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Replacing a cooling tower in disrepair with modern engineered plastic units allows global chemical manufacturer to reduce maintenance and energy costs, improve efficiency.

When it comes to heavy industrial cooling applications like oil refineries, chemical plants, and paper mills cooling towers have been employed for decades. Yet, according to industry research, the utilization of the technology in these sectors is on the rise. There are several notable reasons including a longer average lifespan, consistent reliable cooling, and significant energy savings over alternative cooling options.

Traditionally, however, these heavy industrial manufacturers required cooling towers that were the size of buildings and constructed on-site. This is no longer the case, as advanced cooling tower technologies are not only offering a smaller footprint but also delivering greater efficiencies with significantly less maintenance.

So was the case for a chemical processor in North Carolina where after years of incurring considerable expenses refurbishing and maintaining its aging cooling towers, the plant finally reached a critical point. The facility was looking to replace its existing wooden crossflow units with a more modern cooling tower solution. By switching to towers constructed of high-density polyethylene (HDPE) engineered plastic, the facility has been able to not only dramatically reduce its maintenance costs, but also boost efficiency.

"The company was spending tens of thousands of dollars each year on maintenance trying to keep the old towers operational and it just became cost prohibitive," explains Varun Ganesh, sales engineer with Tencarva Machinery, a Greensboro, N.C.-based integrator of industrial process equipment.

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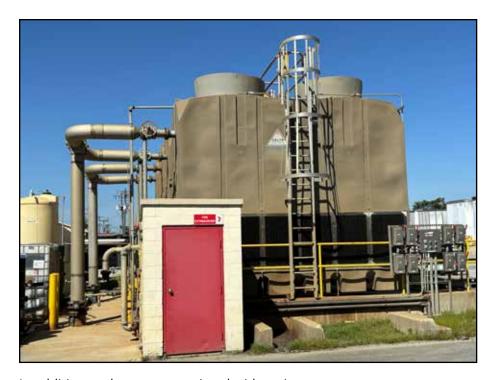
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In addition to the costs associated with maintenance, the efficiency of the old towers was also beginning to decline. Recognizing the need to reduce maintenance expenses and enhance efficiency, the company decided something had to be done. Given the nature of their chemical process, they needed a cooling tower solution that could withstand the demands of their environment.

"In this operation, there was a high likelihood that chemicals from the processing plant would enter the cooling system and deteriorate a metal tower," says Ganesh. "So, they looked at two replacement options which included cooling towers made of stainless steel and engineered plastic."

In this application, the industrial cooling towers are used to reduce the heat from the equipment required to produce the chemical reaction. In the closed-loop system, water circulates from the source, also called "the pond," around several reactor tank vessels that require external jacketed cooling. The water then runs through the cooling towers where the temperature must be reduced by as much as 10–15-degrees Fahrenheit. Then the cooled water is recycled back into the pond.

While stainless steel was considered early in the process, the company ultimately decided on engineered plastic. HDPE cooling towers are impervious to the

#### Bonding with Plastics

Ultimately, the chemical processor selected four TM series towers from Delta Cooling. Together the engineered plastic towers offer a cooling capacity of 1,580 tons and can cool about 6,000 gallons of water per minute. Delta Cooling developed the first HDPE cooling towers in the 1970's with many of the original towers still in operation today.

While HDPE cooling towers typically cost less than comparable stainless-steel models, there was another big reason that the chemical manufacturer felt confident in transitioning to engineered plastic.

"I think the 20-year warranty offered by Delta Cooling goes a long way to relieve any concerns," says Ganesh. "That's significantly longer than any stainless-steel or even galvanized-metal models that I am aware of."

In addition to virtually eliminating maintenance – aside from standard preventive activities – the engineered plastic towers are proving to be significantly more energy efficient than the previously installed crossflow towers, further decreasing the overall cost of ownership.

natural and chemical causes of rust and corrosion. They also require lower amounts of expensive water treatment chemicals and less downtime for repair or maintenance requirements.

"When spending such a large capital investment on a major utility they were not going to compromise on quality," adds Ganesh. "They were also hoping to find the lowest total cost of ownership and the engineered plastic tower's corrosion-proof shell gave the facility the opportunity to greatly minimize repair and maintenance costs over time."

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"The older crossflow towers used large, 30-horsepower fans on each unit, which demanded a lot of electric power," explains Ganesh. "The new Delta HDPE units are equipped with smaller, 60-inch fans that operate at a lower horsepower, so the energy consumption is far less."

Delta Cooling also offers fans that are directly driven by a variable frequency drive (VFD). This lets them vary the fan speed and avoid running them at max RPM except when necessary. The ability to tailor fan usage to cooling demand encourages greater energy efficiency – and substantial savings.

