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## Machine manufacturer hurrying to help suit makers across nation

By Qiu Quanlin in Guangzhou | China Daily | Updated: 2020-03-13 10:20

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Workers make protective suits at a workshop in a company in Ningjin county, North China's Hebei province, Feb 12, 2020. [Photo/Xinhua]

Wu Fujin never expected his company to play such a significant role at a time when the country urgently needed seam-sealing machines using hot air technology, a major product of his company, to fend off the COVID-19 epidemic.

On the fourth day of the Chinese Lunar New Year holiday, which started on Jan 25, Wu, general manager of Guangzhou Gao Ke Garment-making Equipment Co Ltd, was called in by the local industry authority and was asked to resume production of the machines.

"I was told that there had been an urgent demand for seam-sealing machines from producers of medical protective suits due to the fast spreading novel coronavirus outbreak," Wu said. "Then I hurriedly called back the employees and started working as soon as possible."

Seam-sealing machines are vital in producing protective suits as they help prevent viruses from infecting people by attaching seal strips to the protective clothing, he said.

"Attaching strips to the suits is the last step in the processing line of protective suits."

Five days later, the company managed to dispatch 88 seamsealing machines to protective clothing companies in Hubei province, epicenter of the outbreak in the country.

Wu's company was founded in 1993 and specialized in the design, manufacture and sale of equipment for both waterproofing and testing outdoor apparel, tents, medical protective garments, shoes and bags among others.

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the country's top industry regulator, said China has an annual production capacity of 5,000 heat seam-sealing machines. A large number of manufacturers are small and medium-sized enterprises. Guangdong province alone accounts for 80 percent of the total.

Following the coronavirus outbreak, the ministry has called on producers in the sector to send their products to protective clothing manufacturers in whatever way possible by transferring, renting, lending or donation.

"By mid-February, supplies of seam-sealing machines had become sufficient, helping expand the production capacity of protective suits," said Luo Junjie, deputy director of the ministry's industrial equipment department.

According to Luo, there are about 4,300 seam-sealing machines operating on assembly lines across the nation, which can help produce another 600,000 medical protective suits a day.

Wu's company has an annual production capacity of over 1,000 and has sent more than 400 machines nationwide so far since they resumed production. Most of the machines were sent to protective clothing manufacturers in the provinces of Hubei and Henan during the outbreak, the company said.

The company has also shipped its products to about 70 countries and regions.

Demand for the firm's protective clothing has been increasing sharply due to its role in preventing and controlling the epidemic, Wu explained.

Ye Huadong, director of the Guangzhou Municipal Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Bureau, said Guangzhou has a daily production capacity of more than 20,000 protective clothing units and this has been boosted by the resumption of operations of manufacturers whose products are helpful in controlling the disease.