Many Square D employees also volunteer for programs such as Habitat for Humanity and Junior Achievement, and others have been members of city and chamber of commerce committees over the years.

Through the Square D Foundation and matching gifts from employees, the company also awards more than \$30,000 in scholarships every year to local students and adults pursuing engineering degrees at Iowa State University, one of the schools involved in the Square D corporate Targeted University Program. The company has awarded nearly \$175,000 in scholarships since 2001. A significant portion of that amount is awarded to diversity candidates. Square D has also donated more than \$2 million in gifts-in-kind to Stanley and Helen Howe Hall and Gary and Donna Hoover Hall in the College of Engineering. Square D has actively recruited Iowa State engineering graduates for employment since it formed its partnership with Cedar Rapids 50 years ago, in addition to providing numerous cooperative education, internship, summer employment and other experiential learning opportunities for students.

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### **Schneider Electric North American Operating Division**

Headquartered in Palatine, Ill., the North American Operating Division of Schneider Electric had sales of \$2.6 billion (U.S.) in 2004. The North American Operating Division is one of four operating divisions of Schneider Electric, headquartered in Paris, France, and markets the Square D, Telemecanique and Merlin Gerin brand products to customers in the United States, Canada and Mexico. In the United States, Schneider Electric is best known by its flagship Square D brand, with Telemecanique becoming increasingly known in the industrial control and automation markets and supported by many Square D distributors. For 100 years, Square D has been a market-leading brand of electrical distribution and industrial control products, systems and services. Schneider Electric is a global electrical industry leader with 2004 sales of approximately \$12.8 billion (U.S.). Visit Schneider Electric on the Internet at:

- Corporate – <http://www.us.schneider-electric.com>
- Telemecanique Products – <http://www.us.telemecanique.com>
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