

PAINT & RESIN TIMES

Lean times for skills funding but Proskills UK confident

Proskills, the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for the Process and Manufacturing sector, has reached the final stage of the Joint Investment Programme (JIP) and is close to securing £3.7m in skills funding for its industries. Over 80 companies involving potentially 12,000 learners in the process and manufacturing sector responded to Proskills' request for interest in the Joint Investment Programme, and have been included in the bid.

The JIP is designed to bring together public and private investment into 50:50 match-funded plans to support training and skills development in areas key to economic recovery and future growth. Proskills was one of 21 organisations which submitted an Expression of Interest to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) for funding from the JIP for training people in low carbon technologies, which has been accepted.

Terry Watts, Proskills CEO, said "The

budgetary issues facing the Government are well documented, and the funding for skills and training are not immune from the ongoing cuts and savings. With the majority of focus on keeping young people in training or employment, funding for people in the workforce is likely to become harder to find in the future.

"We received huge support from industry in our bid for one of the few budgets available and we are delighted that we have reached the final business planning stage. The skills developed through this programme will be vital to industry as we adapt to the low carbon agenda."

Research by Proskills shows that two thirds of employers say that environmental and low carbon issues will be important for the process and manufacturing industries in the future. The JIP will bring together for the first time a coherent programme that addresses the low carbon skills agenda in

the sector, and will include energy reduction, new technologies, product performance, waste reduction, alternative fuels, and warehousing. All of the public funding assigned through the programme will be spent directly on training and qualifications for people in the sector.

Watts added: "The money assigned by the Government through this scheme will be matched by employers on a 50:50 basis, showing the continuing commitment of employers in the sector to training and developing their employees. By working with industry in this way we have been able to demonstrate to government that there is demand for the right provision out there, but that the current system is unable to satisfy it. We have demonstrated once again that Proskills is the best way to engage with employers in the sector, and given further evidence of the importance of SSCs in the skills landscape".

Rotex Belgium moves to larger facility

The Belgium-based office of Rotex Europe has moved to a new office to support growth and allow the company to provide better customer service, an expanded parts inventory and a new screening laboratory.

The new office, located in Wavre, provides twice the area of the previous office, allowing the company to increase its commercial and testing services. These investments reinforce the company's ongoing commitment to its European customers.

The expansion improves service capabilities with increased staff support, including new customer service representatives in the aftermarket and spare parts departments.

More spare parts are now available in stock to reduce downtime and include such common parts as mesh cleaning balls and connectors.

The new office also offers a larger laboratory with experienced technicians. Free testing services are available and allow for material testing under simulated process conditions to help customers select the proper screening equipment, optimum screen openings, and machine settings for their applications.

www.rotexeuropa.be

Draeger Safety UK wins process innovation award



Draeger Safety UK has won a prestigious national award for process innovation as part of the 2010 Manufacturing Excellence Awards from the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMECHE).

When making their decision, the judges liked the fact that process improvement is a task that never ends within Draeger, and the company was able to demonstrate continuous improvement in both its systems and working practices.

On receiving the award, Dave Richardson, managing director of Draeger Safety UK, commented: "At Draeger, we work very hard to understand our customers' requirements and, out of that intimate market insight, our products and services are developed and continually refined. The processes, innovation and manufacturing industry best practices that we employ have to be second to none. For that reason I am absolutely delighted that the hard work of all of our staff has been recognised at such a prestigious event – and by such an eminent panel of judges."

He added: "This fantastic result truly demonstrates to our existing and future customers and employees that we are a progressive and highly focused organisation."

Draeger Safety manufactures and supplies a wide variety of personal protective equipment (PPE) for use throughout the fire, rescue and emergency services as well as petrochem, oil and gas, utilities, law enforcement and all areas of general industry. The company also offers a series of training courses on confined space working as well as the use, care and maintenance of all forms of PPE from its purpose built training centre in Blyth.

Exterior coating blends abrasives with no shaft seal wear

Since its founding in 1987, US contractors have applied over 9.3 million m² of Master Wall Inc. products – stucco, coatings, and exterior insulation and finish systems (EIFS) – on residential, commercial and industrial buildings.

Master Wall founder and president Steve Smithwick says the company's Aggre-flex EIFS system is "one of the most common commercial claddings in the country". Also termed 'synthetic stucco', it consists of a water barrier, adhesive, insulation, mesh, base coat and Master Wall's Superior Finishes topcoat, layered with a trowel. Similarly, Master Wall Superior Finishes over Stucco systems consist of a water barrier, a base coat and Superior Finishes topcoat. Superior Finishes over Stucco enhances building exteriors with custom colors and textures ranging from fine to coarse sand, to Aggre-Flex Superior Stone Finish resembling cut stone.

