

n e w s f r o m
BROTHERTON

The community newsletter of Brotherton Speciality Products Limited

Issue 16 - Spring 2009

New partnership helps beat the recession

The recent bout of severe Winter weather provided a further boost for Brotherton Speciality Products when sales of the company's 'Safegrip' and 'Ecowing' runway and aircraft de-icers reached record levels, just halfway through their traditional season (*more on inside pages*).

Some 20 UK airports, including East Midlands, Leeds/Bradford and Manchester rely on the products to maintain services in such adverse conditions. Significant quantities were also exported, with Paris (Charles de Gaulle), among the leading users.

Impressive

"When affected by snow and ice, airports are under intense pressure to meet passenger expectations," commented Brotherton's Managing Director, Roger Perry. "Safety is paramount and without such products it would not be possible to fly."

The impressive sales figures have served to highlight what has been a very successful year for the company, which announced a 36% increase in turnover to a record £15m in 2008. Further significant growth is forecast in 2009, despite the economic downturn.

"Much strategic thinking has taken place over the last few years, boosted by our new partnership with the Esseco Group of Italy," continued Roger.

"Their injection of enthusiasm as new owners, plus their willingness to invest in our Wakefield operation, have been instrumental factors in helping us secure more business from

existing clients and acquire important new ones.

"Our overall business strategy is to focus on areas which tend to be recession-proof," he concluded.

Another major contract just secured will see Brotherton supplying a range of potassium products to a multi-national company in the chemical processing industry, where they will be used in the manufacture of energy-efficient process aids.

Trial runs have already begun at Brotherton's Calder Vale Road plant, with full production set to commence in May.



Working from a mobile platform, an airport operative de-ices an aeroplane with 'Ecowing' prior to take-off.

INSIDE: HEALTH & SAFETY GOES TOO FAR?

Produced on behalf of Brotherton Speciality Products Limited, Calder Vale Road, Wakefield, WF1 5PH.
Tel: 01924 371919 Fax: 290408 E-mail: info@brotherton.co.uk Website: www.brotherton.co.uk

You can't do that!

How often have you heard that said? Health & safety regularly makes headline news, but sometimes for all the wrong reasons.

Recently there has been an emerging tendency for over-zealousness, affecting everything from school sports days to pancake races.

Whilst almost no activity is without a certain element of risk, we believe a more proportionate response would often be appropriate.

Work and play are two totally different environments. In general, the more exciting a sport or leisure activity is, the higher the risk: bungee jumping for example. In some shape or form, risk is a part of everyday life.

At work, it's a different story. The emphasis is on eliminating risk wherever possible.

The HSE is concerned only with regulating health & safety in the workplace. The problem lies somewhere between them at one end, and the general public at the other. But more often than not, the HSE takes the blame.

Risks need to be managed, but the killjoys are being allowed to exert an undue influence. Insurance companies too must share some of the blame, as they constantly look at ways to reduce their exposure and responsibility.

Because of the nature of our business, we have a huge commitment to public safety - but we achieve it without any unnecessary impact or prohibitive restrictions in other areas.

So here's a plea for a little more common sense - and a little less over-reaction - in the future. If risks are sensibly managed, it is possible to work... and play... and enjoy yourself at the same time!

Roger Perry
Managing Director




Winter weather sees de-icer sales 'take-off'

Hopping onto an aeroplane and jetting off somewhere is something most of us take for granted. But when snow and ice take hold, and temperatures drop to below zero, you might have to thank Brotherton for keeping things moving.

The company produce two key products to help ensure that when a freezing cold snap strikes, flights can carry on as normal.

Thanks to Brotherton's 'Ecowing' aeroplane de-icer, pilots are able to defy adverse conditions with confidence.

It is complemented by the company's unique 'Safegrip' runway de-icer, to ensure the tarmac surfaces are safe to use for take-off and landing.

Severe conditions

"It has been an excellent season for us so far," commented Managing Director, Roger Perry, referring to the severe Winter conditions that the whole country experienced a few weeks ago.

"Sales are already well past our previous best for the whole season, with the cold weather expected to last until the end of April."

Record amounts of Ecowing have been dispatched to

Paris airports and the secure supply offered by Brotherton has seen the company grab vital new business both domestically and in Europe (including Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport).

"Difficulties obtaining supplies of raw materials mean that some of our competitors have let their customers down," continued Roger. "We, meanwhile, have guaranteed sufficient allocations to maintain supplies, even if the season is a long one, which it appears it may well be."

