



JIM STAFFORD, THE OKLAHOMAN

Stephen McKeever, vice president for research and technology transfer at Oklahoma State University; Timothy Reynolds, manager of business operations at the OSU's University Multispectral Laboratories in Ponca City, and Gary Gallagher, director of facilities at the lab, visit one of the laboratories that will be renovated in the facility, which was donated to OSU by ConocoPhillips.

Doors open for new OSU sensor lab for firms entering crucial new field

By Jim Stafford
Business Writer

PONCA CITY — Gary Gallagher threw open a door to a massive building on the ConocoPhillips campus here and allowed a group of visitors their first peek into Oklahoma State University's national sensor research facility.

The view was daunting. The door opened into a massive corridor in what was known to ConocoPhillips employees as "Research East," a 72,000-square-foot behemoth that was built in the 1950s.

"Research East is 360 feet long on three levels," Gallagher said as he ushered the group into the building. Gallagher is facilities manager for the building, which is now known as OSU's University Multispectral Laboratories. It was donated to OSU by ConocoPhillips earlier this year.

Led by Gallagher and Timothy Reynolds, manager of business operations for what officials call the UML, the building will undergo a renovation that will breathe new life in a structure that has been unused for perhaps a dozen years.

Gallagher and Reynolds are employees of AMTI, a government contractor and a business partner with OSU in rehabilitating and operating the building.

"We're going to bring it back to life as the work demands," Reynolds said. "The expense of bringing it all back to life at one time is going to drive us to do it in stages and phases to be more cost effective and efficient with the money that we have."

The sensor research facility eventually will offer up to 60 separate labs where university, government and private sector scientists will test chemical and biological sensors for use largely in military and homeland security applications.

Eventually, the facility will have a fulltime workforce of 50 to 60 people with visiting research teams of 20 to 30 people at any one time, Reynolds said.

Work to renovate the building will start in January. "Bringing up the building is actually the least expensive portion to it," Gallagher said. "Actually going in and making all the updates to the equipment, to the air handling system and the equipping each individual laboratory is what eats up a lot of money."

OSU recently received the first installment of \$1 million on a combined \$4 million commitment from the city of Ponca City and ConocoPhillips to begin operations in the new laboratory. The university also received \$5 million in state funding for the project.

The center was conceived by Stephen McKeever, OSU's vice president for research and technology

Safe and Secure

PONCA CITY — The University Multispectral Laboratories that Oklahoma State University and business partner AMTI is developing here will offer scientists a secure environment in which to test sensors that will help the military battle biological, nuclear and chemical weapons, officials said.

It is serious work with lives at risk, said Timothy Reynolds, manager of business operations. Heat, sand and water pressure all have the capabilities to disrupt sensors in the field, he said.

The laboratory will feature high security and limited access even to those working in the facility. RFID, or wireless radio frequency tags, will track people and equipment throughout the building. If a person stays beyond permitted locations, alarms will sound.

First on the agenda to renovate for the building is a security fence that will surround it.

The idea here is, No. 1, safety," Gary Gallagher, manager, said. "Safety is put into everything we are doing, and security follows very closely thereafter. It's very hard to separate the two."

Reynolds and Gallagher are employees of AMTI, which is a government contractor and a subsidiary of San Diego-based Science Applications International Corp. They also operate a 6,000-square foot data center on the ConocoPhillips campus.

transfer. A year of discussions and planning led to ConocoPhillips' announcement of the gift in February.

"We've already had several phone calls from companies wanting to know what we're doing," McKeever said. "At the moment, they are just curious."

But serious discussions have been held with officials with Johns Hopkins University, which has a huge research budget but little room for expansion, McKeever said. Companies from Boston to Austin, Texas, have expressed interest, he said.

The lab will generate revenue from users who contract to use the facility.

Gallagher said the facility's management also will pursue developing a business incubator for sensor technology companies at the site.