



Laurel business stretching into Lauderdale Co.

By Brian Livingston

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— Given the state of the economy today, any news that affects potential jobs for Lauderdale County residents is good news.

So when Sue Bridges, who along with her husband George, who own International Fire & Safety Inc., in Laurel, get excited about the future of the company, it is partly because she knows this will mean more jobs for everyone surrounding Jones County.

"We already have two employees from Lauderdale County," said Bridges Monday by phone. "In the coming months I hope to be able to say even more."

A subsidiary of HCS Companies, International Fire & Safety has been awarded a \$5.5 million contract from the Department of Defense (DoD). In the next three to five years, according to Bridges, approximately 25 jobs will be created by this contract. Because it is a DoD contract, Bridges cant' say a great deal about what they will be doing for the DoD but she did say the contract will support and protect our nation's troops both at home and abroad.

International Fire & Safety provides fire protection and suppression systems for all types of businesses, agencies and fire departments. Fire extinguishers, dry chemical fire suppression systems, fire hoses, foam fire protection systems, and the sale of self-contained breathing apparatus are just a few of the products the company handles. Ricki Boone, who is head of the public relations and marketing department for International Fire & Safety said they have a very good presence in Lauderdale County now.

"We supply a large number of businesses and the Mississippi National Guard and NAS Meridian installations," said Boone. "This contract is a huge step for the company and we are ready to grow."

Bridges, who is the company CEO and president, said this first DoD contract is laying the ground work for future contracts. That is why she is so excited about the future.

"I feel like it is a blessing to have this kind of news during this economic down turn everyone has been experiencing," she said. "We have worked hard for 25 years to form a working relationship with the DoD and with state and local governments across the nation so we are pleased with this contract and the potential it carries with it."

International Fire & Safety Inc., is certified by the General Services Administration (GSA). The GSA is an independent agency of the United States government, established in 1949 to help manage and support the basic functioning of federal agencies. Its stated mission is to help federal agencies better serve the public by offering, at best value, superior workplaces, expert solutions, acquisition services and management policies.

In addition to being certified by the GSA, International Fire & Safety Inc., is also a member of the Woman Owned Small Business, Small Disadvantaged Business, the Women's Business Enterprise National Council, HUB Zone, Minority/Woman Owned Business Enterprise and Service Disabled Veteran Owned.

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