



Traex Food Service Supplies

Traex, of Dane, Wisconsin, manufactures food service supplies. Finished products are stored on pallets in the warehouse until needed to fill orders. Previously, the company stretch wrapped the pallet loads by hand for transfer to the warehouse. The wrapping process was time consuming and required most of one employee's attention over three shifts. The process also exposed workers to the risk of back injury from stooping and straining.

Beginning in April, 1995, Traex began testing rubber pallet bands to secure loads. Pallets with dimensions of 40" x 48" require unstretched bands sized at 3/4" wide by 92" in circumference. Typically, two bands are used per skid: one looping around the top layer of boxes and the other at mid-load. Bands are applied by hand, an operation that takes one worker about ten seconds per band. (By comparison, stretch wrapping requires about one minute per skid to apply.) When skids are brought from the warehouse to fill orders, the bands are quickly removed and tossed in a container for reuse. From pallet loading at the production line, to warehouse, to pallet unloading, bands make the roundtrip in about six weeks.

With training, this change in operations was easily adopted. Employees liked the rubber bands better than stretch wrap. After ten months under test, only four bands broke. No injuries resulted from snapping bands. Reduced demand for stretch wrap has freed some storage space, and avoiding baling of stretch wrap has saved additional labor. Occasional use of temporary workers for unwrapping stretch wrap has ended, as have occasional injuries to workers from using a knife to cut away stretch wrap.

Benefits

Traex recovered the cost of its initial supply of rubber bands in just four three-shift production days. In the first year, the company realized \$49,706 in annual savings after spending \$1,001 on 550 large rubber bands (\$1.82 each). On-going annual savings include:

- Reduced labor = \$50,112
- Reduced disposal expense = \$400
- Reduced purchase of stretch-wrap = \$195

For more information on reusable pallet bands and straps, [click here](#).

Credits: Alameda County (CA) Waste Management Authority & Alameda County Source Reduction and Recycling Board

Alternative formats (such as large type, Braille) of this document can be made available. Contact DEQ's Office of Communications & Outreach, Portland, at (503) 229-5317

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