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BUYERS' GUIDE ISSUE

Munson-equipped Kingdom Products 'intensifies' decorative mix production

Concrete Texturing Tool & Supply of Throop, Pa., began receiving customer complaints when ownership of its original manufacturer of decorative concrete materials changed hands. "We were in a situation beyond our control, with colors fluctuating dramatically," says Bart Sacco, president of CTTS, which has been specializing in decorative concrete products for more than 16 years. "Formula changes in products like hardeners affected their workability and coverage rates, and our installers experienced color shifts in the hardeners."

In response, Sacco founded Kingdom Products to make its own materials. "We constructed a state-of-the-art blending facility that allows us to create color hardeners and other decorative concrete products free of color drifts from batch to batch," he affirms.

Three years since installing its first 50-cu.-ft. Munson Rotary Batch Mixer, Kingdom Products is manufacturing a variety of products for the decorative concrete and general masonry market, including high-performance countertop mixes, color hardeners, release agents, overlays, micro toppings and lightweight vertical stamp mixes. The company recently added a second stainless steel 40-cu.-ft. Munson model to support the operation and offer toll manufacturing services.

Key to Kingdom's operation is its blending capability, and Sacco took new blending equipment selection very

The heart of Kingdom Products' blending capability is its two Munson Rotary Batch Mixers placed head to head—the original 50 cu. ft. machine (top left) and the recently installed 40 cu. ft. model. (left) Lift truck operators maneuver raw materials to charge the mixers.

seriously, noting: "We wanted long-term yield and excellent blend. We specified stainless steel for the blenders since we didn't want a porous material when working with pigments. We also thought that stainless would help with cleanup. And we chose rotary over a ribbon-style blender because it reportedly offers five times more life."

Each Rotary Batch Mixer consists of a horizontal rotating drum with a stationary inlet and outlet at opposite ends. As the drum rotates, internal mixing flights and lifters tumble, fold, cut and turn the material in a multidirectional manner. The gravity-driven process produces a uniform mix in two minutes, regardless of the difference in ingredients' bulk densities.

The lifters in the continuously rotating drum elevate the material, preventing segregation of the batch upon discharge through the stationary plug gate valve, as well as promote total evacuation with no residual. Kingdom's 50-cu.-ft. mixer includes an optional Intensifier—critical to homogenous blending of pigments throughout a batch of cement. Since the Rotary Batch Mixer is engineered specifically to blend without degrading particles, the Intensifier can be activated as needed to impart shear into the batch to break apart agglomerated pigments and other non-free-flowing materials into discrete particles. As the drum rotates, specially designed baffles at the inlet end direct all batch materials through the high energy zone of the Intensifier several times, assuring uniform distribution.

FROM SILO TO BAG

Kingdom blends four to six batches per day. "We use different grades of quartz sand aggregate (from 100, 200, and 325 mesh all the way up to 5/16-in. and 3/8-in. chunk rock). The finest is down in the silicate flour range," explains Sacco. The company also runs a variety of additives such as pigments and plasticizers. "On average, we manufacture 35 to 40 different colors in hardeners alone," plus a huge variety of concrete restoration products, glass fiber reinforced concrete and plaster mixes, along with sculpting clay blends. "We are perfectly set up for whatever precision toll blending tasks that are required of us," he says.

Raw materials arrive in tankers and are stored in five silos inside the Kingdom Products facility. Three are filled with U.S. Silica fine, medium, and coarse grades of crushed quartz; the other two Essroc Cement Type I and Federal White Portland. "By keeping the silos inside and maintaining consistent temperature throughout our facility utilizing radiant floor heating, we control the humidity in our dry goods," explains Sacco. "I built our entire facility to suit the blending operation, even having our silos custom manufactured to fit inside the building. Everything in my blending operation has been specified to be manufactured in the USA and was one of my requirements in the purchase of our equipment."

From each silo an auger conveyor feeds material through a collection hopper and into a tote resting on a weigh station. "That way, if we have a problem with too much sand or too much portland cement, we have control over it," Sacco adds. Totes are moved via forklift to the blending station where the material is introduced into the mixer. Additive mixtures, including pigments, are then added and run through customized blend cycle operations to reach a final product. Some products require a gentle blend while others require a more aggressive cycle. "Once we've blended thoroughly, we do our quality control check through an inspection port welded into the machine. Then we discharge into a tote and move it to our finished goods station," says Sacco. "Using an air packer, we can package the end product in anything from pails, buckets, bags, etc." Typically, Kingdom's products are packed in 50- to 60-lb. bags or 5-gal. pails.

