Macro Plastics of Fairfield, California is the largest manufacturer of injection molded, reusable bulk containers used in the agricultural, food, retail and industrial markets. When Macro purchased a facility in Shelbyville, Kentucky, they also purchased a Husky 8,800 ton injection molding machine, thought to be one of the largest injection molding machines in North America.

Since the 1999-vintage press, originally built for Chrysler, was the only one of its kind, Husky’s support of the control system “was not exactly what we needed” according to Macro’s plant manager Jonathan Kitchen. “In this business we need reliability since we are very machine-dependent. We could never depend on the press to run for more than a few hours without a cycle stoppage,” said Kitchen. “We have another machine capable of handling the largest jobs. Moving the 77,000-pound mold back and forth between machines each time we had a problem with the Husky, was an arduous job, requiring two days of down time.”

Macro therefore turned to Cincinnati Process Technologies (CPT) to totally rework the control system for the press. Mike Stewart, Macro’s production manager, said that before the retrofit, “we could never depend on the machine for large runs. That presented obvious production problems and difficulties meeting customer demand. Now we can start it up and it will run continuously without so much as a glitch.”

The modern, user-friendly, touch-screen interface, installed by CPT, provided Macro with the latest in control technology. It gives them the reliability they demand, along with off-the-shelf hardware and supported software. The CPT controller drastically reduces setup/startup time and provides remote diagnostics capabilities. According to Macro’s maintenance manager, Mike Lewis, “before the retrofit we had technicians working on the machine nearly every day. Now we never have to worry about it.”

“This was the largest and most complex control system replacement we’ve done to date,” claims CPT’s Application Engineer Jim O’Brien. “We’ve been retrofitting injection molding machines since our inception, but this machine, with a total of eight tie bars, three of which retract for mold changes, a plunger/shot-pot injection unit fed by a reciprocating extruder and a side-entry seven-axis robot, made this job more challenging than any we’ve done to date. I feel that the success of this retrofit makes us uniquely qualified to handle any machine. We are seeing more opportunities to provide our expertise for more complex jobs.”

Kitchen says that he is totally satisfied by the job done by CPT. “We are all very impressed by the work done by CPT to extend the Husky’s anticipated service life. They installed a state of the art control system that keeps the machine running and profitable for us. Jim O’Brien and his team really demonstrated their expertise of the complex electronics, hydraulics and control system architecture needed to get our machine running reliably.”

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