Water-mist systems in mass-production industries: A successful application to a tissue-converting plant

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CASE STUDY: TISSUE-CONVERTING PLANTS

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS:

- The machineries are very expensive and complex;
- The considered plants operate 24/7;
- The converted material (cellulose) is of low unit price;
- The output products (handkerchiefs, napkins, kitchen towels, paper sheets, toilet paper, etc.) have very low unit value;
- The daily output is very high, as consistent with mass-production industry: the real value stands in the production rate.
TO BE PROTECTED: THE WORK STATIONS

CONVERTING PROCESS

MAIN FEATURES:

• The converting process consists in obtaining the commercial products (toilet paper, napkins, …) from a main paper reel.

• This conversion is achieved by a rotary machine, that is operated within an enclosed space.

WHAT’S IN?

✓ Paper rolls;
✓ Cellulose powder;
✓ Electric motors;
✓ Liquid colors (flammable);
✓ Control panels.
EXISTING BACKGROUND -1-

**LUCCA, brucia la Delicarta Miliardi di danni**

il Tirreno — 12 marzo 1998  pagina -1  sezione: PRIMA

LUCCA - Un grande incendio è scoppiato alla Delicarta di Tassignano, nei pressi dell’autostrada Firenze-Mare. Le fiamme, altissime, erano visibili in tutta la piana fino a Montecatini e sono accorsi decine di vigili del fuoco. I danni sono di miliardi. In cronaca

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**IL MONDO DEL TISSUE**

"31 maggio 1988 Soffass completamente distrutta da un incendio: in una nottata se ne andò tutto il parco macchine, non si salvò neppure un pacco di prodotto finito, l’immobile distrutto. Una campagna pubblicitaria, quella del marchio Regina, appena cominciata e un momento in cui commercialmente stava decollando. Tutti i dipendenti disperati un disastro di tale entità non si era mai verificato in Lucchesia.

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**RAPPORT D’ÉTUDE**

24 / 06 / 2008

DRA-08-98215-08087A

**Étude des risques incendie et ATEX des lignes «rouleaux finis»**

**Client**: DELIPAPIER

Deux incendies ont eu lieu dans les six derniers mois sur deux de huit lignes de production de rouleaux finis. L’un d’entre eux a mené à la destruction de l’intégralité de la ligne de production.
The fire events appear to be mainly due to:

- cellulose powder lying on to hot surfaces (auto-ignition phenomena);
- machine malfunctioning, thus resulting in cellulose-powder ignition.

The large quantity of cellulose powder and the high rotation velocity may yield to fast-growing fires.

The fire-risk analysis has emphasized the need for a fire-protection system within any work station.
FIRE SAFETY OBJECTIVES

- Early system activation:
  need for an effective fire detection system;

- Fire suppression:
  reduction of the heat release rate and prevention of fire re-growth to prevent or limit damages to the machineries and limit the business interruption;

- Temperature control:
  aim at preventing flashover and limiting damages to the machineries, thus limiting the business interruption as well.

A HIGH-PRESSURE WATER-MIST SYSTEM WAS SELECTED
WHY WATER MIST?

- The space is enclosed (compartment fire);
- The space is not sufficiently tight to allow a gas-based firefighting system;
- Potential human beings may be present inside the work stations, thus discouraging from employing CO$_2$-based systems;
- A sprinkler/deluge system would imply longer delay times to re-arrange full-load operations, even because of an excessive wetting of the involved machineries.

FIRE EVENT IN GERMANY: A REFERENCE CASE

April 2010: a fire occurred in a tissue-converting plant in Germany, where traditional sprinklers were employed as the fire-protection system. The fire source was located within an embosser: the sprinkler-system successfully operated, but four days of cleaning operations were thereby required. The plant experienced a full business interruption during that time.
THE CHOSEN SYSTEM: GENERAL FEATURES

The employed system consists of the following components:

1. A series of **open** water-mist high-pressure **nozzles**;

2. A detection system designed as based on a **2-detector confirmation**: both flame detectors and rate-of-rise heat detectors with fixed temperature (57 °C) are inserted;

3. Available **manual discharge**, as a possible option for the involved personnel.
The present case is neither included nor considered as a specific scenario within the standard CEN/TS 14972

GENERAL GUIDELINES: ANNEX B
EXPERIMENTAL TESTS

**Combustible material:** cellulose powder tends to lie onto the solid surfaces of the machineries.

- Production station
- Test facility (28 m², 91 m³)

Cellulose powder
METHODOLOGY: PROPERTIES AND PROGRAM

Cellulose powder characteristics:

