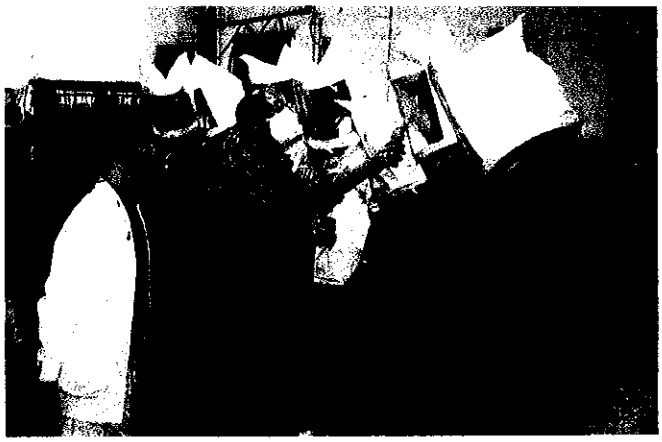
Associated Express

Associated Finishing INCORPORATED

Customer Newsletter for Associated Finishing, Inc., formerly Associated Engineering of Mankato, Inc.

320 State Road Mankato, MN 56001 Phone: (507) 345-5861 ***Fax:*** *(507) 345-5828* *Spring 1999*

New Respirator Protocol



One of the challenges many businesses face is adjusting to changes in safety requirements. The latest change in respiratory protection requires anyone wearing a respirator to have a medical evaluation and be approved by a licensed health care professional. Approved employees must then receive training in the use and care of respirators, as well as undergo a fit test. Getting each painter equipped with the proper respirator is quite a task!

The first requirement is that the respirator fit the task and the environment in the work area. Equally important is that the respirator fit the employee perfectly. A health professional and a respirator trainer visited our plant. After a classroom session describing the types of respirators available, employees tried them out.

Once a respirator has been chosen that meets the needs of an employee's work environment, a fit test is administered. A representative from 3M came to test our painters in large groups. With their respirators on, he had each painter wear a large hood. Then he sprayed a bitter tasting mist into the hoods and asked the painters to do different activities including talk, turn their heads, bend down, and breathe deeply. If no bitter taste was detected during this entire exercise, the respirator fit was acceptable.

Once the right respirator is chosen, more training is needed so the employees know how to take care of their respirators. Each time it is worn, a respirator must be checked to make sure that no part of it is damaged. Once an employee puts it on, he or she needs do a "user seal check" to make sure it's in place and operating properly. Each type of respirator must also be cleaned and stored in a certain way to keep it working as long as possible. Even with the best care, respirators wear out. Employees and supervisors must also know how to tell when the respirators need to be replaced.

The new requirement for medical evaluations gave us all a chance to take a closer look at respiratory safety and reminded us to better appreciate and preserve our good health.

Powder Coating -- Liquid Coating -- Pad Printing
Paint Stripping -- Silkscreening -- R.F.I. Shielding

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Getting the Jobs Done

Serving our customers' needs is the focus of each of our employees at AFI. In this issue we'd like to focus on two people who play a key role in coordinating everyone's efforts, from the moment the parts come off of the truck until they are packed in boxes and ready to be shipped out. Brian Christnagel works closely with our customers to help them meet their deadlines. Getting each job on the line requires careful planning to coordinate paint changes, shift schedules, and jobs that have extreme variations in quantity and part size.

Once the parts are painted, the job is only half done. In addition to her silkscreen responsibilities, Bette Schweim is in charge of making sure the parts that come off the line are ready for safe shipment. She organizes the materials and instructs the packers so that each part is checked for quality then protectively wrapped.

It takes a group effort of all our people to satisfy your needs. We thank Brian and Bette for their work in coordinating this effort.

Using Technology to Produce Quality

There are many different variables to monitor to ensure quality and consistency when painting parts. The instruments described below are an example of some of the tools that make the job of Alan Baer, Quality Assurance, manageable.

As soon as a new paint or powder comes in, sample chips are sprayed and checked against the vendor sample and the technical data. Associated uses a gloss meter to make sure that the raw material meets customer gloss specifications. Gloss can also be affected by the way the paint is cured after application. The Data Paq gives a profile of the cure schedule of a part, giving a line graph of the temperature changes during the time the part is moving through the oven. It also monitors the airflow in the oven.

As parts come out of the oven, different surfaces can be measured with a thickness gage. The gage we use can store up to 5000 readings from 100 separate parts on the line. Later, the information is transferred to a computer program that generates graphs and statistics. The software allows the QA person to determine whether each surface of every part is getting even coverage.

Routing

- ❑ Read _____
- ❑ Forward _____
- ❑ Return _____

Please pass this along to others at your company.

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