

New technology makes the job easier & more precise



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At NonWoven Solutions, uniformity in slitting is key to customer satisfaction.



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A Slit Decision

Midwest-based NonWoven Solutions meets strict production requirements with a new slitting system from Tidland.

By Nsenga Thompson, Associate Editor

While farming, automobile manufacturing, and long-standing baseball rivalries are undeniably Midwest staples, Illinois-based NonWoven Solutions (NWS) went against the grain when it jump-started a nonwovens production line in Ingleside, about 50 miles north of Chicago. According to NWS, converting nonwovens is a practice much more prevalent on the East Coast. But with years of nonwovens experience among them, investors Gerald Leineberg, Joe Leineberg, Tom Leineberg, Frank Porto, and Steve Brown were determined to expand the supply chain in a central location.

SLITTING NONWOVENS



Operator sets up a job on NWS's custom-designed production line, which runs white-only synthetic fibers in the 1–15 denier range. NWS operates the line according to Good Manufacturing Practices (or GMP) medical grade standards.

Photos: Steven Bloch

SLITTING NONWOVENS



Tidland's modular slitting positioning (MSP) system provides quality slit edges, faster setup times, and less dust.



Operators manually inspect and then prepare to remove slit rolls for shipping.

► Converter Info ◀

► **NonWoven Solutions** |
27981 W. Concrete Dr., Ingleside,
IL 60041 | 866-697-0277 |
www.nonwovensolutions.com

Launched in May 2007, NWS manufactures and supplies high quality nonwoven rollstock across the US for a variety of converting applications, including industrial and technical felt, medical and personal care wipes, and filtration products.

"There is very little nonwovens converting in the Midwest because of logistics," says Steve Brown, partner and general manager. "A lot of our customers are contract converters, and most of our competitors are way east.

"We saw a distinct void in the nonwovens supply chain that could only be filled with a new production line and thus a new company," he says of their decision to launch the startup. "The void was a strategically located manufacturer of very clean, very uniform, needle-punched nonwovens centrally located in the United States."

Getting in Motion

After setting up shop in a 50,000-sq-ft facility located next door to the already-established Superior Felt & Filtration (a full-service converting operation owned by brothers Gerald, Joe, and Tom Leineberg), NWS spent the remaining year custom building its extensive nonwoven production line. Brown says NWS is diligent in collaborating with its customers to develop a fabric based on price point or performance criterion.

To ensure the level of quality necessary to meet its customers' stringent needs, a critical feature of the production line is its needle punch component, designed specifically to handle the unique thicknesses and combined materials NWS produces.

To provide the most uniform and even fabrics across the full production width, NWS also has installed the latest technology in web forming, web delivery, and web and batt profiling. Webs are produced on Asselin-Thibeau's Excellence card system.

"We are able to exceed traditional industry standards of plus or minus ten percent on both web weight and web thickness," describes Brown. "In

addition, this uniformity further allows for exceptionally low deviation in the air permeability of CFM [cubic feet per minute per square meter] of webs used in such products as respirators and micron-rated felts.”

Slitting for Perfection

After a year of perfecting its customized production line, NWS began hiring full-time production employees, running two shifts daily, and quickly moved to three shifts by spring 2009. As its clientele grew, thanks to a relatively stable medical and personal care market, the needs of its customers became more specialized, and Brown soon realized the need for more precision slitting. “We needed more versatility. We had to upgrade the slitter,” he says. With a mission to find a system that could meet its rigorous production needs, Brown approached Maxcess Intl. during the CMM show in Rosemont last June. Soon after, he purchased the Tidland MSP (modular slitting positioning) system with Class III Performance Series Knifeholders.

In early November, NWS prepared for the installation. Brown describes, “A Tidland engineer came in to measure, drew it out for us, and then sent us the system. It was easy to install. We installed the system ourselves.”

Tidland’s MSP system is a custom-configured solution, using pre-engineered components, that’s a practical solution for converters of a variety of materials. The system is designed to provide quality slit edges, faster setup times, and less dust, resulting in better rolls and high productivity at a cost-efficient price—all critical features that Brown says NWS required for the operation’s only production line.

