



THE ASSOCIATION & VOICE OF THE US SEWN PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

## **SEAMS Member Spotlight: AEC Narrow Fabrics**

*In this edition of SEAMS Member Spotlight, AEC Narrow Fabrics is featured. President and CEO Jeff Crisco answers our questions.*

**Company headquarters:** Asheboro, N.C.

**Year founded:** 1986

**Primary specialties:**

“We are producers of knit and woven narrow elastics. We add value through dyeing, printing and silicone application. We have a full development staff in both El Salvador and North Carolina that can assist in creating and refining customers’ specific needs.”

**Number of employees:**

- United States: 78
- El Salvador: 151

**Company history:**

In the mid-1980s, apparel manufacturers were thriving in North Carolina, and narrow fabrics played an important role in the production of underwear, athletic clothing and other apparel. Asheboro Elastics Corp.’s founding partners, including Keith Crisco, envisioned a company that employed local people and contributed to the community.

AEC launched in 1986 with headquarters and manufacturing facilities in Asheboro. By the early 2000s, founder and President Keith Crisco transformed AEC into a family-owned company, strengthening its core apparel business while expanding into new markets.

Through acquisitions and organic growth, AEC continued to expand while embracing new manufacturing and finishing technologies. Its reputation for knitted elastics grew to include woven products and rigid narrow fabrics. Enhanced color-matching, printing, weaving and finishing capabilities supported customers’ branding and manufacturing initiatives.

In 2011, AEC celebrated its 25th anniversary as a preferred supplier of narrow fabrics across multiple industries, with worldwide distribution and additional manufacturing in Central America to complement its North Carolina operations. In 2012, AEC acquired Telas Elasticas in Honduras, further expanding its Central American manufacturing footprint.



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**Markets served:**

Apparel, bedding, medical, industrial, automotive, furniture

**Company challenges and opportunities:**

“At AEC, challenges equate to opportunities. Our small, nimble structure allows us to move quickly, solve problems and offer solutions for our customers. While retaining valued customers remains a priority, expanding into new markets requires careful evaluation of projects within our R&D department.

“One challenge is maintaining a skilled workforce. Although AEC continues to benefit from deep expertise and long employee tenure, replacing retiring workers is increasingly difficult. We focus heavily on in-house training and development, as hiring walk-in candidates with strong textile backgrounds is largely a thing of the past.

“Rising operating costs also remain a challenge. Manufacturers continue to face higher costs and limited availability of raw materials, wear parts and labor. Maintaining large programs and consistent productivity is essential to absorbing these costs.

“Opportunities include diversifying our supply base, allowing for quick response while minimizing cost. Maintaining U.S.-based supply partners increases resilience against global disruptions. Growth in government contracts and Berry-compliant production has opened doors in several market sectors.

“Additionally, many overseas producers require container-load purchases. Our presence in the U.S. and this hemisphere enables faster turnaround, reduced transportation time and lower minimum order quantities, helping customers reduce costs and cash outlay.”

**Company differentiators:**

“This question and the one above are closely connected. Our greatest challenges often become our greatest opportunities. We serve a wide range of markets, including bedding, automotive, apparel and medical. From top to bottom, our employees are continuously learning, developing new products and pushing boundaries. While some producers focus narrowly on a single segment, we frequently take on complex new projects and have the disciplined processes in place to do so successfully.”

**Thoughts on the Made-in-America/Americas movement:**

“Watching this movement endure beyond what could have been a fleeting trend has been exciting. We are optimistic about the United States reemerging as a manufacturing leader.



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Beyond economic impact, we look forward to stronger partnerships, more integrated supply chains and the preservation of skilled labor and technical knowledge.

“We want young people to view textiles as a long-term career path. ‘Made in the USA’ should not be protectionist, but a competitive value. A smaller geographic footprint reduces carbon impact and creates more sustainable, cost-effective products for end users.”

**Biggest challenges and opportunities for U.S. manufacturing:**

“Many legacy customers have moved overseas or disappeared altogether. While AEC remains strong, sustaining a diverse customer base capable of weathering economic cycles and political shifts is essential.”

**Business outlook:**

“Maintaining a diverse customer base will continue to drive our future. We remain very positive about the outlook for our industry, the U.S. economy and the partnerships we have built.”

**General thoughts on the future**

“We are optimistic about the future, but staying closely connected to customers and monitoring government regulations is critical, as conditions can change in an instant.”

**Value SEAMS brings to the company**

“SEAMS has provided significant networking value for AEC.”