

PORTABLE STROBOSCOPIC INSPECTION LIGHTS SEAL THE REAL DEAL FOR ALBANY INTERNATIONAL

AS SEEN IN:



Summary: Service Engineers from Albany International use Unilux Inspection Strobes to optimize their customers' paper machines.

Never be fooled by the claim "It's not worth the paper it's printed on." Ensuring paper is produced to precise manufacturing specifications and budgets is the real deal, and Albany International's PMC service engineers seal the deal with the Unilux Miti-Lite. They use the portable stroboscopic inspection lights to make sure their customers' paper making machines are running as efficiently as possible with no downtime.

HOW REAL IS THAT DEAL?

"On some machines, downtime can be valued at US\$400 a minute," said Frank Oxley, PMC technical manager, Albany International Pty. Ltd., Gosford, N.S.W., Australia. "So, there is nothing more critical to our customers than making paper, and it's just as important for the machine to work properly. The Miti-Lite helps us detect problems that can't be seen with the naked eye alone. We can look at issues such as dewatering in the forming section, edge trim efficiency and overall machine set-up. These issues all contribute significantly to the costs of running a machine."

Albany International supplies mills with paper machine clothing, woven mesh synthetic fabrics or metal wires that are critical to the specific process being run. The custom-designed, engineered material is used to produce all grades of paper from lightweight sanitary tissue to heavyweight containerboard. It is a woven mesh of synthetic fibers that can be used to form a web or sheet or support a preformed web during saturating. They also can be used to support a fibrous slurry during the fiber cleaning/washing sequence and/or dewater a fibrous slurry.

The company's plastic products use monofilament strands in polyester, polypropylene, nylon, and PVDF depending on the process environment. Mesh ranges from 6 to 200 ends per inch in single layer, double layer, or triple layer weave patterns. These products are supplied as an endless loop with an invisible woven seam or with a variety of different pin seams for non-cantilevered positions.

Before introducing Unilux inspection strobes to their toolboxes, service engineers were using weak spotlights and digital cameras to see what was happening across a web.

MAKING VISITS COUNT

Oxley's service engineers repair and maintain papermaking machines in Australia, New Zealand and Southeast Asia.

"Typically, most of our domestic (Australia and New Zealand) service engineers are based very close to our major customers," Oxley said. "The Asian-based engineers, however, do have to travel a great deal through difficult terrain. Consequently, the ease of transport and reliability are important items that we require in our equipment."

Service engineers use the strobes to optically freeze the motion of paper machine operations. The light weight of the inspection lights, their brightness and the flexibility of removable, rechargeable batteries are all plus factors for Oxley.

"Our service engineers get involved with a whole range of issues both on and around the machines," he said. "The most critical challenges are quickly establishing problems as well as assisting the machine operators in improving the efficiency of their operation."

"What the service engineer is required to do depends on each mill," Oxley continued. "The first thing he does is sit down with the customer and discuss any issues that may be important. This is then followed by a physical inspection of the machine. This is where Unilux is especially helpful. If the engineer sees problems, he can note them, but if the inspection reveals no problems, he can continue on with other tasks."

Albany International offers a number of services to its customers. The regular fabric service includes normal service coverage, such as design, startup and performance analysis. Consulting services provide assistance operating personnel based on the service engineers' extensive experience, and diagnostic services include regular and in-depth analysis of machine and clothing variables as part of a long-term effort to improve machine and clothing operation.

CANADIAN CALL

In 2001 David Nutt, an Albany International service engineer based in Canada came to Australia as part of the company's regular service support for key customers.

At that time, most Albany International's service engineers were using spotlights, digital cameras and occasionally older, heavier Unilux strobe lights for their inspection work.

"We watched David use the new Unilux strobe to undertake machine inspections and confirm changes on the machine," Oxley said. "I was impressed with its power, ease of use and relatively light weight."

Albany International purchased four strobes and added two more shortly thereafter for engineers in based in Indonesia and Malaysia. The units are so simple to use that the engineers needed virtually no training.

"Our service engineers in those countries are taking the lights to customers in Thailand, Taiwan, the Philippines and Vietnam," said Bob Scott, Technical Manager, Asia, Albany International. "I've known about the lights for some time from my experiences in North America and Europe, but we didn't have the opportunity to get our own until recently. Our European and North American contacts rated the lights quite highly."

SPREADING THE LIGHT

Albany International's customers are also jumping on the Unilux inspection strobe bandwagon. Norske Skog purchased two strobes for the Valmet 9.5m newsprint line at its Albury Mill, which was commissioned in 1993.

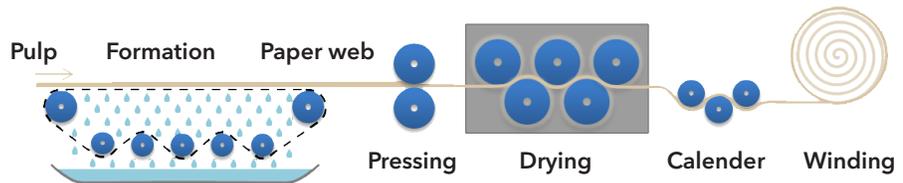


Yan Vassart, Paper & Finishing line manager at the mill, had used Unilux strobes at the Norske Skog Golbey Mill in France and added the lights to help see contaminants and build-up on the calender rolls that would otherwise be invisible to the naked eye. The lights also allow mill operators to quickly determine the causes of problems in formation, dewatering, drying, winding and surface quality. For more detailed analyses of problems in the paper forming area, the lights can be connected to a video camera.

"We're able to view a working zone of a full square meter with the Unilux strobes," Vassart said. "That's a significant increase over the area we had with the strobe light we used before. The resulting area is 25 times larger, and that makes us 25 times more efficient when looking for defects."

Another Albany International customer, Visy Paper, headquartered in Melbourne, requested Albany's Service Engineers bring a Unilux strobe to its Sydney facilities. Visy Paper subsequently purchased its own.

"They all recognize that time is money," Oxley said, "and the time a machine is down is money lost forever. The ability to help our engineers find potential problems and quickly diagnose and fix them saves time that goes directly to our customers' bottom lines - and that's the real deal."



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