

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

DAUBERT CHEMICAL ADDS VALUE THE OLD SCHOOL WAY WITH COLLINS BUS COMPANY

Collins Bus Corporation (Hutchinson, KS) reinvented itself through implementation of LEAN manufacturing principals. Daubert Chemical's contribution in improved product performance, improved packaging, and reduced downtime helped enable improvements at Collins.

After the Storm:



At left is Collins Bus Co.'s newly rebuilt manufacturing plant. At right is the facility after it was hit by a storm in 2008.

Rebuilding the Bus Plant

When a microburst inflicted heavy damage on Collins Bus Corp.'s manufacturing facility, employees pulled together to keep bus production rolling throughout the repair process.

It was a stormy night in the summer of 2008, a few employees were working the night shift at Collins Bus Corp.'s manufacturing facility. The night was experiencing a severe thunderstorm, but a more destructive phenomenon was brewing.

Suddenly, the area around the South Hutchinson, Kan., bus plant was hit by a microburst — a powerful meteorological event similar to a hail storm. Heavy rain fell at the top of a thunderhead about 100 miles and 100 feet above the ground at extremely high speeds.

The microburst on July 24, 2008 — created winds estimated at 120 miles per hour. The winds struck the northern end of the Collins facility, inflicting heavy damage.

"What really was unusual was that in just a few sections of the roof, and our sales and engineering offices were destroyed," says Kurt Topp, president of Collins Bus Corp.

Fortunately, the bus employees who were working that night were able to take refuge in the company's storm shelter, and no one was injured. But major repairs would have to be made.

Evening bus plant

As Collins America's largest builder of Type A school and activity buses, Collins' manufacturing facility had evolved over the years to meet growing demand.

The reconstruction of the plant was originally scheduled in 2010, a schedule which was called in 2008. Then in 2007 the company launched a major reorganization of the production flow through the plant in order to begin a Lean manufacturing initiative — a production process that works to optimize efficiency.

After the microburst hit in 2008, Collins quickly had to mitigate the damage and protect vital equipment.

"We were in the middle of our busiest production period, with over 1,200 buses on the ground to support our customers' school equipment needs," Topp says. "We were on a tight timeline, it was a terrible time to experience such an interruption."

Temporary repairs were made, and Collins employees quickly began to get the most critical equipment back in production. It took several weeks to get the most critical equipment back in production.

Topp says that the employees' experience with Lean systems — technology that deal with improving manufacturing processes — as part of the company's Lean production system helped them assess the situation and quickly come up with solutions to the manufacturing dilemma.

"Honestly, we were back at full production one week later," Topp says. Also remarkable was that Collins installed its hybrid electric and propane buses during the rebuilding of the plant.

The plant production needs had driven the Collins bus plant for nearly four years. With employees participating in the lean events, the company's manufacturing processes are improved in some way almost every week.

Working through repairs

After the initial temporary repairs, Collins' contractor worked on the permanent construction. Collins was under full production for the entire reconstruction, so the entire production line was still in operation. The temporary repairs that could be completed immediately were completed first.

The contractor estimated the entire project out for a full year, but the Collins staff worked through it.

"Throughout this period, our employees' dedication to safety enabled them to meet production needs, coordinate with the construction contractor, and avoid accidents and injury," says John Drennon, Collins' vice president of sales and marketing.

The company was recently recognized for this performance when it earned Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP) certification. The program is administered by the Kansas Department of Labor in association with the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

"SHARP" is an award only presented to companies that have achieved excellence in the areas of safety and health and have met strict OSHA standards. Collins earned this award in 2010.

"SHARP" is an award only presented to companies that have achieved this distinction in Kansas.

To qualify for SHARP certification, companies must undergo a comprehensive evaluation and series of audits, receive any identifiable hazards, demonstrate their effective safety and health programs are in place, and maintain zero recordable injury and illness rates below the national average for the past three years.

Collins' SHARP certification is good for two years. It has the company's first OSHA compliance inspection during that period, and it can be renewed for another two years.

The SHARP certification is one of many awards that Collins earned in 2010. In June, the company received the Kansas State Safety Award for operating more than 500,000 buses without a time-loss injury.

Local flavor

The combined cities of Hutchinson and South Hutchinson within the Collins plant is located in a population of about 40,000. They are about 50 miles northwest of Wichita, the second-largest city in Kansas.

"We're pretty much in the middle of the country," Topp says.

Every year, Hutchinson hosts the Kansas State Fair and the National Junior College Athletic Association's National Baseball Championship.

"Hutchinson is a beautiful town, it's home to the Kansas Cosmosphere and planetarium museum. It's known as 'The ball

On peak days, Collins Bus used multiple 55-gallon drums of undercoating per day. The problem was the company was experiencing excessive overspray of its undercoating – overspray drifted into the plant, creating a hazard for plant personnel. What's more, the overspray fell onto finished buses, causing additional clean-up and thus additional production delays.

In addition to these issues, the 55-gallon drums (installed in the spray booth) caused further production delays, because when a drum emptied, spray operations had to stop until another drum could be installed. This took a half-hour or more out of production for each changeover to a new drum.

Daubert took a proactive role in helping Collins Bus achieve its objectives by first examining how it could solve the overspray situation. The result was a reformulation of the undercoating which became Tectyl[®] 6430 -- a water-based asphaltic coating with a chemical additive that reduces product drag, offers greater atomization at the spray gun tip and thus reduces the overspray of the product.

The new product was formulated at a lower viscosity allowing the use of drums or 330 gallon totes for packaging.



CAPTION: Previously, the undercoating had been delivered in 55-gallon drums, resulting in downtime when they emptied. The modified Tectyl undercoating allowed the product to be delivered through a 330-gallon tote system – when one tote is empty, the valve is closed and the second tote valve is opened. No interruptions to production.

These and other modifications saved up to 1½ hours of downtime per day in changeovers, eliminated the complications of clean up due to the previous overspray problems, and improved plant safety. In fact, in December 2010, the company was recognized as a national model for workplace safety and health by the Kansas Department of Labor and OSHA.

Collins Bus Corporation is at the head of its class!

About Collins Bus Corporation

Collins Bus Corporation is the largest and most technologically advanced builder of Type-A buses in North America. For more information, visit www.collinsbuscorp.com.

About Daubert Chemical Company

Since 1935, Daubert Chemical Company has held a leadership role in providing Specialty Coatings and Adhesives. Serving the steel, automotive, transportation and general manufacturing industries, Daubert is focused on corrosion prevention coatings and additives, high performance calcium sulfonate complex greases, industrial anti-skid coatings, sound deadening coatings, specialty adhesives, as well as concentrate formulations to service the aerosol packaging industry.

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