#### High yield, low corrosion

The towers have also proven to be more efficient. The original installation at the plant consisted of four cooling towers constructed of a corrugated metal outer shell with internal parts fabricated out of wood. During the warm summer months, the facility required all four to properly cool the water. However, with the new, engineered plastic towers only three of the four are needed during peak times, a significant gain in efficiency.

"The final cell of the new towers is now available for increasing capacity at the facility if the chemical processor needs to scale up production in the future," adds Ganesh. "Plus, not having to use the additional motors on the fourth tower further increases their energy savings."

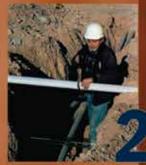
Furthermore, the ease of installation is facilitated by the fact that the cooling towers are pre-assembled in the factory and arrive at the site in just two pieces. The modular design of the towers required a smaller footprint allowing for two towers to fit in the same footprint as one of the old wooden cooling towers.

According to the plant maintenance supervisor, the towers are already offering a return on investment for the project.

"Plant management says they are getting better cooling now than they ever experienced at this location before," concludes Ganesh.



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### More Precise Timekeeping Device Synchronizes Critical Utility Functions

Utility substations require extremely precise sub-millisecond time synchronization to facilitate improved location of faults, multi-rate billing, power-flow monitoring and event reconstruction.

Precise timekeeping is fundamental to the function of the power grid and is used in many applications to improve reliability, reduce costs, predict and prevent faults, and check operation of devices. As such, the power grid requires precise time synchronization across system-wide devices, often with sub-millisecond accuracy.

To accomplish this, extremely precise satellite clocks serve as the time source for the network time protocol, and the information is distributed to the other devices on the network. In fact, satellite clocks are standard within electric utility substations and at certain distribution line locations. "If all of your distribution points or substations have access to a satellite clock, they share a common source for correlation," says Nathan Irvin, product manager of networking products at NovaTech Automation, a leading U.S. provider of automation and engineering solutions for power utilities headquartered in Quakertown, PA.

Despite being extremely accurate, utilities are continuously seeking even greater precision in timekeeping. Luckily, advancements in satellite clock design and programming can enhance accuracy. Currently, the accuracy is pushing towards achieving a margin of plus or minus 20 nanoseconds.

Utilities anticipate significant benefits from the improved accuracy, including more precise location of faults, multi-rate billing, power-flow monitoring, and event reconstruction.

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Satellite clocks work by connecting with orbiting satellites that maintain precise time using highly accurate atomic clocks. At the substation, the satellite clock receives time from the satellites in orbit. Utilizing advanced algorithms, it then accounts for external factors to provide an accurate time.

To improve the speed of connection and accuracy, some clocks provide multi-constellation support, which provides the ability to lock into any available satellites orbiting the planet. The satellites include GPS, maintained by the US but used globally; European Union's global navigation satellite system GALILEO; China's BEIDOU satellite navigation system; and Russia's GLONASS global navigation satellite system.

The satellite clock serves network time protocol (NTP) to other devices on the network. These devices are typically "agnostic" and can be used as a time source for any device in the substation, regardless of brand.

Still, companies like NovaTech continue to invest in research and development to achieve even incremental improvements in clock accuracy in the sub-millisecond range.

Novatech has long served the utility industry. The company's flagship product, Orion, is a communication and automation processor that can con-

nect to nearly any substation device in its native protocol, perform advanced math and logic, and securely present the source or calculated data to any number of clients in their own protocol. Orion connects to IED's such as microprocessor-based relays, meters, event recorders, and RTUs before connecting to a preexisting enterprise network or SCADA system.

"While any satellite clock can access satellites as a time source, the hardware and software within the satellite clock can make it more precise and accurate," says Irvin. "So, in addition to our previous utility solutions, NovaTech offers timekeeping devices."

The latest release is the Kronos Series 3. Named after Kronos, the God of Time, the satellite clock provides multi-constellation support and includes several upgraded features including antenna-cable delay compensation.

According to Irvin, "By building antenna cable-delay compensation into the algorithms for calculating time, along with multi-constellation support, we're able to provide best in class accuracy."

The Series 3 offers increased output flexibility for syncing devices with their optimal mechanisms, supporting both traditional legacy formats and the latest technologies, such as Ethernet over fiber.

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The Kronos Series 3 supports PTP, NTP, and SNTP. Common legacy formats also supported include modulated and unmodulated IRIG-B over twisted pair, coax, or fiber; and PPS or PPM signals The Kronos 3 supports Parallel Redundancy Protocol (PRP) and the High-availability Seamless Redundancy (HSR) within an ethernet network. These protocols are used to implement zero-loss redundancy on wired ethernet.