Each level builds upon the components of the previous version to provide additional benefits. The system can slit from 3–35 mpm.

“What impressed us was the engineering, the ease of use, and ease of setting,” says Brown. “The slitters were real easy to set, change, and adjust.”

Brown says the critical function of NWS’s process is its attention to quality. And when it comes to non-wovens production, differentiation is a not an option.

“It is important that all rollstock is high quality and uniform. By unifor-

mity, I am referring to our ability to maintain the target slit width and then hold the plus/minus targets,” he describes. “With less tension we find there is no distortion caused by stretch, since we cut the felt with virtually zero tension.”

The accumulation and winding equipment, supplied by Signal Machine Corp., which run before and after the new Tidland slitting system, also are instrumental in ensuring the precision and efficiency of the

slitting process. The winder is 6.5 ft from the point of slit, says Brown. “Since we use less tension, we have less neck-down of the fabric, all as a result of a very clean cut.”

In addition to product uniformity, another slitting challenge for the converter is handling lighter-weight materials. “Previously we had difficulty getting a clean cut with 70 grams per square meter material and had to add a supplemental divider after the score cutter roll to break the occasional few fi-

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SLITTING NONWOVENS

bers that were not cut cleanly," says Brown. "Obviously now this is resolved. Tidland simply gives us better slitting."

After two full years of production and now 26 employees strong, Brown says the company is looking ahead. Talk of a second line eventually could become a viable goal. For now, Brown is satisfied with the progress the Midwest nonwovens manufacturer has achieved. "It was a lot of work, but it has gone as planned." PFFC

►Supplier Info◀

►Tidland, a Maxcess Intl. co. |

www.maxcessintl.com

Circle 310 or visit www.freeproductinfo.net/pff

►Signal Machine Corp. |

www.signalmachine.com

Circle 311 or visit www.freeproductinfo.net/pff

►Asselin-Thibeau | www.nsc-nonwoven.com

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NWS produces rollstock that is high quality and uniform, with no distortion caused by stretch.

Engineered Fabric

NonWoven Solutions (NWS) produces basic needle-punch nonwovens, which are a specialized process of interlocking fibers in a nonwoven fabric by punching a barbed needle through layers of fiber, then withdrawing it to tangle the fibers. In addition, the production line is equipped to execute flame singeing, calendering, and precision slitting in both roll-to-roll and single-knife styles. NWS also can produce off-line needling for multilayer composites and high-density felts from layers.

NWS converts "white fiber only" material and nonwoven blends available in various densities, thicknesses, and synthetic blends, such as polyester; polypropylene; polyamide nylon 6 and 6,6; acrylic; viscose; polyvinyl alcohol/polyvinyl acetate; modacrylic; and low melt. NWS can produce these materials at a maximum width of 172 in.

The company also maintains inventory of the most basic fiber styles and can produce custom orders and engineered fabrics on demand in very limited time. Products can be produced from weights as low as 2.1 oz/sq yd up to 45 oz/sq yd; thicknesses from 0.020–0.50 in.; and widths from 1–172 in.

NWS can produce precision blends of up to three components at rates to 2,500 lb/hr. Precision blends are maintained by NWS using two fine openers and a full-sized mixing bin system. This allows NWS to provide technical expertise and product development in support of basic fabric production.

Work More Productively with Your Contract Converter

By Wayne Etchells, Metlon Corp.

Saving time and money is always important. Obtaining the best quality of your finished product is always the goal. These tips will improve both your bottom line and your project outcome.

