

The Springfield Underground: what exactly is down there

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SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – The Springfield Underground is one of the more mysterious businesses in the city. There have been rumors of veteran hospitals and the whole thing being stocked with cheese.

“I think the fact that we are out of sight. It’s always interesting to me when somebody thinks they’re the first one to discover us even though we’ve been here for 50 or 60 years. I think the fact that you don’t see anything, it drives some narratives that are a little more interesting than what really goes on down here.” says John Griesemer, President and CEO of the Erlen Group.

Griesemer says the land is about 600 acres that have been mined over the last 70 years. They removed the limestone product to be used in construction products like concrete for roads and bridges. With the open space below, the Springfield Underground was created.

The industrial complex has 3.5 million square feet of underground space. They run about 500 to 600 tractor-trailers that go through every day. There are about 3.5 miles worth of roadways. Trains also run through it.

According to Griesemer, they have grown about 680,000 square feet in the last five years and are hoping to widen the road leading to the Springfield Underground, La Compte Road, in northeast Springfield.

They mostly work with companies in the food industry such as Kraft, Pepsi, and Vital Farms. Griesemer says about 75% of the 3.5 million square feet is food product storage and about 60% of the space is refrigerated.

“There’s an enormous energy saving being underground if you are going to refrigerate space because you’re not dealing with the temperature fluctuation of the outside environment,” says Griesemer. He says most of the natural caves in the area run about 60 degrees and the Underground is no different.

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