



Increased Purity, Accuracy and Consistency for one of Missouri's Largest Independent Distributors

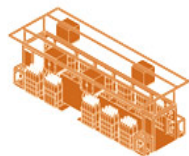
Cee Kay Supply's history with automated cylinder filling dates back to 1997, when the St. Louis, MO, independent gas and welding-equipment supplier installed its first fill plant. Fast forward to 2014 and that semi-automatic island, updated with an equipment retrofit in 2005, had lost much its ability to perform reliably and consistently. Quality control had become an ongoing challenge, cross contamination a pesky, daily hurdle. Something had to change.

"Being customer-driven and known for our quick response to customer requirements, we believed it was time to invest in a new, state-of-the-art automated fill island. Now, our **completely modernized fill operations** have optimized consistency, accuracy and purity for our customers."

- Kevin Kimker, Director of Gas Operations at Cee Kay

The modernization came early in 2015 when Cee Kay partnered with Weldcoa to develop a customized 87-ft.-long automated fill island, one of the largest Weldcoa has ever designed and built. "We can fill 20 cylinders on each of six fill heads," explains Cee Kay production manager Russell Stokes. "The island also has six oxygen banks and eight inert-gas banks."

"We set the bar very high when we specified the fill island's performance requirements," adds Kimker, "and Weldcoa came through. I doubt we'll ever face production-capacity issues again, at least for the foreseeable future."



Easier to Operate, Easier to Train

From the operations perspective, Kimker and his team can't say enough about the ease and speed at which Weldcoa got its operators up and running on the new equipment. "Using the old island, we felt like we needed highly trained experts to fill cylinders. Now we can train inexperienced operators to run the computer-controlled island in a day or two. We've already trained four people to run it, and expect to train a fifth operator in 2016. They can even fill medical gases and our UHP products, where before only two 'expert' operators were able to do so using the old equipment."

One person trained on the new island, who also ran the previous island, is Allen Stokes. Serving as Cee Kay's lead Cylinder Filling Technician, Allen says there's much to like about the new fill equipment. "With the old island the fill heads were heavy, awkward and difficult to move. The weight distribution was poor. Now I can move the new heads literally with one finger. And, the programmability of the new island couldn't be simpler; I can add new programs quickly and easily at any time. Before, we'd typically have to call a software-support person to add new programs."



Technical Acumen, Installation Efficiency

Within a three-day period, the old fill island was dismantled and the new island was installed and ready to go. Stokes, in particular, appreciates how well Weldcoa's installation crew jelled with the Cee Kay team, to minimize any disruption to its business. "By day four of the project," recalls Stokes, "we were running production at 60 percent of our normal load. And, the very first product we filled, 75 Ar-25 CO₂, came out well within our accuracy specifications."

"We've found that it's not just one or two people at Weldcoa that are ready and able to support us. Instead, **we've found that the technical expertise runs deep at Weldcoa**, so we're not reliant on just one or two people being available. The depth of the expertise is a big reason we chose Weldcoa for this project, and continues to be a reason for the success of the installation."

- Russell Stokes, Cee Kay's Production Manager

New Growth Potential

"Bank filling has been a real area of growth for us," Kimker explains. "For example, one of our newer customers, in the refrigeration industry, orders a lot of mixed gases filled in 12-cylinder cradles. We fill these at least twice per week. Before the Weldcoa system came in, our bank filling was more of an add-on section to the old island. It was slow and labor-intensive."

Now, bank filling at Cee Kay is computer-controlled in a two-fill-head extension to the fill island. Weldcoa custom-designed the bank-filling setup, and now it promises to provide real growth opportunities for the company.

"Last year, we more than doubled our bank filling operations," Kimker says, "and we expect to grow that part of our business by at least 10 percent per year."

To learn more about the advantages of automation, call Weldcoa at 630.806.2000. Visit Weldcoa.com