- ▶ Define accurately the material to be slit. Example: If it's foil, what metal? If it's film, is it polyester or vinyl acetate? Is it a lamination? Are there special coatings, pressure-sensitives, or liners?
- ▶ Provide the physical description: gauge; width; length; inside and outside diameter; and weight.
- ▶ Determine the slit width of the material, including plus-or-minus tolerance.
- ▶ Provide the quantity required.
- ▶ Identify the form in which the finished material is to be supplied, such as pancake coil or traverse wound. Specify the type of core or carrier: paper or plastic core, flanged paper core, or plastic spool.
- ▶ Determine the inside diameter preferred, and specify the outside limitations on diameter.
- ▶ Define the packaging requirement in terms of footage per package and/or minimum and maximums.
- ▶ State whether splices are acceptable; identify what type, such as butt, overlap, pressure-sensitive tape, etc. Be specific.
- ▶ If there are unusual requirements or specific




- instructions, state them upfront.
- ▶ List the shipping instructions.

This information determines whether the custom slitter's machinery can handle the physical characteristics. It also helps develop an accurate production schedule and quote.

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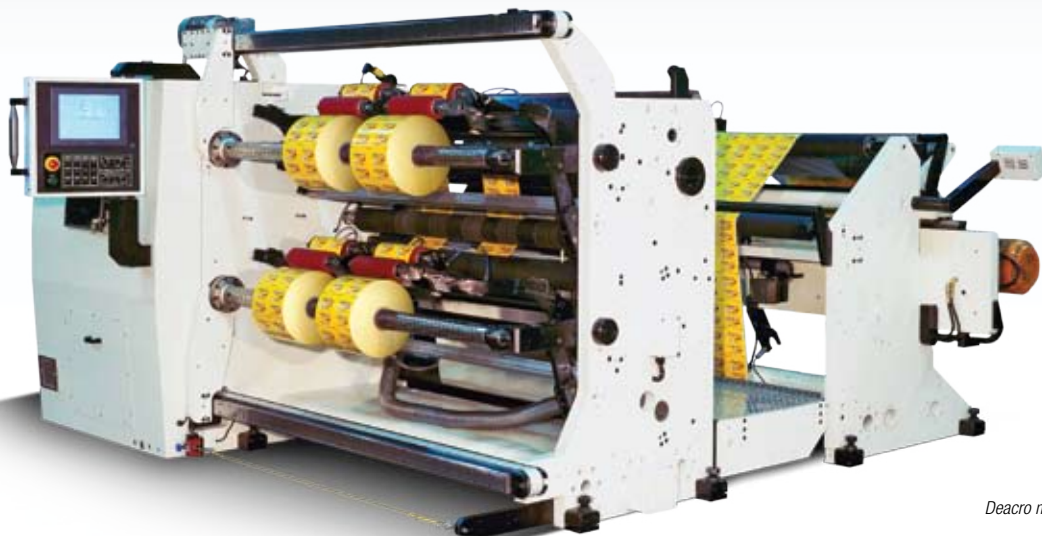
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Prolong Blade Life

Improve slitting performance with wear-resistant coatings that can add wear life to your blades and knives.

By Sam Jones, American Cutting Edge



Very thin surface coatings can be applied to nearly any knife or blade. Almost 20% of slitting customers choose to have an after-market coating applied to their blades.

Why? The main purpose of a coating is to increase the wear life of a blade or knife.

Increased wear resistance is achieved through coatings in two ways: The coating will increase the hardness of the cutting edge, and the coating will fill out the small valleys or ridges that form during the sharpening/grinding process.

The reduction of these grind lines provides a more uniform and smooth cutting surface, increasing blade life and wear resistance. Because coated slitting blades are both harder and smoother, friction effectively is reduced; performance and life are improved significantly.

Coated slitting blades increase production by reducing machine downtime due to buildup on knife and razor edges; tool breakage; scrap rates by holding close toler-

ances and finishes; and tool costs by decreasing the need for replacement blades. This translates to increased productivity, speeds, and feeds by as much as 50% in some industries, all going straight to your bottom line.

Many coatings are applied with a proprietary process layered on with very light coatings only angstroms thick, building the final result and providing greater control over thickness and uniformity. The processes and equipment used allow the blades to be coated at temperatures less than 250 deg, in many applications, assuring there is no annealing or softening of the substrate and no warpage to affect dimensional stability.

