

X-Rays And Precision Scales Enhancing Reliability



Contract Pharmacal Corporation (CPC) develops, manufactures, and packages premium pharmaceuticals, over-the-counter drugs, and dietary supplements for some very prominent brand owners. To assure the highest product quality, CPC recently installed five SmartChek x-ray inspection systems from Mettler-Toledo Safeline and seven XE2 checkweighers from Mettler-Toledo Hi-Speed on their packaging lines.

“Last year, we decided we wanted metal detection on every packaging line but five of our lines package product in a foil-laminated film, which disrupts traditional metal detectors. We decided to look at x-ray systems for those lines and considered technology from three different suppliers,” said Matt Wolf, CEO of CPC. “We considered the accuracy of the systems — that was our most important criteria. We also looked at the durability of the equipment, the price, and the reputation of the supplier.”

“In addition to searching for the best technology at a competitive price, we look for suppliers that will lend their expertise to help us implement the best practices in use in the industry today,” noted Wolf. “Mettler-Toledo Safeline and Mettler-Toledo Hi-Speed have both delivered. And our sales rep, Harold Zeltner at Reliant Packaging, added to the mix by contributing his expertise.”

CPC selected the SmartChek x-ray system from Mettler-Toledo Safeline, which uses a single beam, an electronically controlled low-powered x-ray generator, and proprietary data and image analysis software to identify objects that are a different density than the product. The systems identify foreign particles such as metal, glass, or plastic, and automatically remove contaminated products from the packaging line.

“Technically, we haven’t needed the x-ray systems because we haven’t had any

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problems with contamination, but it gives us the assurance we need that such an event, if it were to occur, will be caught before it leaves our plant," added Wolf. "We test each of our x-ray systems several times every day to be sure they are performing as promised. Since we installed them one year ago, we haven't had any problems with accuracy or reliability. We've had zero downtime associated with our x-ray systems and we're operating three shifts per day, five days per week."

CPC produces more than 4 billion tablets, softgels, and two-piece hard shells, in addition to powdered products, each year at their three manufacturing facilities and one packaging facility. They currently handle around 300 active products, changing over each line once a day, on average.

"Changing over the x-ray systems is fast and accurate. We use pre-programmed settings for each product we run. The operator simply enters the product code into the color touchscreen control panel and then accept/reject thresholds for that specific product are defined, almost on the fly. Then, to add a layer of assurance, our quality control group checks each system throughout the run," said Wolf. "The x-ray systems have three levels of password-protected access, so we're sure that an operator isn't changing the sensitivity of the systems. It's added security."

In addition to the five x-ray systems, CPC installed seven XE2 checkweighers from Mettler-Toledo Hi-Speed on their packaging lines this year. They selected this checkweigher because it gives them the accuracy they need at a good price. With an accuracy of +/- 100 mg, CPC can identify a package with one missing tablet and remove it from the production line.

"With the x-ray systems and the checkweighers, our measure of success is based on the accuracy of inspection sensitivity and reliability in terms of equipment durability and dependability. We're very happy with both the x-ray systems and the checkweighers. More importantly, our customers are happy with the results," concluded Wolf. "We believe that producing products for the public is an important responsibility. With our Safeline x-ray systems and our Hi-Speed checkweighers, we know that we're using the best technology to assure the quality and safety of our products."

About Mettler-Toledo Hi-Speed and Mettler-Toledo Safeline

As the world's largest supplier of checkweighers, metal detectors and x-ray inspection systems, Mettler-Toledo Hi-Speed and Mettler-Toledo Safeline are the product inspection experts for the food, beverage and pharmaceutical industries. Hi-Speed checkweighers ensure regulatory compliance, increase productivity and enhance operational excellence. Safeline metal detectors and x-ray inspection systems detect solid contaminants and ensure product quality, portion control and package integrity for ultimate brand protection. Our innovative products are backed by 24/7 technical support.

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