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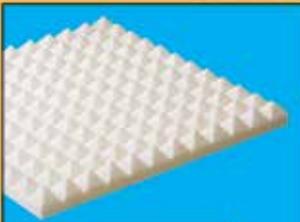




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Today's Industrial Products & Solutions[™] is published ten times a year on a monthly basis by H&F Media Group, Inc., 951 1st Ave. W. Alabaster, AL 35007 USA. *Today's Industrial Products & Solutions[™]* is distributed free to qualified subscribers. Non-qualified subscription rates are \$57.00 per year in the U.S. and Canada and \$84.00 per year for foreign subscribers (surface mail). U.S. Postage paid at Birmingham, Alabama and additional mailing offices.

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Automator America Releases the AC500-3.0



Automator America announces release of the AC500-3.0 Universal Controller for their line of pneumatic, electric and scribe marking systems.

The AC500 Universal Dot Peen controller has been the benchmark for the marking industry since its release in 2010. The 3.0 release increases the flash memory, changes to an even faster/cooler processor and includes software enhancements requested by the market. This new release also extends the list of competitors marking heads that can be operated by the controller. We have also expanded our abilities to operate and communicate with outside equipment including control of any smart motor.

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Weighing in at 1.46 kg (3.22 lbs.) this controller has a fireproof and dust resistant resin enclosure and includes fan vents for better air circulation. This new light weight controller has been approved by SABIC and is designed to ensure reliability in high stress working conditions.

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Plastic Cooling Towers Survive the Test of Time

Many of the world's first cooling towers featuring seamless HDPE plastic shells are still going strong in commercial and industrial installations around the globe.

When you consider the products introduced to the marketplace in the early 1980s, most of them are no longer with us. During that time, for example, the first personal computers were running the DOS operating system, the DeLorean "Back to the Future" sports car hit the street, and Sony was offering the world its Betamax video cassette player and the Walkman personal music player.

The year 1981 also saw the introduction of the world's first 150-ton molded seamless plastic cooling tower. Featuring a seamless high-density polyethylene (HDPE) shell, this breakthrough design was essentially impervious to the corrosion problems that plagued conventional, metal-clad cooling towers, resulting in exorbitant downtime for frequent repairs or replacement.

Today, after 34 years of virtually continuous operation, some early HDPE cooling towers are still running strong, including the one installed by chemical manufacturer Ardmore Inc. in Newark, NJ.

Ardmore's cooling tower is the second Paragon® unit manufactured by Delta Cooling Towers, Inc. (deltacooling.com). In the early 1970s Delta developed the first HDPE towers with forced draft models ranging from 10-100 cooling tons. The Paragon model that Ardmore installed was introduced in 1981 as a line of induced-draft, counter flow design that offered 55-250 cooling ton capacities. Ardmore's unit is a 150-ton model.

Besides an advanced design, one of the most unique features of these cooling towers was its 10-year warranty (20-year currently), which was then inconceivable for a conventional cooling tower.

When he first looked at the HDPE cooling tower, Ardmore president Albert Sharpouse thought that the unitary plastic shell would last far longer and operate more economically than metal-clad cooling tower designs.

"We chose the Delta tower because plastic is non-corrosive, so it would last far longer," Sharpouse explains. Secondly, we use city water for makeup in the cooling tower, and the HDPE shell design would not require expensive water treatment chemicals (only dichloride tablets are used), so that would provide ongoing economies.

"Ardmore, which manufactures a variety of chemicals, uses the cooling tower to extract heat from the water flowing through the heat exchangers and jacketed production vessels as well as a process flaker. Sharpouse notes that while some of the chemicals and allied products that his company produces have changed over the years, the application and cooling system equipment has remained unchanged.



Featuring a seamless high-density polyethylene (HDPE) shell, this breakthrough design was essentially impervious to the corrosion problems that plagued conventional, metal-clad cooling towers, resulting in exorbitant downtime for frequent repairs or replacement.

Located on top of the roof of the building, the cooling tower's unique design gives it a distinctive, somewhat futuristic look, less industrial-looking than many traditional towers, says Ardmore's mechanical engineer, Walter Sommer.

"Although we've now had the tower a long time, it still looks great, especially when you compare it with some of the conventional cooling tower structures," Sommer says. "Also, with those galvanized metal-clad models you have a lot of maintenance. After a few years they can start to disintegrate and have to be replaced."

Sommer feels that some people don't realize that cooling towers are exposed to continuous evaporation, salts and other aggressive elements that contribute to corrosion. In some cases these towers are affected by other destructive

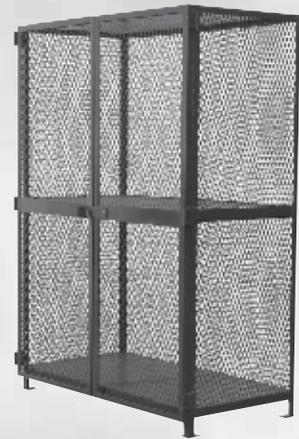


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factors such as acids, aerosols, salt air or other contaminants that are very rough on metal-clad towers.