Typical coatings increase wear life as follows:

► **TiN | Titanium Nitrate** has a bright gold surface color. TiN provides the least added wear life to blades but can be a good choice when price is critical and some wear resistance is needed. TiN typically will cost less, depending on blade size and quantity,

Converters that use either score or circular slitting blades can benefit from having a coating applied to the blades to extend wear life.



but the added wear life can be 5–10 times longer than a carbon steel or stainless steel blade or knife.

- **TiC | Titanium Carbide** has a gray surface color. TiC can be a high-performing surface coating and may add additional wear life of 20–30 times over a standard carbon or stainless blade or knife.
- **Boron Carbide |** This black-colored surface coating often is referred to as “ceramic” or “extreme.” It is one of the industry’s biggest-selling coatings. The added wear life can be 50-plus times longer than a carbon steel blade or knife.
- **Teflon |** Usually a clear coating, DuPont’s Teflon generally is used to increase

the lubricity of the blade surface. It can be good for adhesive cutting applications to keep the blade edge and surface free from “gumming up.”

A number of coatings are FDA-approved and allow converters to run tool steels in applications that typically would have been “stainless only” in the past.

Industrial blade specialist Sam Jones, sales manager of American Cutting Edge Inc., Centerville, OH, has spent the past five years as an industry consultant for blades and custom blade applications process, design, and operations. Contact him at 888-282-3372; sjones@americancuttingedge.com. PFFC

► Supplier Info ◀

► **American Cutting Edge | www.americancuttingedge.com**

Circle 315 or visit www.freeproductinfo.net/pff

More Space, Less Power



Reducing energy consumption is an added benefit for AET as it completes a drives upgrade on an Atlas film slitter to expand capacity.

Edited by Claudia Hine, Managing Editor

Plans to expand slitting capacity at Applied Extrusion Technologies (AET) began last year with the upgrade of an aging 8-m-wide Atlas CW982 AP primary film slitter, originally installed in 1989 at AET's production facility in Terre Haute, IN. A highly intensive 18-day schedule included a major overhaul of the obsolete control system by several Atlas engineers with support from AET technicians on site.

"This upgrade was a very impressive project by the team of Atlas engineers who did a really professional job for us," says Brad Roush, controls specialist

at the plant. "We have reduced the 22 original electrical control panels to only seven, making a lot more space but, more importantly, also dramatically reducing our power consumption. All the old transformers have been taken out and replaced with active dynamic drive technology. The machine is now so much more efficient, reliable, and productive."

Today the Atlas slitter has all AC web drives throughout as well as new rewind arm positioning and automatic knife positioning systems, which enable quicker changeovers between production runs and much less machine downtime. The control



desks for the unwind and rewind side of the machine have been replaced and upgraded with new PC and PLC technology, making the slitter more user friendly and easier to operate, with a vast data storage facility.

"We can now run the slitter at 3,300 feet per minute, compared to 2,000 feet per minute previously, but also with much better roll quality," Roush says. "Basically, there is nothing wrong with the mechanics of the machine—I think it will run forever! It was just that the original spec of the slitter could not keep up with the demands of today's BOPP [biaxially oriented polypropylene] film production requirements."

AET has six other Atlas primary and secondary film slitters, all installed during the 1990s, including a machine commissioned in 1998 that is 33 ft

(10 m) wide. Upgrades to some of these machines will be carried out by Atlas later this year and into 2011.

"The 18-day project has been a huge success for AET Films," confirms Lawrence Mauer, director of operations at the Terre Haute facility. "We had no problems during the upgrade and checkout. We were able to fully accept the upgrade as soon as work was completed. In all, it has been a rewarding and important step toward a more sustainable solution for the company." PFFC

A Global Reach

Established in 1986 with its initial operations in Middletown, DE, Applied Extrusion Technologies (AET) manufactures specialized oriented polypropylene (OPP) films and serves some of the world's largest consumer product companies. AET offers more than 80 product groups, including holographic films for promotional packaging and board lamination as well as barrier films and heat-sealable films used to protect snacks, cheeses, meats, fresh produce, fruit, and candy bars.

