

Thinking *Outside* the Box

EDITED BY SHARON SPIELMAN

A small mom-and-pop job shop in Indiana has increased business by 200% since entering the powder coating arena. Utilizing outdoor space for the oven allowed the shop to retain its valuable, minimal shop floor space.

Crager's Paint & Powder Coating is a family-owned powder coating business located in Freemont, Ind. Richard and Bernice Crager, owners, and their staff apply powder to everything from automobile parts to air compressor tanks to ski towers. The company was established in 1985 as a body shop with a majority of the business focused on semi-trucks. In 1989, they began liquid painting parts for factories.

As the demand for liquid painting decreased, Crager's realized they needed to enter the powder coating business if they wanted to grow and stay profitable. So in 2002, Crager's entered the powder coating market.

As Richard Crager planned the transformation, he says that one of the areas where he was not willing to compromise was his company's continuing dedication to providing its customers with the highest quality parts in their region.

After some research on powder coatings and how they are cured, Crager knew that a high quality powder coating oven would have to be purchased. At only about 1,200 square feet, though, shop space was a big concern. How could their current facility accommodate an oven large enough to process their customers' parts? The oven they wanted had a footprint that would take up about half of their available shop. After doing some more research, Crager's turned to Wisconsin Oven for a solution to its powder curing requirements and shop space restrictions.

It was determined that the best solution to the limited shop space would be an oven that could be installed outside of the facility with the oven doors opening into the shop. This meant their current useable factory shop floor space would not have to be compromised.

A gas-fired walk-in batch powder curing oven was installed. The oven's design uses standard metal building components assembled in a patented design, which allows for thermal

expansion. The corrugated walls act as an accordion to accommodate thermal expansion. There is 6" of 6# density batt type insulation and a 2" dead air space, resulting in only 8 to 12 BTUs of shell loss per square foot, which is one-tenth of normal panel construction. The exterior shell of the oven is mill treated and warranted against fading, chalking and peeling for a period of 10 years. The interior shell and duct are fabricated of aluminized steel.

Photo credit: Brett Ryden, Publisher



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The job shop does a significant amount of powder coating on metal cross-sections up to 1" thick, and Crager says the part quality has always met or exceeded expectations. He also says

Photo credit Brett Ryden, Publisher



Due to lack of space in their shop, Crager's chose to install an oven on the outside of it. The exterior shell of the oven is mill treated and warranted against fading, chalking and peeling for a period of 10 years. The interior shell and duct are fabricated of aluminized steel.

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that their customers always comment on the excellent quality of the powder coating jobs that come from their facility. Crager also reports that the average 15 to 20 minute baking time allows them to process their jobs quickly, which contributes to their high production rates.

Since entering the powder coating arena, Crager's has established itself as one of the highest quality powder coaters in its area and because of this they have acquired several high-end customers and products. After four years in the industry, Crager reports that they have seen a 200 percent increase in business.

Crager's Paint & Powder Coating can be reached at 260-833-4885. Wisconsin Oven can be reached at 262-642-3938 or visit www.wisoven.com. Sharon Spielman is editor of Powder Coated Tough. She can be reached at 847-302-2648 or via e-mail at sspielman@powdercoating.org