

‘Optimistic’: Oregon’s Freres Wood pushes forward with fresh mass timber projects

By: Todd Unger

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Freres Wood headquarters in Lyons, Ore. (KOIN)

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- Tyler Freres

Deep in the Santiam Canyon wedged between hillsides covered in Oregon forest, the evolution of the timber industry is on full display one giant panel at a time inside Freres Wood.

“This one is about ten feet by 36 feet,” said Tyler Freres, the company’s vice president of sales.

Stroll through one of their massive facilities, and it doesn’t take long to deduce this isn’t the timber operation of a bygone era.

“We use 100 percent of the tree. We aim to have nothing go to a landfill. Everything leaves our property as a beneficial product,” Tyler added.

The family-run company is one of the industry’s pioneers of mass timber.

A highlight of their work is that beautiful new ceiling and design at the revamped Portland International Airport, made out of Freres’ engineered wood.

In downtown Oakland, Calif., there’s also a 19-story building composed of their product, as is a massive arena and recreation center in Edmonton, Canada.

“It’s intimate contact with the designer, the architect and entire project team because you’re helping them design the most efficient building they can possibly get,” Tyler said.

One of their new pushes are mass timber warehouses, which Tyler showed a KOIN 6 crew during an exclusive visit.

“The entirety of this 58,000 square foot warehouse went up in six weeks,” he said. “The entire

warehouse is all wood. They’re meant to replicate what would be concrete, tilt-up construction.”

The Freres history stretches back more than century, starting with one man and a vision that has now grown to 450 employees strong.

In this close-knit corridor of the state, it’s no exaggeration to say everyone knows someone who earns their paycheck from Freres.

“We’ve been here for 104 years. We don’t think we are distinguishable for the local community because we kind of are it with our local partners,” Tyler noted.

While the future is bright, sustainability makes it all possible. They help to plant more than 350,000 trees annually, with efforts underway to grow that figure and grow their presence in the industry.

“I’m more optimistic now about the timber industry than I ever have been,” Tyler said.