When a cooling tower has to be replaced, the consequential downtime can be noticeably damaging to the owner's production schedule and bottom line.

Sommer adds that the HDPE tower still provides a "green" benefit after 34 years of operation, not only because of its longevity but also because it doesn't require harsh water treatment chemicals.

Further consideration of the HDPE cooling tower will show additional "green" merits including improved sustainability, greater energy efficiency, added water conservation and smaller carbon footprint.

Sommer says maintenance and downtime have been minimal, as well. While he has replaced the motor and bearings over the years, in the overall, service has been nominal.

A two-speed motor powers Ardmore's cooling tower fan and water circulator with a belt-driven fan. While many cooling tower users specify a direct drive motor (Delta's standard offering now) for energy savings, Sommer is happy with the belt-driven design.

"The motor with the belt drive has been very reliable over the years," he explains. "In the summertime we run it on high, and in the wintertime we just switch it over to low speed. That is part of the beauty of the cooling tower's design simplicity, and why it has been so good for our application."

Although Delta's cooling tower design have evolved since the 1980s, offering a variety of single and modular design with up to 5,000 cooling ton capacities, the company still offers Paragon series models. The company also offers engineering and installation assistance to aid companies such as Ardmore in making the best selection for their applications.

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The HDPE cooling tower seen here has additional "green" merits including improved sustainability, greater energy efficiency, added water conservation and smaller carbon footprint.

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Fire Extinguisher Selection for Petro-Chemical Facilities



Petro-Chemical facilities face daunting tasks in preventing and suppressing fires. With a tight energy market and unprecedented consolidation of energy companies, plant protection departments and refinery fire departments have found themselves in a position of doing more with less. At the same time, the world's increasing demand for oil has placed new importance on production, pipeline, manufacturing and marketing facilities for oil companies. The loss of a major facility affects our economy and poses concerns about our national security and independence. Now more than ever, it is necessary to provide prevention techniques along with a strategy of "defense in depth" against the possibilities of fire and explosion in petro-chemical facilities.

Ever vigilant prevention methods continue to be improved upon in these facilities. Hot work permits, lock-out tag-out procedures, outside contractor training, gas detection systems and plant modernization help to prevent fires from happening. Should a fire occur, employee training, new suppression technologies, first responder tactics and mutual aid infrastructures provide layers of "defense -in-depth" response as an incident grows in size and magnitude. At the very first step in these various levels of defense, after prevention, is the seemingly mundane and low tech fire extinguisher. Dry chemical extinguishers offer speed, portability and rapid knock down of flammable liquid fires that cannot be matched by most other equipment. Their proper selection, maintenance and training are essential in a successful use of these important fire fighting tools as part of a "defense-in-depth" program.

These three elements can be summarized by a concept that has been used by fire equipment distributors in the U.K referred to as the "Triangle of Safety".

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Each key element of the triangle is dependant upon the other. With the best selection of equipment and the best maintenance program, without an effective training program, the system fails. With an effective training program and the best equipment available, if maintenance is not performed according to the equipment manufacturer's recommendations, the system fails. An effective training program and proper maintenance will still result in system failure if the proper equipment was not put into service. Each one of these elements will be discussed in this article, but first let's discuss the role of fire extinguishers, their advantages and disadvantages in a petro-chemical setting.

Proper Equipment.

Portability: Fire extinguishers have some unique and distinct advantages, particularly as it relates to the first line of defense in a flammable liquid fire situation. One of these advantages is portability. Fire extinguishers, whether hand portable or wheeled, in addition to being placed throughout the hazard areas of a petro-chemical plant, can be carried to nearly any part of the facility including areas where hot work is being performed. Since they are not dependent upon any fixed infrastructure, like hose lines and foam delivery systems, they can be quickly deployed throughout the facility, even in anticipation of a problem. This portability comes with a price – limited agent quantity. Your fire fighting capabilities will be limited by skill, training and the amount of equipment you could carry (or wheel) to the incident.

Speed: Another advantage that dry chemical extinguishers have in flammable liquid fire situations is speed. Getting fire extinguishing agent onto the fire may be as simple and as quick as Pull Aim Squeeze Sweep (P.A.S.S.) depending on the type and size of the extinguisher being used. Flammable liquid fires grow and intensify very quickly so speed is a large factor in achieving successful extinguishment in the fire's initial stages, or perhaps more importantly, knocking the intensity of the fire down to allow personnel to get to a safe area and gaining time for first responders to arrive. Speed, like portability, comes with a trade-off – discharge time. Depending on the size of the extinguisher, the flow rate and other factors, discharge time may be as little as 15 seconds for a hand portable and up to 60 seconds for a large wheeled extinguisher.

