

Single Pressure Washer Meets Mill's Needs

Of all the potential bottle-necks in Alcoa Mill Products' 1.3-million-sq.-ft. Lancaster Works mill in Pennsylvania Dutch country, the lone pressure washer in the mobile equipment department is easily overlooked. Sooner or later, however, the giant rollers weighing up to 37 tons – used in making aluminum sheet and cast plate for cars, appliances and other products – all come through the central wash bay to have dust, grease and oxidation removed prior to being reground.

The stationary power washer plays an indispensable role at the mill, located some 30 miles west of Philadelphia. In addition to the massive rollers, the washer cleans large production coils, screens used in the cast house, and every one of the mill's 176 forklifts, 54 personnel carts and sundry other load-moving devices. The wash bay operates around the clock.

"I don't think there's a day this pressure washer isn't used at least four or five times," says department supervisor James Sides. Maintenance records show the 15-year-old Kärcher HDS 930 hot/cold water washer has had few service calls and has never been down for more than a few hours. "In the three years I've been in this capacity, I have not lost any time because of mechanical problems," says Sides.

Longevity in a pressure washer isn't dumb luck. New machines may be the best yet, but they don't render older machines obsolete. A well-maintained and regularly-serviced washer operated per manufacturers' instructions can have a working life of 25 years or more.

Centralizing most washing activities around a single washer and wash bay brings practical efficiencies and environmental benefits. For example, only a small group of workers use the machine, know it well, and share responsibility for maintaining it. The company's electric-powered, natural gas-heated

HDS 930 – the first natural-gas model Kärcher made – is located on the outside wall of the wash bay. There is a gas feed and outside venting, so there is no need to replenish a fuel tank. An underground tank collects waste water, which is pumped out weekly for offsite treatment. Cleaning jobs for Sides' staff of 16 at the Alcoa plant include 20-30 minutes to clean a forklift, and 20 minutes to clean a roller. The 20-ft.-long rollers can weigh up to 75,000 lbs.



An Alcoa worker uses the facility's only pressure washer to clean a forklift in the washing bay.

The pressure washer includes a proprietary anti-scale system that maintains the efficiency and integrity of its heating coil. Sides' crews also cool down the unit after each job, per manufacturer's instructions, which preserves coil life. In addition, Alcoa's single pressure washer includes the same features that enhance productivity and extend machine life that are found on new models. These include a water-cooled electric motor; three-piston direct-drive axial pump; electronic ignition; variable operating pressure, water volume and temperature; and detergent metering.

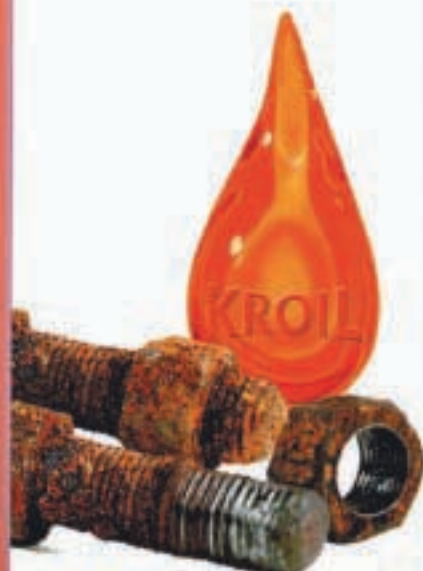
A service contract with a local equipment supplier helps ensure the washer keeps operating up to specifications. Even if you think your washer isn't up to the job any more, a tinkering by a trained mechanic may show you otherwise.

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