Batch plant modernisation

Batch plants require repair and modernisation. Douglas D Burgoon* offers advice.

Batch plants are modernised to accommodate glass production increases and/or product quality improvements. It is easier to modify a batch plant at furnace rebuild time, but they can be modernised during a campaign without interrupting production. They can be repaired during a campaign, but it requires more planning and effort.

A scope of work for batch plant cold repair should be developed alongside that for furnace rebuilding. Some important considerations are as follows:

**General**
- Clean raw material silos
- Replace dust skirts/vent bags
- Replace dust collector bags
- Rebuild gear-boxes for mechanical equipment
- Rebuild/rewind motors for mechanical equipment
- Replace all cullet chutes and diverters
- Replace compressed air components.

**Bucket elevators**
- Gear boxes, shafts, bearing/seals, and pulleys
- Belts and splices
- Buckets.

**Conveyors**
- Gear-box, shafts, bearings, seals and pulleys

**Pneumatics**
- Have pressure vessels recertified as safe pressure vessels
- Replace pneumatic valves and associated filter regulator units
- Reline or replace elbows and spool pieces.

**Control system**
- Check all limit switches and sensors
- Recalibrate all scales and check scale repeatability
- Evaluate repair versus new control system.

**Special considerations**

**The mixer**

Where a furnace is rebuilt with greater melting capacity, it needs more mixed batch. If the batch plant must operate more than 16 hours per day, it needs more capacity and this usually starts with a bigger mixer.

Mixer replacement requires planning. The major problem is getting the mixer inside the batch plant and into position (see Figs 1A and 1B).

**Modernity scales**

Consider replacing mechanical scales with a modern load cell-digital electronic type. Typical scale sensitivity is in the 1:1000 graduation range; for example, 1000 lbs. by 1 lb., 2000 lbs. by 2 lbs., etc. This can be increased up to 1:10,000 graduations; for example, 1000 lbs. by 0.1 lbs., 2000 lbs. by 0.2 lbs., etc but needs the resolution of the weigh feeders to be examined and revised.

Maximising scale performance is very important. TECO recently replaced a three-furnace batch plant with a new one with sensitive electronic load cell scales. Fig 2 shows the glass density variation for each furnace 30 days before batch plant switchover and 30 days after start up. Tighter control of glass density increased product pack efficiency.

**Automatic micro ingredient weighing**

Eliminate manual premixing of microingredients with a diluent. Today, the colourant ingredients can be automatically handled and controlled and automatic scales can work satisfactorily as low as 10 lb. by 0.001 lb. range. (See Fig 3.)

**Total weight check scale**

A total weight check scale pays for itself, many times, if it prevents just one off-tolerance batch from getting into the furnace. Check scales can be added to the weighed batch surge hopper, the mixer or the mixed batch surge hopper in that order of preference. The support structure for the hopper or mixer must be altered so the installation is free of erroneous forces. Load cells can be successfully added to pneumatic transporters or blender/trans- porters with careful installation of the pneumatic piping and electrical conduit. TECO has installed check scales on mixers and pneumatic vessels with repeatability of ± 2 lbs. (See Fig 4.)

**Control system**

Evaluate replacing the control panel with a modern one. Control systems usually last 5-10 years, after which spare parts availability gets to be a problem. Also, a new control system will have new software with automatic weighing algorithms. The TECO system contains special algorithms to minimise feeder jogging.
**Process alterations during production**

Batch plant modification done while maintaining production requires thorough planning to assure continuous mixed batch delivery. Some useful practices in this regard are:

- **Spare storage:** Use a spare silo, or portable storage such as super sacks, rail hopper car, etc to store mixed batch.
- **Electrical switchover:** It is best if control system changes are made during furnace rebuild time. If that is not possible, a switching network must be installed. Every input and output must be switched to allow the existing control system to function while the new control system is debugged. TECO switched over a five-furnace control system while the glass plant maintained normal production.

- **Storage capacity increase:** A batch plant should be designed to accommodate additional raw materials storage in a simple, easy manner. It should be predetermined where the additional silos will be located and how these new raw materials will be weighed and mixed. The original design must provide extra positions on the raw material distributor.

- **Additional furnaces:** Make basic plans for future production requirements, such as number of furnaces and types of glass produced. The aim is to establish the ultimate number of mixed batch delivery loops that will be required. The diverting and delivery equipment need not be installed, just the space provisions for the future.

**Conclusion**

Batch plant upgrading should be a basic part of every furnace rebuild programme and can be done during a campaign. Including provisions to accommodate future batch system requirements can minimise future construction work and complications.

TECO has the experience and wherewithal to be of assistance in planning batch plant modernisation programmes. It has designed and built 16 new batch plants and modernised 65 over the past 35 years.

Douglas D Burgoon, senior director project management, Toledo Engineering Co Inc (TECO), Toledo, OH, USA. Tel: +1 419 537 9711. Fax: +1 419 537 1369. Email: form on website; Website: www.teco.com