Cleanup is minimal. "We only run dry materials," notes Sacco. "In fact, our blender never sees water. Between batches, we brush everything down inside, and vacuum it out with a HEPA vacuum."

PERFECTING THE FORMULA

Many of Kingdom's new formulations are market driven. "We have developed good communication with installers using our products in the field in order to get feedback about what they want in product performance," explains Sacco. "Whether it's a finer aggregate or a longer open time, we can adjust the additive mixture to give our customers the products they want."

For instance, the company recently introduced a vertical stamp mix. "Some of our customers wanted a material with improved adhesive strength—something that would cling better and wouldn't dry out as quickly," he says. "All of our formulas are developed by myself or my brother Jim. When we develop the new formulation, we first run it in our lab blender, which is a 3-cu.-ft. Munson Mini Mixer. It's equipped with the same Intensifier, and represents what we will get on the larger blender."

New formulations are ramped up using the Mini Mixer from a few hundred grams to a few hundred pounds (used for field and other testing) before production moves to the 50-cu.-ft. mixer to produce 4,500-lb. batches, or the 40-cu.-ft. mixer to produce 3,000-lb. batches.

EXPANSION ON THE HORIZON

With plans to expand Kingdom Products' toll manufacturing operations, Sacco purchased the used 40-cu.-ft. Munson Rotary Batch Mixer. "Even though it had been sitting outside for more than two years, the mechanics exhibited no wear," he says. "We reconditioned it, repainted the framework, put in new seals, and installed it in January

Jim Sacco takes batch samples from inspection port for quality assurance checks. The mixer yields uniform blends in two minutes with no segregation of ingredients regardless of different bulk densities. The cage-style Intensifier at the inlet end of the mixer creates a high energy zone, assuring homogenous blends. Kingdom Products develops and tests new mix designs with its 3-cu.-ft. capacity Munson Mini Mixer.

KINGDOM PRODUCTS—GENERATIONS IN THE MAKING

Kingdom Products is a family-owned and operated business. "We were born into a masonry family," says Bart Sacco. "Our dad was an ornamental plaster man. [Brother] Jim and I have worked in the trade since we were children. Having worked a lifetime with mix designs, pigments, plaster and concrete gives the Sacco brothers an advantage in developing new mix designs and in blending them properly for the performance required.

Bart Sacco additionally has more than 25 years experience as a professional decorative concrete installer. He is also an ACI flatwork finisher course instructor, having conducted educational workshops on decorative concrete for the past 20 years.

Jim Sacco's previous experience in large commercial masonry construction brings additional expertise to the Kingdom blending operations; today, he runs the Kingdom blending operation and the three Rotary Batch Mixers on a daily basis.

Both brothers work on developing formulations, and Bart Sacco manages product development and other daily business tasks with a dedicated staff. "Most of our employees have been with the company 10 years or more," he explains. "When people really care about what they do. Everyone wins and it shows in the final product."

2014," he adds. "Excluding the Intensifier, it's an exact twin of our original 50-cu.-ft. Rotary Batch Mixer. Rock aggregate—countertop mixes—can be mixed without the intensifier, so a lot of items we manufacture are well suited for the 40-cu.-ft. machine.

"We placed the mixers head to head for our next step of expansion. We will convert our current fill station to a stationary weigh hopper, and then add a tubular drag conveyor to feed raw goods directly into the two mixers. Blended materials are discharged into a tote and transported the way we do it now," Sacco explains.

"Adding the second stainless steel Munson Rotary Batch Blender to our original equipment allows us the utmost flexibility in blending. We can add as much or as little shear into manufacturing the products, giving us flexibility to blend just about anything without degradation of particle size," says Sacco. "Since most of our products are colored, the two blenders allow us to manufacture both pigmented and non-pigmented products simultaneously, doubling daily production. With the second Munson on line and hooking up the future tubular drag, we can increase our production again by more than 100 percent. We are ready for the future." — *Munson Machinery Co., 315/797-0090; www.munsonmachinery.com*

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