

It's been quite a while since I wrote a Tech Note – thought that I might give it a stab. I hope that everyone is well rested after the summer slowdown. It looks like the balance of the year may be pretty busy. We seem to be having more than our fair share of natural disasters. Harvey and Irma have had their impact, Jose and Maria are still a threat. As I'm writing this I am learning of a 7.1 earthquake near Puebla Mexico – that's where our shop is located. We hope that all are well.

As most of you know, the float glass industry in the US is going thru a rough patch. Pilkington Ottawa has been out of business since Spring when a tornado took that plant down. Guardian Dewitt had a planned rebuild, which they completed, and we then heated the unit up to go back into service. Shortly after we had left site, some gas release event happened that resulted in an explosion and fire. Extensive damage resulted and repairs are still in process. Carlex in Nashville had a planned rebuild which is still in process. And Vitro Carlisle (former PPG) had a major glass leak which took both furnaces out of service. #1 line is down cold with the extent of repair still under investigation. #2 was maintained hot but still had not returned to production when I last had an update. So the market for flat glass is very tight and our clients would like to be back in production ASAP. It appears that we will heat up at least four floats in the next few months.

Our crews were faced with a big challenge recently in draining a sick container furnace in Mexico. Everyone was very concerned whether the furnace would survive the emergency drain that we were asked to perform. It was a bit of a nail-biter for all of us but it was accomplished safely. Here's a shot of most of the crew (Terry and Juan Carlos missing).



Container manufacturers have had their share of emergencies and challenges. There have been lost bottoms and fires. It seems that everyone is trying to extend the life of what would normally be considered worn out refractories. We certainly have to be aware of furnace conditions and manage the hazards to the best of our ability. We're seeing several furnace drains so that hot bottom repairs can be performed.

Given the relative slowdown this summer, we were able to get quite a few Techs to Lexington for a meeting. I hope that the participants found the meeting informative and that they pass the info on to those who couldn't attend. It is always a pleasure for me to see you guys live and in the flesh.



Recently there was an incident at a lead plant in Mexico. A gas ignition happened during the attempted takeover by the client. There was some confusion whether the event was caused by the client or by Hotwork. During that investigation, it was determined that a Hotwork burner was being taken from high fire to pilot by use of the Maxon. After a period when the vessel had cooled from red heat to temperatures below gas autoignition temperature, an attempt was made to return to the same firing condition by reopening the Maxon (with main and boost valves still in the previous open position).



Hotwork does not teach or endorse this practice and it is likely that this was a contributor in this event. Luckily there was no damage or injury.

Following up on this event, a Tech meeting and training session was conducted in Mexico. Ramon and Eduardo held an incident review, discussion and practice review at the shop.



On some personnel notes, everyone should have seen the announcement of Justin Jones return to Hotwork as VP of Sales. He spent about 5 years with Resco Refractories and we are glad to have him back. Debbie Murray is currently out on leave after having surgery. We wish her a speedy recovery. Most people are probably aware that Terry Swory has relocated his family to the US. David Cobane had a mysterious stomach ailment but seems to be on the road to recovery. I hope that everyone has had a chance to interact with Megan Burkhart who took over the Safety Coordinator function from Kari Evelyn. Donna Esson's husband accepted a promotion which resulted in their relocation to North Carolina. Theresa and Oscar are working hard to cover the Customer Service responsibilities. Carina Lyndon is recovering from a broken leg and surgery to repair it. It happened while walking her dog.

There are a few new equipment initiatives underway. During the Tech meeting we explained about an ongoing competitive situation on the best way to handle cullet filling. Hotwork is making another attempt at vibrating cullet feeding and also vibratory cullet screening. We have several clients who state that they will not blow cullet into their furnace in the future. It seems that either we will have a solution or we will lose the clients. I suspect that this development will require something of a learning curve. We are also investing in some power panels which are often required on floats. And we are considering whether to purchase a new propane vaporizer – if so, gas or electric.

Our Australian operation just completed a move to a new and larger shop. Moves are never easy or fun but this appears to be an upgrade.



Paul Monismith had a slipped wrench, pinched finger incident in Mexico recently. We need to keep the awareness up on both the major hazards (refractory, molten glass, hot water, gas, etc) and the everyday hazards (driving, hand tools, tripping, etc). Heading into the busy year end period – lets finish the year safely.

Tom