The topcoats are a challenge to blend, and require a durable, heavy-duty blender, explains Glen Smith, manager of process engineering at Master Wall. The high density topcoats, up to 1600kg/m³, are comprised of heavy, abrasive aggregates – coarse particulates of sand and marble – blended with pigments in an acrylic polymer binder. The material caused the shaft seals of Master Wall's blenders to wear and leak.

In 2006, Master Wall opened a plant in Payson, Utah to better supply the western US. The company specified a Munson HD-48-SS ribbon blender having a 2839 litre capacity equivalent to 150 19-litre pails per batch, to handle the heavy duty coatings mixing jobs.

In planning the construction of the

Payson plant, Munson representative Bob Jeremias of TEC Engineering helped engineer the blender and dust collection system while Steve Knauth of Munson configured a model to meet Master Wall's needs, including safety features and an air-purge shaft seal system.

Smith says: "We needed a durable machine. Just looking at the blender you can tell it's a heavy-duty machine because of its sturdy construction."

When blending the coatings, ingredients are added to the 2.8m³ ribbon blender in several steps. First, liquid acrylic polymer and water are metred by a pumping system. While the blender is running, 23kg bags of pigments and fillers, together with various pre-weighed chemicals, are manually dumped into the blender. Next, pre-weighed aggregates are added from self-dumping hoppers using a forklift. Typically, the blend contains about 25% liquids and 75% solids.

The blender runs at full speed for the entire mix time of a batch, which is usually about one hour. Once mixing is complete, a sample is taken for quality control. An operator measures viscosity and pH, and visually compares the sample to a control. When the batch is approved, material is discharged through a manual butterfly valve into 19-litre pails, which are palletised for shipping.

The 1.6 to 0.8mm clearance between the ribbon blades and blender trough minimises residual material after discharge. "The Munson blender blades sweep closer to the wall than our other blenders, resulting in less waste," reports Smith. Cleaning between batches is not usually needed (production is scheduled so that products with increasingly larger aggregates

follow those with smaller aggregates); the blender is simply washed out at the end of the day. While batch sizes vary, the largest batch size is 2839 litres – about 453kg of material – utilising the blender's full working capacity.

The blender's double helical ribbon agitator design is energy-efficient and offers faster blend times than other ribbon configurations. "With our other blenders we sometimes have to go longer than the desired time to fully homogenise the powders, but with the Munson we can sometimes mix in less than the set time due to the 2-to-1 length-to-width ratio of the double helical ribbon agitator," says Smith, noting that the 30kW motor maintains consistent speed when heavy materials are added.

The blender withstands non-stop, all-day mixing of abrasive material without premature seal leakage. In ribbon blenders, packing glands create a mechanical seal where the shaft penetrates the blender wall. The abrasive material in Master Wall's blends was wearing away the braided Teflon packing of the blenders in the Georgia plant, allowing material leaks, requiring packing to be replaced monthly, and shafts to eventually be replaced, incurring two to three days of downtime.

To prevent the problem, the new blender is equipped with air-purge shaft seals that apply positive pressure to drive abrasive particulates away from the seals, which show no signs of wear or leakage two years after installation.

The company plans to purchase the same brand of ribbon blenders for its Fortson, Georgia plant.

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Automobili Lamborghini selects Zircotec ceramic coating

The new lightweight Gallardo LP 570-4 Superleggera is the latest Lamborghini to use Zircotec's advanced ceramic heat resistant coatings on its tailpipe assemblies. Using a Diamond Black ceramic to keep heat inside the exhaust allows Lamborghini to adopt more lightweight composite bodywork that contributes to the 70kg weight saving.

Developed specifically for Lamborghini, the Diamond Black ceramic is applied to the exhaust at temperatures over 12,000°C using plasma spraying. This process ensures the ceramic is extremely durable, offering an aesthetically-pleasing finish that will outlast paint or untreated metals.

"Zircotec's technology not only protects sensitive composite finishes

but also the exhaust itself," says Zircotec's sales director Peter Whyman. "Corroded or flaking exhaust finishes ruin the appearance of the rear of the car. Our technology ensures Lamborghini's latest car will continue to look good for many years."



The durable coating was tested to ensure that it met the rigorous requirements set down by Lamborghini. "Zircotec's coating met the lifetime and temperature cycling tests set by Lamborghini including rapid cycling in temperature and pressure washing," says Whyman. "The combination of our application method that effectively welds the ceramic to the exhaust, the proprietary ThermoHold bond coat and the unique Diamond Black material make our coating viable for OEM applications."

The Gallardo LP 570-4 Superleggera follows the highly successful application of Zircotec's thermal barriers on the Reventón and Murciélago supercars, where the use of the coating delivered both weight reductions through the removal of heatshields and added protection for the composites.

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