Rapid "Knock-Down" and Flow Rates: Dry chemical has another advantage over other extinguishing agents when applied to flammable liquid fires – rapid and profound effect on the flame front, commonly referred to as flame "knock-down". The effect of dry chemical application on a flammable liquid fire will be determined by several factors – the type of flammable liquid fire involved – the flow rate of the extinguisher being used as expressed in lbs/sec. – the operator's application of the chemical to the fire. The flow rate of the extinguisher can be a key issue contributing to not only successful extinguishment, but also more rapid extinguishment of incipient flammable liquid fires other than simple spill fires. As another way of expressing dry chemical flow rates, think of the difference between fighting a flammable liquid fire with a single 60 gpm fog nozzle compared with fighting the same size and type of flammable liquid fire

with a 90 gpm fog nozzle, the 90 gpm fog nozzle will have more effect on the fire and accomplish extinguishment more easily and more rapidly than the 60 gpm nozzle.

Flammable liquid fires can be divided into 5 categories: Spill Fire, Flammable liquid in depth (like a pan fire), Obstacle fires, Gravity-fed/Three Dimensional (like a punctured drum dripping or flowing onto the floor), Flammable liquid or gas under pressure (like a failed flange or packing or a broken propane valve or line). All five of types of flammable liquid fires are likely to occur in a petro-chemical setting, however, only one type, flammable liquid in depth, is used in the UL testing protocol, since it is most easily duplicated and repeatable with consistent circumstances. For this reason, ANSI/UL 711 uses flammable liquid in depth fires for rating the relative fire fighting capability of dry chemical extinguishers. Below is a chart outlining the UL Class B rating, the corresponding size pan used for the fire test and the minimum discharge time assigned to the extinguisher that bears the UL rating.

Rating	Min. D. Time	Pan Size
20B	8 Sec.	50 Ft. Sq.
40B	13 Sec.	100 Ft. Sq.
60B	17 Sec.	150 Ft. Sq.
80B	20 Sec.	200 Ft. Sq.
120B	26 Sec.	300 Ft. Sq.

The concept behind the minimum required discharge time for the higher ratings was to allow the novice operator more time to correct any application mistakes that were made. This also increases the time that the extinguisher operator will be exposed to the fire incident, the associated radiant heat and possible spread of the fire. Live fire tests using various flow rates under controlled circumstances conducted by several manufacturers in the 1950's and 1960's proved that a higher flow rate would result in faster extinguishment of most flammable liquid fire situations. Many facilities would prefer to hit the fire with a higher flow rate to increase the "knock down" even though the effective discharge time is decreased because it limits the operators exposure to the fire in its initial stages.

A common rating available for a 20 lb. Extinguisher would be 120B:C, however, it may be more advantageous when choosing extinguishers for a petro-chemical facility to use a 20 lb extinguisher with a lower "B" rating such as 40B:C or even 20B:C because of the increased flow rate. A 40B rated 20 lb extinguisher would have nearly twice the flow rate of the 20 lb extinguisher that has a 120B rating and therefore would have a more profound effect on the fire and more success when dealing with gravity-fed fires and flammable liquids under pressure. 20 lb. and 30 lb. Dry chemical extinguishers with increased flow rates are available from several manufacturers and may be designated "Fast Flow" or "High Flow" models. Regarding flammable gases under pressure – it is not usually suggested that these fires be extinguished since a vapor cloud may form that would compound the problem. The best way to deal with pressure fires is obviously to shut off the source of fuel through the "blocking" of valves – isolating the leak point.

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NFPA 10 – 2013 Edition requires “Large capacity dry chemical extinguishers of 10 lb (4.54 kg) or greater and a discharge rate of 1 lb/sec (0.45 kg/sec) or more...” for the protection of pressurized flammable liquid, pressurized flammable gas, obstacle and three dimensional fires. See 5.5.1, 5.5.2 and 5.5.4.

Discharge Ranges. Another option available from different extinguisher manufacturers is a longer effective discharge range. Longer range may be necessary to reach potential hazards in the facility either in a vertical or horizontal plane. It may also be of benefit to employ long range extinguishers to keep personnel back further from the fire incident for safety and a more effective means of escape. A typical effective range for a “standard” extinguisher may be 12 to 15 feet while a “long-range” extinguisher may be 25 to 30 feet for a hand portable extinguisher and 40 to 50 feet for a wheeled extinguisher. Long range, coupled with a higher flow rate could give the greatest knock down on the fire from the greatest possible distance making the extinguisher more effective and safer to operate.

