

Carried away

Excess steel shavings that were once a problem at Main Manufacturing are now easily handled with four-wheeled carts.

By Jeff O'Neill, Associate Editor

Without question, Main Manufacturing of Grand Blanc, Mich., had a weak link in its materials handling. The problem wasn't delivering stainless steel to machining centers or even taking away finished hydraulic flanges. Instead, the problem was handling the coolant-covered metal chips and fines produced during machining.

All would be drained into wheelbarrows. "We would then roll the wheelbarrows up a ramp and dump them in a 20-yard dumpster," says Terry Bettinger, plant manager, who adds that the company lost its share of wheelbarrows off the ramp over the years. Also, because wheelbarrows could not drain the chips, coolant often covered the floor by the machining centers.

To combat messy removal, several four-wheel carts (Cecor Inc., 800-356-9041, www.cecort.net) have been installed, making removal less of a strain on workers' backs. In addition, the carts feature drain holes, allowing for coolant to be discarded cleanly and then be recycled. The container is fitted with a 3/4-inch drain plug that prevents fluids from escaping from the drain hole at other times.



With a 13.4-cubic-foot capacity, the carts carry a big load. The carts are easier to push than the wheelbarrows "because it is four wheels versus one that we had to balance," Bettinger says.

Now, the carts are lifted with a one-ton hoist over the dumpster and emptied—a vast improvement over the previous manual dumping process, Bettinger says.

The carts feature a flip-up drain screen available as an option. The drain screen prevents chips and other larger particles from clogging the drain hole.

Dumping the chips from the machine tool into a receptacle has completely changed the process from the wheelbarrow days. "It has made our jobs a whole lot easier," Bettinger adds.