

# FOOD & DRUG PACKAGING

AUGUST '01

## PRODUCTS IN ACTION

### Case packer cuts downtime on critical cookie line

*Updating the case packer on its busiest packaging line gives Archway-Mother's greater reliability in production output. It also trims maintenance and labor costs.*

Archway-Mother's makes a lot of great-tasting cookies. To keep them flowing out the door at a good pace, the company realized that it was time to update the case packer at its plant in Oakland, Calif. The earlier unit, which was more than 12 years old, was a fully pneumatic machine with a lot of moving parts.

According to plant engineer Bert Pires, it was a "continuous maintenance hog" and had reached the end of its life.

The replacement—a Model SE-10/M2 automatic case packer from Sabel Engineering—matched Archway-Mother's needs for reliability, price, quality, delivery and less-expensive local service.

Equally important, the compact system—which measures just 8 feet wide x 12 feet long x 8 feet high—also fit in the same limited floor space as the previous machine.

runs three shifts five days a week. The company scheduled the change for a three-day weekend in November, a time when production slows down a little.

Over the weekend, the old case packer was removed from the line and the new one was installed, including a five-foot infeed and custom discharge. The line was ready for production on Monday.

The servo drives on the new Sabel machine are preprogrammed so there's virtually no tweaking when the line starts up. Pires says, "The machine was very, very close to where it needed to be after it was in house. A good thing about the servo system is that it requires no downtime because many of these changes can be made while the machine is running."

According to Pires, the servo machine holds repeatability and accuracy better than a pneumatic system, which also contributes to less downtime and higher line output. "Production has

#### Timely installation

Archway-Mother's had a strict timeline for delivery and installation because this is one of the most essential lines at this facility—it

*Cases filled with cookie packages (at top) exit the new case packer at a height that's higher than before. A custom discharge lowerator (at right) only requires another two and a half feet of floor space and integrates the new case packer easily with the rest of the existing line.*



definitely increased because we don't have a mechanic [at the case packer] as much," he says.

The dedicated case packer is set up to handle one case size for seven different

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### **In a nutshell**

**Goal:** Increase output on critical packaging line

**How:** Replace outdated case packer with servo system that fits in the same area

**Result:** Lower maintenance costs; labor savings and reliable operation

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flavors of sandwich cookies. All the cookies come off the same packaging line that places the cookies in 16-ounce overwrapped trays. In the tray, two side-by-side cells each hold 12 cookies so

every package contains 24 sandwich cookies.

Line speed is 10 cases per minute. According to Pires, oven capacity and creamer speeds are the limiting factors. This case packer can accommodate the maximum line speed of the processing operation.

After tray loading and overwrapping, the cookies travel to the bottom-load case packer where 12 packages are loaded in each case a layer at a time, three across and four high. The automatic system erects the case, stacks the product, loads the case, seals it with hot glue using a unit from **Belcor Industries** and then lowers the case to a floor-level conveyor for subsequent palletizing.

Discharge from the previous machine used to be lower to the ground and the company wanted to keep the cases coming out of the new unit at that same ele-

vation. Pires explains, "We case code all four sides of the case, which is just before the palletizer and we didn't want to change that. Also, if the palletizer goes down, we want the option of hand stacking the cases. [The discharge elevation] is low enough for a person to remove them."

### **Savings add up**

To further keep downtime to a minimum, Pires chose hot glue for case sealing. The glue tank is easily accessible for refilling by an operator and this can be done without stopping the line.

And, because the servo-driven case packer is more user friendly and doesn't need as much attention, Archway-Mother's was able to reduce manpower on this line from two employees to one. A single operator now monitors both the horizontal wrapper and the case packer.

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