"Because it is critical to maintain time and communication between the various IEDs, utilities want to build their ethernet networks in a way



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that if one ethernet network goes down, there is a backup that the same traffic flows across," says Irvin.

The net results of these upgrades are more precise time with sub-millisecond accuracy.

"In the prior version of Kronos, the master clock was able to achieve 60 nanosecond maximum time deviation while locked with the satellite. For Series 3, that drops to 20 nanoseconds," says Irvin.

Satellite clocks must also be concerned with "holdover," which refers to the ability of a clock or timing device to maintain its accuracy and continue functioning reliably even when it temporarily loses its external reference signal due to adverse weather conditions, interference, or other factors.

During holdover, the satellite clock relies on its internal oscillator or timing mechanism to continue providing timekeeping information until it can reestablish a connection with the satellites. For this, Kronos Series 3 offers enhanced accuracy through

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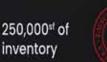
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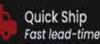
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"In holdover, TCXO has typical drift of 9ms/day, whereas OCXO has a typical drift of less than 100µs/day. All clocks also support out-of-bounds alarm when the time drifts more than a specified value," explains Irvin.

#### Utilities benefit

According to Irvin, there are many applications in the power grid that can benefit from more precise timekeeping.

Multi-rate billing: Typically required accuracy: 0.5

to 1 second.

To get better utilization of the grid, power utilities often charge different prices at different times of the day. The revenue meters of utility and consumer as well as the machines and processes at the user's site need a common time-base.

"Although this application does not require exceptional time accuracy, it can benefit utilities that implement a multi-rate billing structure," says Irvin. "To ensure they are charging the end customer accurately, they need to have a precise time source to know when they should switch the rates."

Event reconstruction, sequence-of-events (SOE): Typically required accuracy: 1 to 5 ms (sub-cycle of the 50/60 Hz sine wave).

Events in the power grid need a spatial-temporal frame of reference (what happened where, what



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happened when) so that cause and effect can be correctly understood.

In the analysis of the large blackout of August 2003 that lasted almost 48 hours and affected 10 million people in the Northeastern and Midwestern United States and the Canadian province of Ontario, more time was spent ordering and manually time-tagging unsynchronized event recordings than on any other task.

"If some devices have a less accurate time source than others, then manual adjustments are required to properly reconstruct the events," says Irvin. "Synchronizing the devices in the network with a satellite clock eliminates a lot of this type of work."

Power-flow monitoring: Typically required accuracy: 1 to 10 µs.

The phase component of the so-called synchrophasors can be used to estimate the power flow and the stability of a power grid. The computation of synchrophasors is only possible if all the phasor measurement units (PMUs) use a common time base.

Traveling wave-based fault location: Typically required accuracy: better than 1 µs (for a 300 m fault location accuracy).

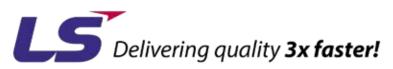
The location of faults can be accomplished by precisely time tagging wavefronts. Faults on the power transmission system cause transients that propagate along the transmission line as waves. Each wave is a composite of several frequencies, ranging from a few kilohertz to several megahertz, having a fast-rising front and a slower decaying tail.

"Composite waves have a propagation velocity and characteristic impedance and travel near the speed of light away from the fault location toward line ends. The location of faults can be accomplished by precisely time-tagging wave fronts as

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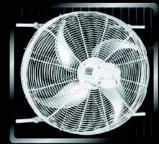
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they cross a known point typically in substations at line ends," says Irvin.

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"With all these distributed renewables, it is important for them to properly tie into the existing line. They need to match the waveform frequency accurately when they are adding power to the line," says Irvin. "In addition to the synchronization, it's important to accurately understand how much power is being added and when that power is added, which is where satellite clocks can play a crucial role in renewable integrations."

For utilities, precision timekeeping plays a critical role in the operation and efficiency of the power grid, emphasizing the necessity for exact time synchronization across devices to enhance reliability, minimize costs, and facilitate fault prediction and prevention.

With the use of highly accurate satellite clocks providing time synchronization with the potential to reach accuracies within plus or minus 20 nanoseconds, utilities are on the verge of achieving even greater operational precision.

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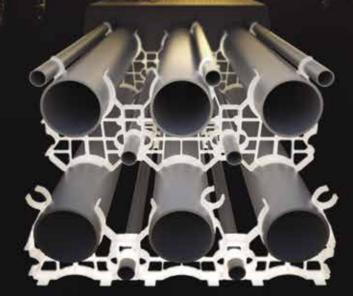
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