



Steam Team slashes refinery steam demand by almost a quarter

ExxonMobil's refinery in Fawley, Hampshire, has cut boiler steam demand from 850tph to 650tph, thanks to the efforts of a combined "Steam Team" comprising Spirax Sarco steam specialists and in-house engineers.

The cost of producing steam at Fawley has risen by some 30% in the past year. The Steam Team has helped contain these rising costs with its programme of fixing leaks and implementing continuous improvement projects around the steam system.

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Spirax Sarco Site Operations Engineer Paul Smith provides day-to-day on-site expertise, while Roger Ferryman, Spirax Sarco's OPC Manager, helps define the Team's ongoing strategy. "In the end, what this really means to us is that the Steam Team gets the results it is planning for," says ExxonMobil's Steam Team Leader, Mick Mears.

Spirax Sarco – adding value

In one example, pump seal failures have reduced since Spirax Sarco designed a system to remove condensate, control the steam pressure and ensure that steam reaching the seal is dry. The design is now part of ExxonMobil Best Practice.

Another improvement is in the Slack Wax line, which must be kept warm for the wax to flow. The causes of cold spots on the line have been identified and remedial work successfully undertaken on some of the 3km line to the jetty.

Mr Ferryman explains: "It is the application of our knowledge that sets us apart and brings true 'added value' to the customer. Spirax Sarco is well known for trap management, however we are also experienced in auditing complex processes, steam plant and equipment to scope steam energy optimisation projects."

Traps replaced in minutes

Leaking steam traps have been another major focus of the Steam Team's campaign. Failures have reduced from around 30% to nearly 5%, which is the site target, and this results in significant energy savings.

The site preference is the Spirax Sarco UTD30 thermodynamic trap, which is extremely energy efficient because it removes condensate as it forms. The traps are fitted with a diffuser to reduce noise levels during discharge and protect people and plant.

The UTD30 connector block allows replacements to be made simply by disconnecting two bolts. This cuts the time taken to replace a faulty trap from hours to just a few minutes.

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