Corrosion Protection. Since many petro-chemical facilities are located near oceans, bays estuaries and rivers, corrosion can be a major concern for fire extinguishers. Many manufacturers offer special options on extinguishers to extend the life of the unit in harsh environments. Different components using stainless steel, chrome plated brass or specially anodized aluminum are available in addition to “CR” paint processes to retard the rate of corrosion. Even hot-dipped galvanized extinguisher shells and wheeled unit carriages are available. If corrosion is a problem, these options are available from several different manufacturers and should be considered based upon the environment where the extinguishers will be installed.

Manufacturer’s Recommended Maintenance. Once the proper equipment has been chosen that matches the needs of the facility, including long range and increased agent flow options, it must be maintained properly in order to be effective. NFPA 10 requires inspections of extinguishers at 30 day intervals. These inspections are a “quick check” of the unit to assure reasonable confidence in its operation. NFPA 10 – 2013 Edition has detailed information on how and what to check on the extinguisher during a 30 day inspection. NFPA 10 also requires an annual maintenance to be performed on every extinguisher. Annual maintenance is a thorough examination of the unit and should be performed only by “...trained persons having available the appropriate servicing manual(s), the proper types of tools, recharge materials, lubricants, and manufacturers replacement parts or parts specifically listed for use in the fire extinguisher”. If you are currently performing annual maintenance “in house” by using full time employees, you may want to re-evaluate that position. Unless you have employees trained, equipped and solely dedicated to this function, your maintenance program will be inadequate. It may be more advantageous to contract this work out to fire equipment distributors who have professional technicians that are trained, have the appropriate parts, manuals and supplies to do the job properly. In any case, it is imperative that the maintenance be performed in accordance with NFPA 10, local codes and the manufacturer’s maintenance manual. Some manufacturers offer warranties up to 12 years in length as long as the equipment has been maintained by one of their authorized distributors and that maintenance has been performed in accordance with their

manual. As part of the “Triangle of Safety”, even the most expensive equipment and comprehensive training will be wasted if proper maintenance is not performed.

Effective Training. Fire extinguisher training is necessary for effective, safe extinguisher use and required by OSHA. Live fire training exercises, still considered the most effective method for training employees on using extinguishers to suppress flammable liquid fires, is becoming increasingly difficult perform. Ever stricter air quality standards and employee scheduling make conducting live fire training exercises on site nearly impossible. Some fire extinguisher manufacturers still offer live fire training at off site facilities on a limited basis and there are many industrial fire schools throughout the country. Fire Equipment distributors will often offer specialized or customized extinguisher training that is tailored to a facilities particular needs and schedule.

Every effort should be made to assure that the equipment being used for training is the same as the equipment that is available to the employees in the facility. Many facilities have taken extinguishers out of service, because of age or condition, and relegated them to use as “training units”. This is not a sound practice for several reasons. If the extinguishers were no longer considered serviceable, then they should be removed and destroyed – if they are not deemed reliable or safe for in plant service, they are not appropriate for use in training. The older extinguishers may have different flow rates, effective discharge ranges and nozzle discharge patterns than the extinguishers in the plant. Training with one set of performance specifications and then using a piece of equipment that performs differently in the plant during an incident is asking for trouble – use the same extinguishers that you have in the plant for training the employees.

Many options are available today that were unavailable 15 years ago. With the current widespread use of the Internet, www.fireextinguisher.com provides a free training session in the classes of fire, proper extinguisher use and will even issue a certificate upon successful completion. Computer based fire simulators are available and cleaner burning propane fueled mobile training props are also being used.

Whichever form of training that you choose, make sure that it fits your company’s policies on emergency response, your employee’s needs and your particular hazard or situation. Always, always stress the importance of turning in an alarm immediately on any fire incident and confirming safe evacuation routes. If your plant has purchased the best equipment available and has taken great care to maintain the equipment properly, it will be of no use if the employees that will use the equipment have had little or ineffective training in the proper use of that equipment.

By using the “Triangle of Safety” concept when discussing fire extinguishers for petro-chemical plants, facilities can optimize the effectiveness of their “defense-in depth” strategy toward fire protection. Choose the proper equipment for the particular hazard and situation, establish a quality maintenance program that follows the manufacturers manuals and provide effective training for employees – then the triangle is complete and success will be assured. •

