

We are in the summer doldrums. Business is really slow but we are getting our normal dose of emergencies in order to keep things interesting. It appears that business will return to more typical levels in the fall. Hopefully we can get thru the summer with something like a respectable level of work. Only time will tell.



As a result of the business levels, we managed to arrange a Technician meeting in Lexington. We initially had almost 40 Techs present but our favorite aluminum client had an emergency the morning of the meeting. We ended up sending 10 people down to help out due to their complete power outage.



I think that the meeting went well. Most of the feedback that I received indicated that everyone thought the content was good information. Some of the info from the meeting is available in the login section of the website. If you have time and weren't at the meeting, you may benefit from reviewing Irish's presentation on refractories and George's technical paper on glass furnace heatups. Equipment instructions and other operating procedures are also posted in this area of the website. If you have other suggestions of info that may be beneficial to store in this manner, please let me know. If you have lost or misplaced your password for access to the website, Debbie can get you reset if you let her know.

Our 3 year old lawsuit over a refractory explosion has been settled. Eventually the insurance companies got tired of paying lawyers and they agreed that no one was at fault. They negotiated a settlement where all participants shared the pain. From our perspective, this was not the best outcome as we believe it is clear that Hotwork did nothing wrong. I do understand the business decision to settle the lawsuit versus incurring the high cost of lawyers to take the case to trial. But I don't particularly like it.

We are always exposed to potential legal claims like this. The best that we can do to defend ourselves is to document everything well in the job folder and communicate well – both internally and with our client. Recently we reviewed some charts from jobs with ramp and hold schedules where it appears we let the temperatures drift up during the hold portion. When this occurs, more heat is being delivered to the lining than what the manufacturer specified. We should not allow this to happen unless we are specifically instructed to do so by a client. And if that happens, there had better be a note in the file about who gave the instruction and when.

We are continuing to expose some Techs to some of our roles in the office. Currently Dave Smith is spending some time with George and Scott Schleif will do so soon also. Several months ago, Dwayne Jordan did the same with Sandy and Ryan Nelson helped out in Houston during Danny's health issues. We will probably continue to do this in the future to get more people familiar with the roles and procedures of our management positions. If you feel that you have the capability and interest to be considered as a candidate for future management openings, please keep Larry informed about your desires. We may not accommodate everyone's desires but it is an opportunity to see what is really involved in doing some of these management positions.

We are planning a Tech meeting for Asia-Pacific based Techs at the end of the month in Sydney. At the moment, the order book is cooperating to allow us to have good meeting attendance. Hopefully it will cooperate just long enough to have the meeting and then we will be busy. This region in particular has been very slow.

Recently Kyle Hurlbut discovered some health issues and we wish him the best with his treatment and recovery.

Here's hoping for better business levels soon.

Tom