

Coloring Supplier Ramps Up Safety Efforts

Founded in 1865 in New York City as a manufacturer of burnt sugars for the brewing industry, D.D. Williamson & Co., Inc, has grown to become the world's leading supplier of caramel coloring and natural coloring for use in food production. Now headquartered in Louisville, KY, D.D. Williamson has nine operations on five continents that produce food colorings that are used in 1.5 billion servings of food and beverages every day.

Mark Ballard, Safety Representative at D.D. Williamson's Louisville plant, thought it would be pertinent to investigate some better fall-protection measures in the plant's tank-truck loading and unloading areas. Since these areas are located outdoors, they are susceptible to the wide variety of weather that can roll through the Louisville area during the year. Ballard was also concerned that the ladders and handrails on the trucks did not offer the best in fall protection for his employees.

"In Louisville, we have rain and snow, all of the seasons, and it can be very difficult in the winter and very scary to be on top of those trucks," said Ballard.

He initially considered a catwalk that used a fall-arrest system and harnesses, which proved to be an expensive option. Then Ballard came across a catalog from SafeRack, LLC, of Sumter, SC, the world's leading provider of stronger, safer and easier-to-handle truck loading-rack and fall-protection equipment. When he saw SafeRack's Mobile Access Unit (MAU-I), he knew he had found the solution.

"When I saw the portable ladder, I thought that it would be a great way to provide fall protection for the people who work around the tank trucks," he said.

The MAU-I has been designed to serve as a truck loading rack or as a general-purpose rolling ladder that will work for any application where a safe, stable, dependable rolling platform is needed. The ladder is available in two adjustable sizes, from 10 feet to 14 feet and from 12 feet to 16 feet. Each unit is tested for a 500-pound capacity and is height-adjustable via a hand winch. After the height is adjusted, the ladder locks via high-quality stainless-steel safety pins. While the MAU-I portable loading ramps are easily adjustable and highly maneuverable, the base of the rolling platform is exceptionally stable to ensure on-the-job safety. Additionally, solid 16-inch tires mean that they will not go flat at inopportune times.

D.D. Williamson took delivery of an MAU-I unit in early September 2009, and the results have been spectacular.

"We really pushed for the ladder this year and it worked great in our budget," said Ballard. "It arrived in early September and two of us put it together in no time. Since then, we've had numerous tank-truck loads come in and everyone that has gone up there said they feel so much safer and secure. They are really buying into

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it; that's something we want. If the associates don't buy into it, they won't use it, but it's so easy to operate and move around, our guys think it's a great piece of equipment."

Ballard foresees the MAU-I getting continuous use since the plant is in operation 24 hours a day. There are two specific areas where the MAU-I is used. One is where shipments of chemicals and sugar arrive in tank trucks that need to be offloaded, while the other is where trucks are loaded for outward-bound shipments once or twice a day.

"We have a very large parking lot where the tank trucks come in and we also have an area where we load the trucks ourselves," said Ballard. "These two areas are about 60 yards apart, but the MAU-I is pretty easy to move and we don't have to worry about the tires going flat. It also fits in our truck-loading carport. The adjustable height is wonderful; it fits all of the configurations you find on top of a tank truck—some have boxes built in, others have an exposed manway, but so far we haven't found any configuration that this piece of equipment doesn't fit with."

Ballard is also in the process of adding a rope to the unit so that the transfer hose can be hooked to it and then pulled up by the operator when he gets to the top of the truck.

"It's working out way better than I anticipated," said Ballard. "I knew it was a nice piece of equipment and had been trying for six years to get it here, but it's exceeded all of our expectations so far."

For more information on any of SafeRack's products or solutions, visit www.SafeRack.com [1].

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