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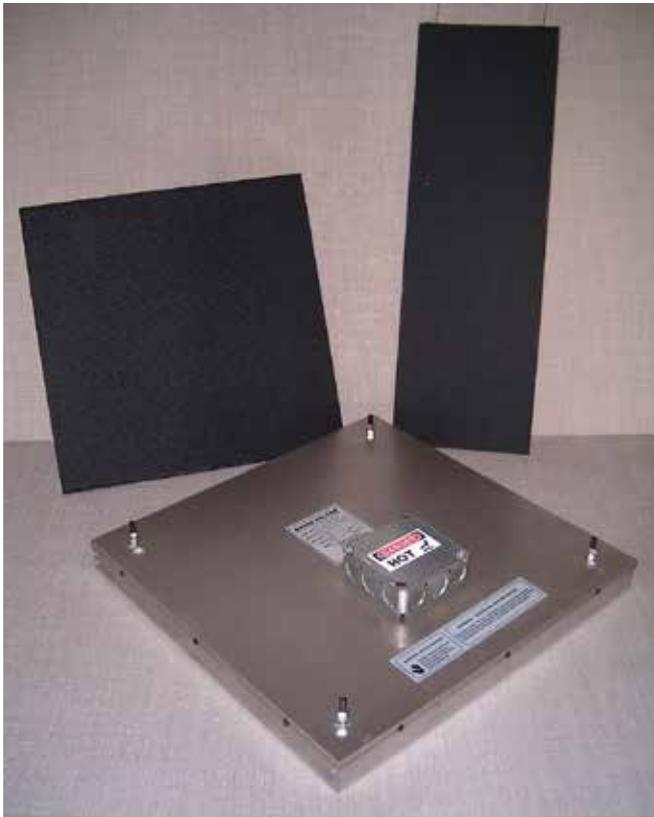
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Oven and dryer OEMs can benefit significantly by teaming with suppliers to specify infrared elements



Whether custom or off-the-shelf, properly sized, infrared heating elements can have dramatic, positive effect on the performance and even cost of the heating apparatus as well as its application.

Infrared heating technology has become prevalent among industrial ovens, dryers and heaters used by a multitude of industries ranging from metalworking, thermoforming and printing, to the manufacture of adhesives or pulp and paper.

The OEMs who manufacture these ovens and heaters use infrared heating elements, which are more energy efficient, cheaper to operate, provide controllable heat, and are significantly more environmentally friendly.

Infrared heating elements are available in standard, off-the-shelf designs such as flat panel models, but there is a host of custom infrared elements that have

been developed by OEM suppliers to meet the unique requirements of specific applications.

Whether custom or off-the-shelf, properly sized, infrared heating elements can have dramatic, positive effects on the performance and even cost of the heating apparatus as well as its application. So, it benefits the OEM to collaborate with its supplier before settling on element design parameters and specifications.

Standard or custom?

Oven/heater applications can vary widely among market segments, even within the same industry. For example, within the printing industry, different heaters or elements are used by screen printing, paper, and 3D printing industries.

“There may be some standard specifications within the OEM models available for some specific applications, but in many cases the OEMs don’t have the in-house technical resources to determine exactly whether an off-the-shelf element is suitable or if a custom design is required,” says Jesse Stricker, founder of INTEK Corporation (Union, MO). “Or they may not have the experience to consider all of the intricacies of heat transfer, reflection and controls.”

INTEK is a manufacturer of heaters and elements for industrial ovens and dryers used in continuous process heating for production automation and material handling in a wide range of industries.

Stricker, who has been involved with the industrial heating field for over 40 years, says that in many cases it is quite practical to tailor infrared heating elements to provide the exacting performance necessary for the heater/oven to provide optimum productivity and minimum downtime in a given application. “To say the least, the specifications should be confirmed with the heating element supplier”, he adds.

Determining specifications

Whether standard or custom element design is anticipated, certain design criteria should be established with the element supplier at the outset.

“OEM designers sometimes use different terminology, so the first question we usually ask is ‘Do you need a

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A close-up photograph of a human hand with the index finger pointing upwards. The word "Like" is written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font across the middle of the index finger. The background is a light gray gradient with several faint, white, rounded rectangular outlines scattered around, resembling a digital interface or social media theme.

Like



Infrared heating elements are available in standard, off-the-shelf designs such as flat panel models

filament, element or heater,” says INTEK’s Stricker.

Basically, a filament is the bare heating wire (usually nichrome) that generally requires some sort of additional construction to provide a finished, usable element.

An element generally consists of a filament wire encapsulated in a ceramic body or suspended by ceramic bushings and includes terminal wires necessary for connecting to supply power. Heaters generally consist of a heating element and insulation contained in a sheet metal housing suitable for installation using brackets or structural framework of some design.

Next, what is the desired size of the element which is determined by the actual heating surface needed for your application? What are the dimensions of the heater frame? Where will this be mounted or installed (allow necessary clearance for good fit)?

What are the electrical specifications: watts, volts, amps, ohms? Does it require single-phase or 3-phase operation?

The next thing to be considered is how the filament, element or heater is connected to supply power and what the location is of each element lead wire, as well as the method of attachment or termination required.

