

Stone-Cold Performance

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The cold environment of refrigerated and freezer warehousing can present a challenge for warehouse equipment, facility managers and employees. United States Cold Storage, Inc., a 110-year-old refrigerated warehouse operations company with headquarters in Voorhees, N.J., owns a network of cold-storage warehouses totaling more than 150 million cubic feet of space. The company provides cold-storage warehousing for a complete range of perishable food products, pharmaceuticals and other items, and most recently opened two new facilities in Wilmington, Ill., and Lebanon, Ind.

Extensive research goes into selecting a location to build a new facility, including geographic position to major routes and interstates, rail service and, most important, proximity to the company's estimated 1,200 customers. To serve its nationwide customer base through facilities in 10 states, the company has researched best practices and equipment for cold-storage material handling to maximize its distribution process. In both the Wilmington and Lebanon facilities, U.S. Cold Storage relies on *Raymond*® lift trucks to stand up to the cold environments and move up to 100 million pounds of product per month between the two facilities.

Lift Truck Options Aid Material Handling in Cold Storage

Jim Duffy, regional chief engineer for U.S. Cold Storage, says lift trucks are the lifeblood of the distribution process. He worked with Arbor Material Handling, Inc., a Raymond Sales and Service Center, to select the lift trucks for U.S. Cold Storage's

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new facilities. The combined lift truck fleets total 71 trucks — including *Raymond Reach-Fork*® trucks, sit-down and stand-up counterbalanced lift trucks, orderpickers, and pallet trucks — all utilized for various applications within the warehouses.

Lift trucks used in cold-storage environments must be equipped to operate in severe temperatures, so all of U.S. Cold Storage's narrow aisle lift trucks feature a cold-storage conditioning package, which protects the lift trucks' control systems.

In addition, the *Reach-Fork* lift trucks at U.S. Cold Storage are equipped with the *Raymond ThermaKit*™ system to keep operators more comfortable when maneuvering in frigid temperatures and even in blast-freezing operations, where the mercury can dip to 40 below zero. The *ThermaKit* system includes heated control handles and heated floor cushions on the lift trucks to help keep the operators' hands and feet warm. Both heaters are thermostatically controlled to shut off when the trucks move into nonfreezer, ambient environments.

"Anything we can do to help the operators feel more comfortable in this environment is a bonus," Duffy says. "We know the operators appreciate the heated handles and floor cushions, and the added comfort may make them a little more productive as well."

Technology Aids Productivity

U.S. Cold Storage takes advantage of narrow aisles and tall racks to maximize the storage capabilities of its facilities. Storage heights in the U.S. Cold Storage warehouses can reach up to 40 feet, which can be challenging for an operator putting a pallet away on the back shelf of a double-deep rack. The *Vantage Point*® high-level color imaging system, which is installed on the company's *Reach-Fork* trucks, aids operators when working in the tall racks. The imaging system includes a camera mounted on the forks of the lift truck and a screen mounted in the operator compartment. This system provides additional visual assistance at greater heights, increasing operator accuracy and efficiency when handling pallets.

Duffy also appreciates that the lift trucks interface with other technological systems installed in the U.S. Cold Storage warehouses.

"Lift truck technology has advanced, and the trucks now include provisions for computerized systems and additional connections for equipment such as computers and scanners," Duffy says. "Raymond has demonstrated the versatility to provide these provisions to integrate our warehouse management systems with the lift trucks. This allows us to better manage the facility and inventory, track pallet and case moves and manage overall productivity."

Service is Key

The U.S. Cold Storage facilities in Lebanon and Wilmington run as many as 16 to 18 hours per day, 7 days per week. Reliable, comprehensive service from authorized Raymond Sales and Service centers keeps the lift truck fleets maintained, enabling

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U.S. Cold Storage employees to focus on material handling instead of focusing on lift truck maintenance. Associated Material Handling, Inc. and Allied Handling Equipment Co. service U.S. Cold Storage's facilities in Lebanon and Wilmington, respectively, through a comprehensive service agreement. As part of the agreement, service technicians from Associated and Allied are regularly on-site at U.S. Cold Storage to perform scheduled maintenance and follow up on other maintenance requests.

"We have some redundancy of lift trucks built into our fleet because if the lift trucks are down, we are down. We are unable to receive product, move it from docks to storage and then pick product from storage for shipping," Duffy says. "Our experience has been that *Raymond* lift trucks are very reliable, and reliability and performance are key to our lift truck purchase decisions. These trucks and their accessories are designed to perform in our harsh environments, and that makes all the difference in the world to me and our operations."

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