



MTC Logistics is one of the region's busiest cold chain businesses.

MTC Logistics

Brrr ... It's Cold In Here!

Rush-hour commuters along Interstate 95 have probably driven by the unassuming warehouse building where the General Motors plant used to stand, oblivious to its important connection to the food in their refrigerators and kitchen cupboards, and on their tables.

MTC Logistics takes seriously its role in getting foodstuffs to grocery stores and consumers, even if its cold-storage distribution center adjacent to the Port of Baltimore is only a temporary stop for consumable imported and exported refrigerated cargo that flows through the Maryland Port Administration's private

and public marine terminals.

"It's products from all over the world and products destined for all over the world," explained F. Brooks Royster, president of the company that is marking its 90th year in business during 2018.

What began as Merchants Terminal Corporation – born of an industrious Hoffberger family that delivered ice and coal to families across Baltimore – has morphed into MTC Logistics, one of the region's busiest businesses in the cold chain, which keeps meat, seafood,

TAKEAWAYS

- MTC Logistics marks its 90th anniversary in 2018.
- Its current distribution center features more than 32,000 pallet positions.
- Automated storage and product retrieval are the future and will enable urban cold storage growth.



MTC constructed one of the first single-story refrigerated warehouse facilities in the US.

Laurie DeWitt

produce, and other items at proper refrigerated or frozen temperatures until they can be sent along the supply line to consumers or exported to foreign markets.

"It's a symbiotic relationship we have with the port," said Royster, who served as MPA executive director from 2005-2007 before joining MTC. "We support the port, and the port supports us. We depend on the containers that flow through the Seagirt Marine Terminal to produce the imported and exported products that flow through our warehouse."

MTC's long association with the Port of Baltimore is definitely a win-win proposition, but one that depends on both parties keeping abreast of current trends and investing in both technology and infrastructure necessary to remain on the cutting edge of ever-changing marketplaces. MTC's current distribution center, which opened in 2009, features more than 32,000 pallet positions and the ability to chill products to temperatures

as low as minus-70 degrees Fahrenheit (minus-60 degrees Celsius).

That's a far cry from MTC's humble beginnings of an 11-story facility with three elevators and multiple cooling lockers. But as emerging technologies in the 1920s introduced flash freezing of fruits, vegetables, meat, and seafood,

hungry consumers clamored for the convenience of their favorite staples year-round ... and a market was created. As the use of containerization and palletization to efficiently transport products became the norm, MTC moved from storing and delivering products to a logistics provider to constructing



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one of the first single-story refrigerated warehouse facilities in the United States, utilizing new refrigeration capabilities.

The company's warehouses now serve the mid-Atlantic region, taking advantage of major north-south and westbound highway routes and utilizing intermodal transportation to bring a variety of products through its Baltimore hub. Though there is some seasonality in the foods that MTC handles, the business is built on certain staples. Seafood from the Far East and South America, juice concentrate from China and South America, frozen vegetables from South America and Europe, and pork from Eastern Europe are routine imports. Poultry from farms across the Delmarva Peninsula is exported across the globe.

MTC Logistics operates three facilities in the region. In addition to the

distribution center adjacent to Seagirt, a Jessup, Maryland, location services companies reaching Washington, DC, and southern Maryland, while another center in Wilmington, Delaware, services the ports of Baltimore, Wilmington, and Philadelphia.

"With the continued growth of the Port of Baltimore, and with Ports America Chesapeake as the terminal operator at Seagirt, it won't be long until we put Phase Three of our expansion plans into place," Royster said.

One of the reasons MTC Logistics has remained viable for nearly a century is the company's ability to change and adapt to advancements in the temperature-controlled industry. MTC has invested in technological upgrades, such as utilizing solar panels and LED lighting, to control energy costs and lessen its

carbon footprint. MVision, the company's proprietary web portal, allows customers a real-time look into the status of their products in cold storage.

"The speed of business today demands instantaneous communication," Royster said. Though temperatures remain a constant in the cold-storage industry, those entities that adapt and change with the marketplace are the ones that experience sustained success. Royster envisions a future that includes automated storage and retrieval of products — something that's already happening in Europe. He believes that warehouses of the near future will encompass fully automated high-rise buildings, which will make it easier for companies to compete in more dense, urban marketplaces where building up will replace building out. ■



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