

# Zeeland Lumber, Hamilton Farm Bureau to merge

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**By Greg Chandler**  
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ZEELAND -- Two players on the local building scene are teaming to form what they hope will be a larger, more responsive company.

Zeeland Lumber & Supply Co., in business since the late 1940s, is merging with Hamilton Farm Bureau's Hamilton Truss and Hamilton Lumber divisions.

The merger takes effect Friday, with the new firm to take the Zeeland Lumber & Supply name, officials from both companies said Monday.

"This is not a buyout of Hamilton; this is a merger," Zeeland Lumber Chief Executive Officer Herk VandenBosch said.

Executives said the move will enhance existing strengths -- Hamilton's manufacturing capacity with Zeeland Lumber's delivery system, customer service and strong connection to the building industry.

A "significant number" of employees who work in the two Hamilton divisions will join Zeeland Lumber, although officials from the two companies declined to say how many. Zeeland Lumber employs 112 people.

The merged company's ownership will be 75 percent Zeeland Lumber and 25 percent Hamilton Farm Bureau, with a seven-member board -- five from Zeeland Lumber and two from Hamilton Farm Bureau -- overseeing it.

"This is a great opportunity for two similar-minded organizations to do something together," Hamilton Farm Bureau Chief Executive Officer Bob Fenton said.

"It should be great for both communities, both employee groups and customers."

Zeeland Lumber will take over operation of the Hamilton Truss plant, which has manufactured trusses for the commercial and residential markets for 45 years. It also will open a Zeeland Lumber concept store in Hamilton, joining similar stores in Zeeland, Comstock Park and Kalamazoo. Zeeland Lumber will continue to operate its subsidiary, Zeeland Contractor Services.

"It'll give us a very large presence on the west side of the state," VandenBosch said.

Zeeland Lumber was founded by his grandfather, John A. VandenBosch, as a box and pallet manufacturer, in 1947, and the company started selling lumber in 1954.

Hamilton Farm Bureau, which employs 165 people, will continue to operate its agronomy, egg, energy and feed divisions.