“The element supplier should be able to resolve all of these (above) requirements,” says Stricker.

Confirming specifications

Whatever the element design specifications, they should be discussed and confirmed with the supplier whenever possible.

“I believe it is important that a supplier is willing and able to provide support from design to completion, that you get a personal response, and get to talk with someone who has experience with the application in question,” says Stricker. “I feel that the most effective way to provide support is through face-to-face meetings with the OEM’s design group. That may be a little bit more time consuming, and may involve flying or driving some distance, but we feel it is important. Of course, in some instances Skype might be as effective as meeting the people in person.”

Stricker says INTEK also provides its OEM customers with an approval drawing for each new element design.

“The digital drawing illustrates our design discussions and how we understand the requirements of the application,” he explains. “It is an

important tool that helps us obtain customer approval before going into production.”

Meaningful value-added

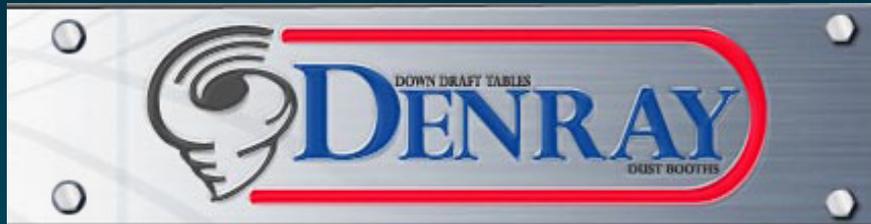
Value-added services can in some cases be vital to the success of a customer/supplier relationship. For example, they can include extra services or assurances that supplies will be available when required.

“Expect thoroughness from your supplier and good response time,” Stricker advises. When his company completes a design they offer to stock the element so customers won’t have delivery problems. This service is performed in several different stages: raw materials, work in progress, and finished goods are all kept on hand. This type of service enables OEM customers to meet their delivery requirements just in time when they are in short supply.

Stricker adds that it is important to OEMs that suppliers maintain strict confidentiality regarding product designs, applications and financial arrangements.

“These days virtually all products and processes have some proprietary aspects”, he says. “That is why we share design concepts – not proprietary information. This is an important distinction that allows us to help our OEM customers achieve their goals in a unique manner, and yet protect their product and process information at the same time.”

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Proximity: the New Business

Fortune 500 manufacturers look to speed repairs while reducing costs by working

Given the increasing cost of ongoing maintenance and repair at any industrial plant, many manufacturers are discovering the value and advantages of working with a repair service company that not only has the size and expertise, but also is as nearby as possible.

Proximity, after all, has many advantages for the manufacturer. First and foremost, having a repair service in close proximity means repairs can be completed faster and the maximum possible uptime maintained. Today, most manufacturing plants, need replacement parts quickly.

Proximity also means faster service and reductions in shipping costs.

For plant maintenance departments, the savings achieved by being close to a reputable repair service company impacts the balance sheet by extending the life of plant assets and keeping them in production.

Considering the vast range of parts that need servicing in any given plant - such as drives, PLC's, servo motors, CNC machines, spindles, ballscrews, hydraulic components, robotics, material handling components, valves, safety curtains, pumps, actuators, and torque tools - the cost savings can amount to millions.

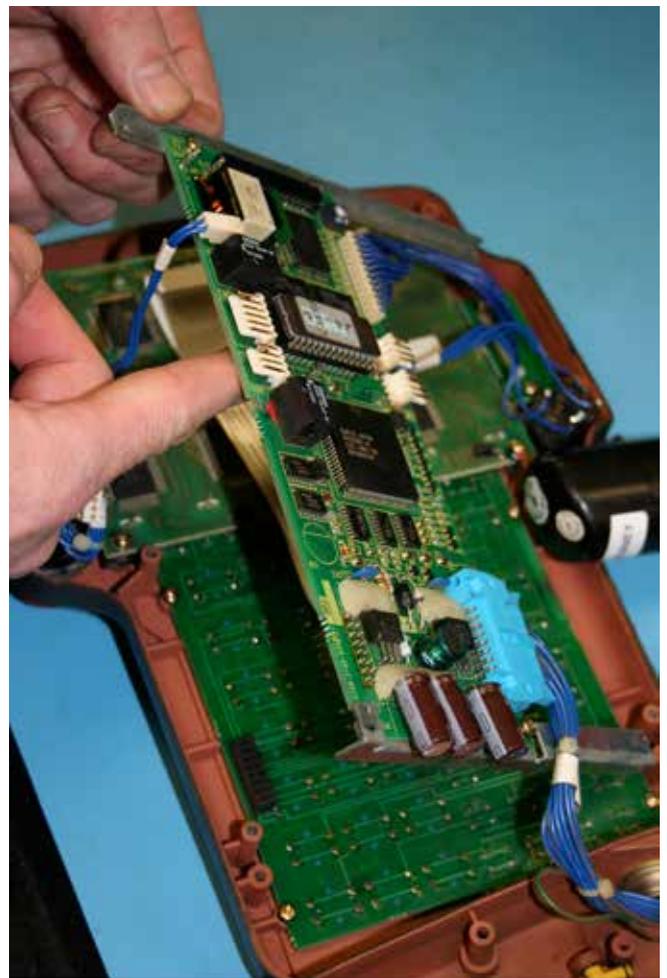
Take the case of the automobile manufacturing industry, currently enjoying a renaissance. *No summer vacation for swamped Fiat Chrysler*, read the headline of a May 15, 2015 article in the *USA Today* supplement. The story listed a major US auto engine manufacturer in Michigan as one of the impacted plants.

