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USES! to Buy Wiedenbach-Brown

U.S. Electrical Services LLC (USES!), Chester Springs, Pa., the company run by Richard Worthy, former CEO of Sonepar North America, agreed to purchase Wiedenbach-Brown Co. Inc. (WB) effective July 19.

Founded in 1913, WB has a reputation as an industry leader in national account lighting and electrical supply. Headquartered in Westchester County, N.Y., WB has offices in Hicksville, New Rochelle and Hawthorne, New York; Boston; Columbus; Kansas City; Los Angeles; and Seattle.

The company ranks as the nation's 123rd largest electrical distributor, according to *Electrical Wholesaling's* Top 200 distributors.

According to WB owners Christopher Brown and Elisabeth Brown-Daley, USESI offered the greatest opportunity for the continued growth and success of WB. "We are excited to become part of the growing U.S. Electrical Services family. USESI understands the importance of local decision making and emphasizes client service — which is crucial to our business and profitability."

"WB is a first-class company and a standard of excellence in national account electrical supply. We are extremely pleased to have WB as part of U.S. Electrical," said Richard Worthy, chairman and CEO of USESI. WB will retain its name and operations. The current management team, including owners Christopher Brown, Elisabeth Brown-Daley, and James Leahy, president of WB, will remain with the company.

USES! also owns Electrical Wholesalers Inc., Hartford, Conn.; and Monarch Electric Co., West Caldwell, N.J.

Rexel to Almost Double U.S. Sales with Plans to Acquire GE Supply

In a blockbuster acquisition that will make it the largest electrical distributor in North America, Rexel has agreed to buy GE Supply, a unit of General Electric, for \$725 million.

The announcement ends almost a year's worth of rumors that GE Supply was on the block. Dick Waterman, president and CEO of the newly created Rexel U.S. holding group, told *EM* in an exclusive interview July 11 that GE and Rexel were in discussions for the "better part of a year."

"It's been a long time coming," Waterman said. "I jumped into the fray when the opportunity presented itself. It's been going on for the better part of a year."

Rexel Inc., the North American subsidiary of Rexel SA, the largest electrical distributor in the world, posted \$2.5 billion in sales in 2005. Based in Dallas, the company has 4,945 employees and 300

branches in 34 states. The company ranks as the nation's sixth largest electrical distributor, according to *EW's* 2006 Top 200 listing of electrical distributors.

With \$2.2 billion in pro forma 2005 annual revenues for the transferred business to Rexel, GE Supply is a leading distributor of electrical products produced by GE and more than 200 other manufacturers. The business is headquartered in Shelton, Conn., and employs approximately 2,500 people in more than 150 locations around the world. GE Supply's core electrical distribution activities operate mainly in the United States.

Upon closing, which Rexel anticipates in early August, GE Supply will operate in the United States through a dual-banner strategy, serving an expanded customer base with a much larger product offering

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MARKET FORECAST: Inland Empire

*A series of reports
on the fastest-growing markets in the United States*

Inland Empire: The Fastest-Growing Market in the Golden State

Driven away from coastal communities near Los Angeles and in Orange County by insanely high home prices, many Golden State residents are flocking to a region approximately 80 miles east of Los Angeles known as the "Inland Empire." This exodus to Riverside and San Bernardino counties has created one of the hottest construction climates in the United States over the past few years.

Inland Empire communities such as Temecula, Hemet, Indio and Victorville have grown rapidly over the past two decades because homes and land are comparatively less expensive in those areas than in other parts of Southern California. The Inland Empire's population is large and still growing — roughly 4 million people live in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

As a point of comparison, fewer people live in Oregon. With an average annual population gain of nearly 57,000 new residents each year over the past four years, more people are moving into Riverside County than into any other county in the United States, according to a survey released in April by the U.S. Census Bureau.

"This marketplace was the gold mine of Southern California's residential explosion in the 1970s and 1980s," said John Defazio, principal of Electric Sales Unlimited, a manufacturers' rep based in Santa Fe Springs, Calif. "It has developed like crazy, and it has been a humongous residential market in the past. What came with that was more light commercial to support the residential. Then companies began to move out

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