

Indiana-Based Asphalt Producer Achieves New Milestone in Automation



Milestone Contractors upgrades several plants with state-of-the-art Windows-based control system to stay ahead of the technology curve

By Curtis Kieres

Milestone Contractors LP is a fully integrated highway, heavy construction and site-development contractor that primarily services the state of Indiana. With offices located in Indianapolis, Lafayette, Columbus, Richmond, and Bloomington, Milestone operates hot mix asphalt plants strategically located in several Indiana market areas.

Several of the plants have blending control systems circa the 1990s which are older DOS-based systems. Although the controls still function, a decision was made to upgrade key plants to state-of-the-art Windows-based controls systems, as a proactive approach and to stay ahead of the technology curve.

Partnerships are key

Milestone partnered with two industry suppliers to upgrade its control systems.

The two companies — Reliable Asphalt Products and MINDS Inc. — worked closely together on the project. Reliable is a dealer of MINDS solutions, and Milestone was its first project.

Roger Miller from Reliable was the technical coordinator for the project, while Dennis Mauzy was involved in the material and installation coordination with Reliable.

Enter Drumtronic; an advanced easy-to-use Windows-based, automation control system for drum plants. Drumtronic fits on all types of asphalt plants cost effectively.

The system has the capacity to control all plant operations or just the blending



Milestone planned to upgrade all its asphalt plants before spring startups, which gave those involved about six weeks to get the job done.

Since the MINDS Drumtronic controls system can easily retrofit into many legacy systems, the decision was easy.

Implementing the automation

In March 2011, a plan was organized to upgrade all plants before the plant startups which was around a six-week time frame.

Gaétan Nantel from MINDS acted as project manager for the Milestone upgrade. Involved from day one, he worked relentlessly to be on schedule. Drawings and schematics of each plant were received from Milestone. Industrial PCs and ancillary components were ordered in advance.

The first plant upgrade started in early March and all were finished by late April. Apart from some minor technical issues, the implementation went smoothly.

Mark McGaughey, area plant manager for Milestone, was very satisfied with the installation and the ability to work within the condensed timeframe. The ability to customize MINDS' basic control to meet Milestones operating requirements was a well received bonus to the upgrade.

"We had an ambitious timeline to deploy to some of our key plants," says McGaughey. "It was a team effort that was planned and executed very well."

Milestone also elected to have eRoutes data acquisition installed as a value-added solution to capture production data at the plant for trending and real-time

information. Furthermore, energy information such as electricity and gas can be monitored remotely. Vital information such as mix temperature, A/C content, output quantity in tons per mix, and plant start/stop sequence. Automatic alerts can be sent via SMS or e-mail for out of tolerance value so the lab technician can notified of any potential problems. ■

About the suppliers

MINDS Inc., with offices in Boisbriand, QC, is a leader in advanced easy-to-use Windows-based customizable automation control systems for batch plants, drum plants, silo loadout, full plant control and data management for the asphalt industry. With over 15 years of industry experience, MINDS has been installed in over 400 locations throughout North America and Europe.

Based in Shelbyville, KY, Reliable Asphalt Products provides high quality asphalt plant products and services. From complete asphalt plants to retrofit equipment and parts, Reliable Asphalt Products has the industry knowledge and resources to keep asphalt plants running at maximum productivity.



The Drumtronic system can control all plant operations or just the blending elements.

elements. An industrial grade computer with security and redundancy ensure reliable, uninterrupted operation.

MINDS Inc. proposed a cost-effective upgrade path that entailed keeping the existing I/O boards and modules and replacing the PC, thus saving money on time and materials for replacing the entire system.