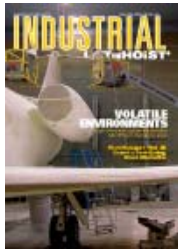




TOP STORIES

Hoosier Crane Partners With SCI for Railroad Project



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 Wedge and funnel test

November 18, 2010 — [Hoosier Crane Service Co.](#), Elkhart, Ind., has demonstrated the diversity of its overhead crane-based knowledge by manufacturing special components for a system designed to increase the safety and efficiency of transporting coal by rail. Hoosier designs, fabricates, installs, and services overhead cranes. Coal dust represents a huge problem for open rail cars carrying coal from mines to power companies throughout the country. Two notable train derailments in the coal-rich Powder River Basin in Wyoming pushed coal dust into the limelight.

[Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Co.](#), Fort Worth, Tex., maintains that coal dust buildup prevents water from draining from track beds and pushes steel rails out of gauge, causing derailments. Railways, shippers, power companies and the federal Surface Transportation Board are now involved in investigating the full impact of coal dust.

[Structural Composites of Indiana \(SCI\)](#), Ligonier, Ind., has designed fiberglass covers for coal rail cars with several advantages over uncovered rail cars. The covers protect the coal from the elements; a covered car is aerodynamic, thereby increasing the fuel efficiency of the train; and covers prevent coal dust from polluting the air and falling on rail tracks. SCI also designed an innovative system to open and close the covers' sliding doors, called the wedge and funnel system. Hoosier Crane Service was approached to manufacture the wedge and funnel.

"Hoosier Crane has a good reputation. They're a vendor for a railroad freight car manufacturer that specializes in coal-carrying rail cars so they were familiar with the industry," said Ken Baranowski, president of SCI. The two companies have so far provided covers and a wedge and funnel system for a rail carrier with 80 cars and a power plant in North Dakota.

A coal carrier will need two wedge and funnel systems, one at the loading station at the mine and one at the power plant's unloading station. Each system has two components—a retractable wedge actuator bridge to open the cover and a retractable funnel actuator bridge to close the cover. The systems do not need a motor as the momentum of the rail cars activates the actuators, thus providing an energy saving for the carrier. At the mine, the wedge actuator opens the cover so coal can be loaded. Located about 150 feet from the wedge bridge, the funnel actuator closes the cap as the car moves down the track. At the utility, the wedge actuator opens the cover to relieve pressure before the coal is unloaded in the bottom-discharged cars and the funnel actuator closes the cover, again as the coal car moves down the track.

"The Hoosier Crane team is pleased to be working with SCI. We're confident that their rail car covers and wedge and funnel systems will revolutionize the coal transportation industry and keep coal as a viable solution to our energy needs," said Tom Schmidt, president of Hoosier Crane.