Proof of the high level of demand was provided at Birmingham at the beginning of February, when 40 planes were de-iced with Ecowing before take off - a record for the airport.

Applied from heated rigs by an operator working from a mobile platform or boom, Ecowing is effective in temperatures as low as -14C.

Sufficiently viscous to stick to a stationary aeroplane, it is designed to simply blow off an aeroplane's wing as soon as it reaches take-off speed (approximately 150/160 mph), so as not to impair its in-flight performance.

So far Brotherton has shipped out almost two million litres from their Calder Vale Road headquarters. That's enough to de-ice approximately 5,000 jumbo jets.



Safegrip is carefully applied to a runway using a Schmidt spraying rig.

'Fixing it' for the fabric trade

One of Brotherton's biggest sellers at the moment is ammonium acetate (in solid form), which has a wide variety of mainstream uses.

Produced from ammonia and acetic acid, it is unusual in that it cannot be dried in a conventional way. The fine white crystals are extracted from the mother liquor by centrifugation (similar to a spin cycle in a washing machine), then packed in high-quality bags which completely exclude moisture. The liquor which is removed is returned to the process, thereby eliminating any waste.

It is a most versatile product and perhaps its most popular application is in the dyeing and printing of textiles where it is used as a 'mordant', to help 'fix' the colour to the material.

Sales to Italy (where Brotherton's new owners are based), are very substantial, with most destined for the country's vibrant textile and fabrics industry.

This technical grade of ammonium acetate is also used for the in surface treatment of metals and as a catalyst in rayon fibre productions. It acts as a gelling agent in the creation of rubber latex (for example, in the production of foam rubber) and is an essential component in the production of vinyl plastics and the manufacture of industrial detergents.

Meanwhile, pharmaceutical grade ammonium acetate is used in the manufacture of insulin and penicillin.

Other uses can see ammonium acetate finding its way into pesticides, fire extinguishers, mining explosives, preserving meats and as a therapeutic diuretic and diaphoretic.



Mark on schedule for marathon showdown

Last year proved a significant one for Mark Devlin and his wife, Joanne, who both celebrated their 40th birthday on 4 July.

The couple, who were born within 45 minutes of one another, celebrated with a weekend trip to London - a destination which also features prominently for Mark again this year, as he prepares to take part in his first London Marathon.

Mark only took up running a few years ago, after reading Jane Tomlinson's book 'The luxury of time'. "She was a real inspiration," he said, "and I thought: if she can do it, I can."

So in a few weeks' time - on Sunday 26 April - he will attempt to prove it, and beat his best marathon time so far of 4hrs 52 mins, achieved at Nottingham.

Mark knows it will be no easy task. "I prefer 10-kilometre runs, they come faster than miles," he joked, adding: "I've done several half-marathons and 10k events, including the 2008 Jane Tomlinson 10k in Leeds, but London has always been my prime objective."

When he swaps his running boots for

work boots, Mark is a Process Supervisor at Brotherton, where he has worked since 1997. Prior to that he had spent 13 years at Asda's Durkar store, after joining straight from school.

"I knew someone who worked at Brotherton, who tipped me off about a job opportunity," he confided. "I wanted something different and really enjoyed the transition and the chance to work in a more challenging environment."

After starting as a Process Operative in the bicarbonate plant, Mark is now one of five supervisors who between them maintain a round-the-clock schedule, seven days a week.

"We monitor the whole plant, checking such things as temperatures, pressures and pumps, working through a checklist on a regular circuit," he outlined.

Round the clock role

Monitoring the plant is a 24-hour-a-day, 365-days-a-year job. "Inevitably there are times when I'm on my own, especially during holiday periods such as Christmas, or Easter," admitted Mark, who added: "it's always great to see a familiar face when the shifts change!"

The one consolation is that every 25 days (after working for 21, with just four days off), Mark gets an extended period of 10 days off, which gives him time to catch up on family life.

Not that he gets much time to put his feet up: he and Joanne have three children (Kirstie 18, Liam 16 and Christopher, who's eight), and of course there's his marathon training.

"If all goes well though, I might get a chance to relax after London," he said with a not-too-convincing smile...

Mark will be running the marathon in aid of Wakefield Hospice, for whom he hopes to raise in excess of £1,000. If you'd like to sponsor him, log onto his weblink: www.justgiving.com/markdevlin