The plant, like so many similar large manufacturing plants, requires constant maintenance of its motors, spindles, actuators, etc. To keep up with the demand, the plant uses nearby K+S Services for its repair services on an almost daily basis. The fact that only ten miles separates the two, accounts for much of this successful relationship.

Headquartered in Southgate, Michigan, K+S Services, Inc. is unique in the repair service business as it pursued a strategic model of expansion by opening new locations in close proximity to existing major plants, as well as geographic regions that attract and support U.S.-based manufacturing.

The company now operates eleven facilities across the globe, including the U.S., Mexico, Canada, and Europe. More than just a store front with a lone representative that coordinates with a larger office, these repair facilities are fully functioning shops with managers, technicians and spare parts at every location.

This business model not only delivers all the benefits of high quality repair services, but provides these services in close proximity to where they are needed.



Having a repair service in close proximity means repairs can be completed faster and the maximum possible uptime maintained.

s Model for Repair Services

with international repair services that offer full service locations in close proximity

Building on a strong relationship and performance, K+S was recently awarded UTC Supplier Gold status by demonstrating “best in class” quality and delivery performance, implementation of a lean culture, and overall strong customer satisfaction. Achieving Competitive Excellence, or ACE, is the UTC operating system for promoting quality, delivery, efficiency and customer satisfaction. UTC Supplier Gold is a program that facilitates and accelerates supplier performance improvements which recognizes suppliers who have achieved exceptional performance.

In the case of the engine manufacturer, for example, K+S Services



Considering the vast range of parts that need servicing in any given plant, such as servo motors, the cost savings of having a close repair service can amount to millions.

maintains a spindle-repair facility within five miles that handles emergency needs. From a logistics standpoint alone, turnaround time is practically negligible. Cases exist where a part has been picked up in the morning, fixed, and returned that same afternoon.

If physical proximity in terms of location has its benefits, there is no relationship closer than having a repair service representative stationed within the plant itself.

In K+S' Smart Total Asset Management Program (STAMP), customers are assigned a full-time, on-site account manager to serve as a one-stop facilitator and manager of all repairable assets within a specific plant.

This includes tracking all repairs, expediting when required, shipping or delivering to and from the nearby repair facility, maintaining database integrity, streamlining and stabilizing procedures, generating a wide variety of reports and keeping the customer informed throughout the process. The facilitator works with the plant to establish min and max levels to ensure effective lead-time fulfillment of repairs and uptime.

When the part arrives at the repair facility, technicians conduct an evaluation to identify the probable cause of failure, and then repair and test the part per the manufacturing test procedures. After being repaired the item is tested with the associated closed loop test system for the specified duration. The part and its associated documentation are then sent back to the plant.

Proof of the success of this business model rests with the number of corporations ascribing to it. Major companies such as Continental, GM, Fire Stone, Ford, Goodyear, GE Air, Chrysler, and UTC are current STAMP customers. K+S successfully services well over 800 manufacturers.

This success points to a very good reason why the local repair-service model should see even greater adoption by more manufacturers in the immediate future.

For more information, contact K+S Services, Inc. Headquarters; 15677 Noecker Way; Southgate, MI 48195; (734) 1-374-0400 or 800-542-1331; sales@k-and-s.com.

www.k-and-s.global.com •

Small Quantity Metal Supplier Handles Growth with Easy Transition to Linux-based ERP Software

Philadelphia's Metal Stock enables higher sales growth with enhanced integrated ERP software and customer support.

With a growing number of manufacturers, machine shops, tool and dye makers, and contractors in the Delaware Valley around Philadelphia requiring metal parts, business is good for Metal Stock, a small quantity metal supplier in the area.

Most metal vendors and distributors in the region responded to rising demand by consolidating their service centers and catering mostly to those buying large volumes. As a result, they left the many who require less by the wayside, facing longer delivery times and fewer choices.

