Industrial Doorway Accident Prompts Air Curtain Installation For Safety

J.W. Murdoch and Sons

This article first appeared in* IMPO's** May 2013 ***[1] issue.

After several near-misses culminating with an injurious forklift truck collision involving strip curtains, a Northeast Ohio metal fabricator and manufacturer searched for creative solutions to improve safety, energy efficiency, and productivity at a high traffic ground level material handling doorway.

The busy 20 x 16 foot doorway’s clear overlapping PVC strips steadily lost visibility from scratches, oil film from metal fabricating processes, and residual grease from forklift mast rail chains. The accident was due to one forklift driver not being able to see another through the strip curtains, which resulted in a worker’s compensation claim.

The doorway’s insulated overhead door was prematurely becoming maintenance-intensive due to excessive forklift traffic from outdoor metal stock areas to indoor production areas. Adding the $3,000 strip curtains was an inexpensive energy solution to a previously inefficient doorway during Ohio’s four-month winter season. But while the strip curtains helped reduce energy losses from the door’s 20 cycles per hour or left open status during high traffic periods, the metal product manufacturer felt it could no longer risk more potential accident liabilities at its 100,000-square-foot industrial complex.

Instead, J.W. Murdoch and Sons, Youngstown, OH, a three-generation, family-owned industrial door installation and service dealer, offered an air curtain as a doorway

safety solution.

A high-speed door was nixed because it costs three times more than an air curtain, needs significantly more maintenance, can also be a forklift liability, and has no defense against escaping energy while open, according to David Murdoch, president, J.W. Murdoch and Sons.

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