



Spirax Sarco expertise helps Cova Products slash steam consumption by 35%

Decorative surface film manufacturer Cova Products has cut its steam consumption by 35% in two years, with a series of energy-saving projects relying on Spirax Sarco expertise. The achievement is even more impressive since production at the site in Cramlington, Northumberland, increased by around 30% over the same period.

“The work we’ve done with Spirax Sarco has reduced our energy bill and the impact on the environment,” says Cova Products Engineering and Systems Manager Philip Bell. Mr. Bell leads the in-house team responsible for implementing energy saving measures at Cova Products, along with colleagues Bill Milton and Joe Cocker.

“Spirax Sarco has provided valuable advice and highlighted a number of energy-saving opportunities,” says Mr. Bell. “The expertise of the engineer has been of great value to Cova Products.”

The first major energy-saving project undertaken by Spirax Sarco was to install a flash steam recovery system. Previously, condensate from around the site was fed back to the boiler house but any flash steam was vented to atmosphere. The new system includes a flash steam separation vessel to capture the steam before passing it through two plate heat exchangers to preheat the feed to the boiler.

This project was followed by a Spirax Sarco survey of the site’s entire steam system. The survey revealed that 13 traps had failed open, costing Cova an estimated £90,000 a year.

In addition to the failed traps, the review also found that the site was not always using the most appropriate type of steam trap for each job. For example, balanced pressure traps were being used on the steam mains, where the constraints of the pipe work meant that their use could result in a build up of condensate and, possibly, water hammer. These were replaced with thermodynamic steam traps.

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“We have significantly improved our maintenance of the system by building in checks such as conducting a trap survey every three to six months,” says Mr. Bell. “We’ve also upgraded our SCADA system to monitor the steam to each process; this provides an immediate indication of any problems.”

Other initiatives include a programme of replacing and upgrading the insulation on all the steam and hot water pipes. Heat losses have been further reduced by rationalising the pipe work across the 40 year old site, isolating and removing any pipe runs that are no longer needed.

Cova Products is an internationally successful organisation with over 50 years of experience in manufacturing decorative surfacing materials. Cova Products supplies decorative laminates into three main market sectors: furniture components, exterior windows and doors, and the consumer electronics industry. Additionally there are ranges of PVC

products for flooring, panel lamination and mobile home applications. The product process involves calendaring base PVC films which are then printed with sophisticated wood grain designs. The calenders are steam heated as are the rollers that press the PVC into a film.

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