

3M Joins Local R&D Club

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October 23, 2013

The  **Moscow Times**

U.S. industrial conglomerate 3M on Wednesday talked up its decision to join a small club of international firms that do research and development in the country.

The company's research and development, or R&D, center near Moscow has patented five new technologies since starting work in July last year and is moving to patent another one: a respirator for Russia's sprawling nuclear-power industry, said Sergei Dmitrouk, 3M head of R&D for Eastern Europe.

At least 15 foreign corporate R&D centers opened in Russia from 2002 to 2011, much fewer than in China and India, according to a PwC study released in March. The two Asian economic powerhouses attracted at least 224 and 95 R&D centers over the same period, respectively.

Among the reasons preventing foreign firms from establishing R&D centers in Russia is the country's red tape and unfamiliarity with Russian legislation, the study said. The club of foreign companies that run such centers in Russia also includes Boeing, Intel, Google, Siemens, Samsung, DuPont, HP and LG, the study said.

3M employs 55 researchers at its center in Volokolamsk, where it has its Russian plant. That number compares with a total of 11,000 research staff at 35 R&D centers worldwide and makes the Russian outlet one of the smallest in the company's fold.

The patents obtained by the center are for making road signs more visible, adjusting the quality of paint to the thickness of paper in printing, and improving connection jacks for optic cables, Dmitrouk said at a news conference.

The Russian center does not only develop new products but also adapts existing technology, such as the one for an anti-corrosion coating for oil and gas pipes, to Russian customer demands, he said.

Tim Koenig, the new managing director of 3M in Russia, said the company had started construction of its second plant in the country last month. The company plans to begin production at the plant, at the Alabuga special economic zone in Tatarstan, next October, he said, speaking at the same news conference.

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Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/10/23/3m-joins-local-rd-club-a28872>