Rapid expansion of its business, including several strategic acquisitions, has led AET to focus on the development, manufacture, and marketing of a wide range of OPP films to a worldwide marketplace. In addition to its Terre Haute, IN, plant, the company has a production facility in Varennes, QC, Canada.

► Converter Info ◀

► Applied Extrusion Technologies Inc. | US Highway 41 N., Terre Haute, IN 47805 | 812-466-4277 | www.aetfilms.com

► Supplier Info ◀

► Atlas Converting
Equipment—Bobst Group |
www.bobstgroup.com/atlas

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www.freeproductinfo.net/pff

DRIVES RETROFIT

◀ At Applied Extrusion Technologies, an Atlas CW982 AP primary film slitter is upgraded with AC drives and new control desks.



▲ Before: A total of 22 electrical control panels were needed before the upgrade.

▼ After: A reduction from 22 to just seven panels provides space and power consumption savings



PennPac Expands Slitting Operations

PennPac Co., a flexible packaging film provider and contract slitting company located in Manheim, PA, has installed a high-speed, compact Titan ER610 cantilever slitter as part of a multi-year capital equipment upgrade program for its slitting/rewinding operations. The company also has confirmed an order for a 2.5-m-wide Atlas CW800 slitter rewinder, with individual rewind stations. PennPac believes these new additions will help it continue to offer the reliability and flexibility its customers need and deserve.

President/CEO Bill Palmer, says, "We have been so impressed with the performance of the new ER610, but our customers are even happier! The slit reel quality is far superior to what we were able to deliver in the past with the older machines, and we can now schedule our production on a 'make-to-order' basis, reducing the need for excessive finished goods inventories."

To meet increasing demand for wider width rolls and larger rewind diameters, PennPac has decided to invest in a larger Atlas CW800 secondary slitter as well. The new Atlas slitter will run at speeds up to 3,300 fpm (1,000 mpm) with a maxi-

SLITTING UPGRADE



PennPac's new Titan ER610 cantilever slitter is 65 in. (1,650 mm) wide.

imum rewind diameter of 39 in. (1,000 mm) and was installed and commissioned in April.

"The performance of the ER610 has given us so much confidence in Atlas and Titan slitting technology that we had no hesitation in buying the larger Atlas machine from Bobst Group," says Palmer. "At PennPac, it's all about what will meet our customers' needs, and these machines will help us to do just that." PFFC

▶ Titan-Bobst Group | www.bobstgroup.com/titan

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| Annitti Enterprises-E+H Laminating & Slitting, Paterson, NJ | www.ehlam.com |
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| Filmquest Group , Bolingbrook, IL; p51 | www.petfilm.com |
| FILMtech Inc., Bean Station, TN | 865-767-3533 |
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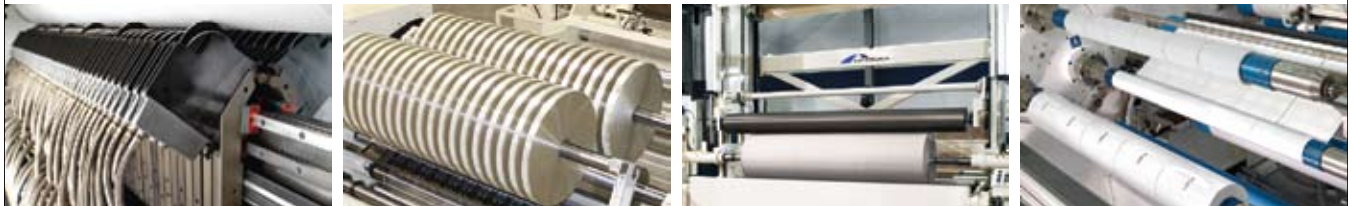
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| Sekuworks, Harrison, OH | www.sekuworks.com |
| Situation Materials Inc., Twinsburg, OH | 330-425-1387 |
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| Syntac Coated Products, New Hartford, CT | www.syntacusa.com |
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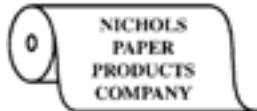
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