

Dock Equipment Is Good News for The Dallas Morning News

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While the coffee is perking on Sunday morning one of the rituals repeated in homes across the country involves digging through the 20 to 40 or more ad sections that arrive when the paper hits the doorstep.

In the Dallas metro area the ritual is different. If Dad gets to *The Dallas Morning News* first, he can pull out the Gap section, Macy's sales and all of the other ad sections for his teenage daughter and then quickly find out what's happening with the Cowboys. Everyone gets their immediate gratification because all of the Sunday paper ad inserts arrive in a convenient plastic bag.

This is made possible for *Morning News* readers thanks to an operation recently brought on-line at the paper's new post press and distribution facility in South Dallas. *The Morning News* is one of the largest newspapers in the country, and is currently only one of four papers that deliver the Sunday supplements (known in the newspaper trade as free-standing inserts – FSI's) bundled in plastic bags.

While the readers appreciate this neat package, the benefits of this new production and distribution facility significantly impact advertisers as well. In a typical newspaper operation the FSI's arrive at the substations scattered throughout the circulation area. It is the job of the newspaper carriers to stuff these sections into the Sunday paper before they hit their routes. One of the weaknesses of the process is often the carriers can leave sections out of a paper in their rush to get out into the streets.

This new bundle process shortens the time to stuff the papers and ensures that the right FSI gets to the proper home – a major concern for advertisers. The 132,000 sq. ft. operation has the latest in packaging and material handling equipment, tied together with a state-of-the-art system for identifying and tracking to customize delivery of these advertising sections. Dock equipment supplied by **Serco**® and **TKO**® **Dock Doors** helps ensure these ad bundles get out the door with no disruptions to ever tightening schedules.

It is no secret that print newspapers are in competition with on-line content for advertisers, and *The Dallas Morning News* is aggressively increasing their services to attract more of this business. According to Doug Barlow, Assistant Director of Collating Operations at the South Dallas facility, "with this new facility we can customize the distribution and content of our Sunday inserts to meet the marketing programs of our advertisers, plus add a growing number of services."

This operation, which is expandable on a 50-acre site, was extensively researched by *The Morning News* production management team. They visited plants around the country that included Quad Graphics, RR Donnelly and a number of other newspapers.

"What impressed us and helped us ultimately decide on the **Serco** and **TKO** equipment was that our representative from **Southern Dock Products**, **Tim Wray**, took us to see working loading docks at a local manufacturer to get hands on experience, rather than coming by with a truck to demonstrate a single piece of equipment," recalled Barlow. "We decided not to scrimp on the dock equipment as a result." [**Southern Dock Products** is the local **Serco** and **TKO** distributor.]

The Morning News also had positive experiences with **Serco** equipment at their Plano, Texas facility, and with the increased pace of the process in the new location reliability was an even greater concern.

The dock set-up matches the system approach throughout the operation. When trucks arrive at the facility with pre-printed FSI's from a variety of printers, a dockworker commands the PitBull® vehicle restraint to grab the trailer's rear impact guard by pushing a button on the wall-mounted Master Control Panel.

Rather than separate control boxes for each piece of dock equipment, the Master Control Panel combines those controls into a single panel and coordinates the operation of the restraint, dock leveler, the motorized dock door and even the dock light – preventing activation of any piece of equipment outside a pre-programmed sequence. Barlow and **Wray** worked together closely to customize the Master Control Panels to the *Morning News*' application so the dock equipment can function in the required sequence.

Until the trailer is secured the powered **TKO** door will not open and the leveler cannot be deployed. When it is time to activate the **Serco** Hydraulic Leveler the user has independent push-button control of the deck and lip extension to position the leveler into the trailer bed. Once the truck is ready to leave the Master Control Panel will not allow the restraint to release the trailer until the dock leveler has fully stored and the door is down.

The Dallas Morning News first installed loading dock equipment at the North Plant facility a few years ago. "We wanted to be sure our forklift operators and truck loaders were safe. I don't know the exact stats," asserts Barlow, "but we do know that every year, forklift drivers are killed when trucks pull away from the docks while a forklift is inside the trailer. The Master Control Panels give us a high level of safety and they are proven, reliable equipment."

Though this is a spacious facility, the seven doors at the receiving dock and the eight on the shipping dock are tightly lined up against the wall. "We like having it all controlled by one box at each dock," notes Barlow, "plus the set up is neat, compact and doesn't have a lot of wiring conduit."



