

## AUTOMOTIVE PARTS SUPPLIER IMPROVES PLANT EFFICIENCY WITH BAR CODE SYSTEM

STANDARD TUBE CANADA

WOODSTOCK, ONTARIO



**industry**

MANUFACTURING – AUTOMOTIVE PARTS

**applications**

INVENTORY CONTROL · WORK-IN-PROCESS

**situation**

Standard Tube Canada receives steel coils and processes them into welded steel tubing for automobile manufacturers such as General Motors and Ford.

**critical issue**

Standard Tube was frustrated by efforts to achieve individual finished part traceability as part of compliance with ISO 9000 and the automotive industry's QS 9000 standards. Standard Tube was unable to satisfactorily track movements of raw materials to finished products: from receiving of steel coils, through slitting and welding processes, and into the finished automotive part.

**reasons**

Standard Tube was using a bar code data collection method based on the batch principle, in which data captured in a terminal is fed to a host computer once or twice per day. The batch method could not provide real-time information nor could it track individual coils and finished tubes. The company only had the ability to track part numbers, rather than specific pieces of received or finished product.

**vision & capabilities**

The company's MIS manager envisioned a better system, in which the instantaneous flow of uploaded and downloaded information from the data collection terminal was sent to the company's IBM AS/400 host computer. The company wanted a solution that would allow Standard Tube to track individual pieces but not require secondary systems, fancy integration or batch transfers. The MIS manager wanted the new bar code data collection system also to provide information relevant to warehouse management, job tracking, and employee time and attendance.

**intermec solution**

Intermec's value-added reseller for this project (Nutech Systems) configured a new bar code system to give Standard Tube the ability to assign serial numbers to individual coils, track each coil's location, and monitor shop floor activity. These capabilities are provided through an Intermec radio frequency (RF) bar code system well-suited for the harsh environment of Standard Tube's plant. To illustrate this, when a recent power outage at the plant interrupted an Intermec RF transmitter during the middle of a data transaction, it resumed right where it left off — in the middle of the transaction — with no loss of data when power resumed. The plant utilizes a MODEL 9185 Controller, a MODEL 9181 Base Station Receiver, two 9183 RF Repeaters, and six JANUS™ JR2020 Hand Held Computers with built-in scanners.

**benefits**

Standard Tube achieved certification for the automotive suppliers' QS 9000 standard due, in large part, to the new RF data collection system. Also, production managers at the plant believe that processing efficiency has improved. As an extra bonus, the company has realized the benefits of bar coded information when dealing with very large orders, because the bar code system ensures that Standard Tube uses the oldest inventory first, thus reducing the incidence of rust on older steel coils.