✓ Density: 60 kg/m$^3$
✓ Lower Heating Value: 16.1 kJ/g [1]
✓ Quantity: 0.13 m$^3$


Test program:

✓ Obstructed and non-obstructed fire
✓ Ventilation conditions, VVR (vent-to-volume ratio) = 0.05 m$^2$/m$^3$
✓ Pre-burn time: 150 s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Q [L min$^{-1}$ m$^{-2}$]</th>
<th>Obstructed fire</th>
<th>Ventilation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXPERIMENTAL TEMPERATURE PROFILES – TEST 01

Discharge density: 0.5 L min\(^{-1}\) m\(^{-2}\)

- obstructed fire;
- no ventilation was considered;
- pre-burn time: 150 s;
- 0.13 m\(^3\) of cellulose powder.
EXPERIMENTAL TEMPERATURE PROFILES – TEST 02

Discharge density: $0.9 \, \text{L min}^{-1} \, \text{m}^{-2}$

- obstructed fire;
- no ventilation was considered;
- pre-burn time: 150 s;
- $0.13 \, \text{m}^3$ of cellulose powder.

![Graph showing temperature profiles over time](image-url)
EXPERIMENTAL TEMPERATURE PROFILES – TEST 03

Discharge density: $0.9 \text{ L min}^{-1} \text{ m}^{-2}$

✓ non obstructed fire;
✓ no ventilation was considered;
✓ pre-burn time: 150 s;
✓ $0.13 \text{ m}^3$ of cellulose powder.
Discharge density: 0.5 L min\(^{-1}\) m\(^{-2}\)
- obstructed and non obstructed fires;
- ventilation was considered;
- pre-burn time: 150 s;
- 0.13 m\(^3\) of cellulose powder dispersed on different surfaces.
### EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Q [L min(^{-1}) m(^{-2})]</th>
<th>Obstructed fire</th>
<th>Ventilation</th>
<th>Fire suppression</th>
<th>Fire extinction</th>
<th>Temperature control</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>02</td>
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<td>03</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Main design parameter:**

- DISCHARGE DENSITY = 1.4 L min\(^{-1}\) m\(^{-2}\) (50% safety factor);

**Applicable to:**

- total-compartment applications;
- systems integrated with an early-detection system (e.g.: flame detector).

The results obtained throughout the experimental campaign have been discussed and analyzed together with fire-safety and insurance consultants.
SYSTEM CUSTOMIZATION

The water-mist system has been inserted in the whole safety program through a discussion with fire-safety consultants. Most notably, the following tasks have been accomplished:

➢ **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WATER-MIST SYSTEM WITHIN THE PROCEDURES OF THE SAFETY PROGRAM;**

➢ **INSTRUCTION OF THE INVOLVED PERSONNEL TO OPERATE THE SYSTEM (EVEN MANUALLY).**
FIRE EVENTS -1-

Case 1

- **Date:** 4th October 2009;
- **Location:** Italy;
- **Ignition point:** Broken clutch (print group);
- **Fatalities:** None;
- **Damages:** Limited to some electric wires and plastic air ducts;
- **Water-mist action:** Extinction;
- **Business interruption:** 40 h (24 h to cleaning and re-establishment, 16 h to re-arrange full-load production).
FIRE EVENTS -2-

Case 2

- **Date:** 30th October 2009;
- **Location:** Italy;
- **Ignition point:** Embosser;
- **Fatalities:** None;
- **Damages:** None due to the fire event;
- **Water-mist action:** Extinction;
- **Business interruption:** 6 h

Case 3

- **Date:** April 2010;
- **Location:** France;
- **Ignition point:** Embosser (brake pad);
- **Fatalities:** None;
- **Damages:** Plastic air ducts, sound-insulation materials in the work station;
- **Water-mist action:** Suppression;
- **Business interruption:** 18 h
Case 4

- **Date:** 17th September 2010;
- **Location:** Italy;
- **Ignition point:** Bearing;
- **Fatalities:** None;
- **Damages:** None due to fire;
- **Water-mist action:** Extinction;
- **Business interruption:** 6 h

Fire-detection control-panel report
CONCLUSIONS

• The system has shown remarkable effectiveness according to both the safety and the economic aspects;

• No fatalities have occurred over the fire events;

• Very limited damages resulted against the involved machineries;

• No fire spread was detected outside the involved work station;

• Very limited business interruption was borne by the production activity.

The Gruppo SOFIDEL S.p.A. (Porcari, Lucca, Italy) is gratefully acknowledged.
Thanks for your kind attention.

Questions?

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