In contrast, Metal Stock kept its faith in the smaller buyer who doesn't want much but still needs fast, efficient service and a wide selection. Consequently, its business has boomed. So much so, that in 2004 president Ken Bell ended his company's 10-year relationship with a franchiser and set the metal supplier on an independent course from which they have never looked back.

But by the fall of 2005, both Bell and his controller, Corinne Wightman, knew that to handle the company's swelling sales volume profitably they needed Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software with more power and capacity to efficiently manage key business functions through one shared information database. So they called in their computer consultant and president of VS Info Systems, Harry Van Steenacker.

"They had been reliably using Vigilant Solutions for 10 years, but it was no longer big enough for them," says Van Steenacker. "Their sales and staff had grown so much they were constantly filling up their accounting files, having to purge them, and losing much of their sales history. That's when I helped them make the move to Oneir Solutions."

The new integrated ERP software had a familiar look and feel, yet provided sales order taking and invoicing for phone orders and over-the-counter sales, purchase order and inventory management for material requirements planning and customer relationship

management, as well as accounts receivable, accounts payable, and general ledger for financial control.

But the Oneir ERP software is downloaded to Van Steenacker with a customized, reliable yet nimble modern day Linux operating system ready to install on either a Windows or Linux server. This supplies not only a solid foundation for applications running on the server, but also makes it relatively easy to integrate new software with legacy applications.

"Linux is basically communications software that works beautifully with Windows Terminal Services, which allows Metal Stock to manage Oneir Solutions alongside all its Windows-based applications very comfortably," says Steenacker.

Metal Stock changed to the new ERP software over a weekend to keep business interruption to a minimum.

Van Steenacker co-coordinated the technical side of the transition while Wightman did the internal preparatory balancing and verified the correctness of the converted data afterwards.

"We shut down on Saturday and opened up again on Monday morning," recalls Wightman, a former chartered public accountant (CPA) who says she has witnessed many transitions from one accounting system to another in her career. "Everything was working. I was very impressed with the smoothness of the transition."

That migration also meant no more disruptive shutdowns for Wightman and Metal Stock.

"Before I had to remove paid invoices and purchase orders from our storage files," says Wightman. "With our growth, every three months or so I had to shut down in mid-afternoon because the system was full. With Oneir Solutions, I haven't had to shut down at all."

Nor has there been much of a time-robbing learning curve for Metal Stock staff.

"It is such an easy system to use because it's not complicated," says Wightman. "I needed no training or adjustment time, which surprised me because as a CPA I have gone through transitions with other companies that have been nightmares. I had set aside a lot of hours to train each of our six salesmen on the new system, but I ended up spending about half an hour doing it."

Wightman credits not only Harry Van Steenacker's careful planning for the ease of transition but also direct help from Oneir Solutions Inc. technical support staff ahead of time.

"They went through all our records with me to see if they were all ready for conversion," explains Wightman. "We spotted a few things so we fixed them. In previous transitions I've experienced, financial statements you've customized do not make it, so you have to put them all back into the system again. But with Oneir Solutions, everything came over, and I didn't have to re-customize anything."

Consultant Van Steenacker concludes, "You don't need customer support very often because they have such solid applications, but when you do need it, it's the best in the world."

For Ken Bell of Metal Stock, the smooth transition to the Linux-based ERP software means that he can get on quickly with growing the company. Already one of the biggest small-quantity metal suppliers in North America with more than 2,000 customers and several thousand items stocked in and sold from its 37,500 square-foot facility, Ken is thinking expansion.

"Oneir Solutions has opened up our bottom line," says Ken. "It's extremely reliable and can do sophisticated reporting. The sales analysis reports that Corinne generates from it, for example, show us what percentage of our sales is coming from which customers, and how that is changing from year to year. So we can make plans for growth based on some hard facts."

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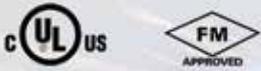
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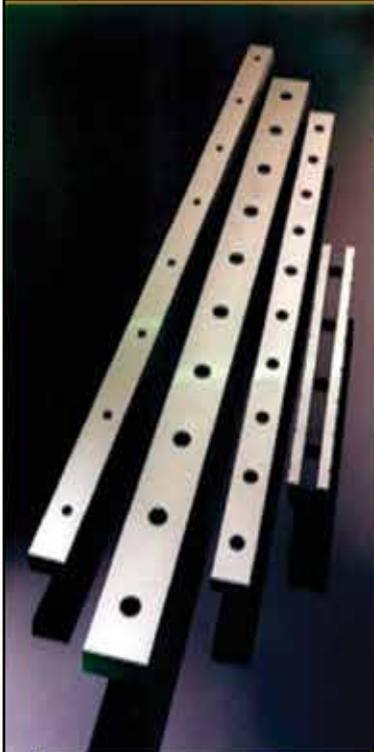
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