

INTERPHEX Vs. the Volcano



By LUKE SIMPSON, Associate Editor

The volcanic ash from Iceland's Eyjafjallajokull kept some of the European pharmaceutical processing & manufacturing contingent from attending INTERPHEX 2010 in New York City this week, with some cancelling travel plans altogether and others finally making it in for the final day of the show (as reported on the [INTERPHEX Twitter feed](#) [1]).

In another case of bad timing for the show, the Associated Press reported on Day 1 that [expiring patents for big name drugs and tighter EU price controls](#) [2] would affect global pharmaceutical sales. It's the sort of news that gets people focused on innovation and efficiency.

At a seminar on "What We Learned From H1N1," John Hyde from Hyde Engineering & Consulting discussed the need for manufacturers to take more risks and develop new fast, flexible and safe technologies that would help to produce and distribute vaccines when the next pandemic arrives. A few areas that are currently being developed include:

- Techniques that allow 100 doses of vaccine to be produced from a single egg instead of just 1.
- Cell culture technology that bypass the need for egg-based vaccines (and the specially raised eggs required to produce them).
- Smaller, modular production facilities that can be constructed in the areas

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Published on Chem.Info (<http://www.chem.info>)

most in need of vaccines.

I also had the pleasure of meeting Doug Jennings from Fike, who filled me in on the company's explosion protection equipment. He explained how their passive explosion venting systems were able to minimize the damage caused by combustible dust explosions, and also could be fitted with flame-retarding mesh or a large valve to stop oxygen from re-entering the equipment.

An even safer solution, as Doug explained, is isolation or suppression, where flames are mechanically blocked or chemically suppressed at the earliest stage of the explosion. It's a more expensive option, and as such many facilities go with the venting systems instead. It was good to see that Fike recognized this and worked to improve the venting systems with mesh and valve add-ons.

At Hamilton's booth, I played with the ARC, a sensor that can measure pH, conductivity or dissolved oxygen. It feeds measurement data and diagnostic information to a wireless handheld monitor with a large, bright interface, logical navigation and straightforward indicators for sensor health. With this diagnostic information, sensors can be replaced before they break, and stops functioning sensors from being replaced during routine maintenance.

Other show highlights included:

- ITT's rotary pump display, with some seriously viscous bright blue goo being used to put the pumps through their paces.
- Blackmer's easy-to-clean pump designs, which made them ideal for sterile pharmaceutical or food applications.
- Getting my hands on CORNING's modular glass reactor and seeing how each reactor cell—consisting of glass wafers that guide chemicals and heat exchange fluid through winding pathways—can be used to control the temperature of exothermic reactions.

As INTERPHEX comes to a close, we start gearing up for the International Powder & Bulk Solids show in Rosemount, IL. If you will have a booth at the show, drop me a line and I'll make sure I swing by (luke.simpson@advantagemedia.com [3]). Alternatively, you can post your details and booth number in the comments field below. If you can't make it to the show, we'll be broadcasting the highlights from our [Twitter account](#) [4]. I hope to see you there.

Source URL (retrieved on 04/27/2015 - 11:59am):
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Links:

[1] <http://twitter.com/Interphex>

[2] <http://chem.info/News/2010/04/International-News-Price-Controls-Likely-to-Slow-Drug-Sales/>

[3] <mailto:luke.simpson@advantagemedia.com>

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