

The benefits of versatility

Processing a wide range of products is a competitive advantage for **Calstrip Industries**

BY MEGHAN BOYER

Calstrip Industries Inc. prides itself on versatility. Founded in 1938, the Los Angeles-based company's capabilities have expanded as Calstrip has grown from a cold-rolled reducing facility for carbon and alloy products to a multi-facility service and processing center for commercial steel production.

"Our roots have always been to find specialty applications by nature of being a precision cold-roll strip house originally," says Tom Nelis, Calstrip CEO. "Today, we literally process steel from 0.009 to 0.375 gauge in our Los Angeles plant."

The company's versatility is a competitive advantage, notes Nelis. "We attempt to find non-commercial, non-easy jobs. We look for the jobs that customers have problems with. With our equipment and our metallurgical depth of management, we believe the easiest way to find customers and hold on to them is to find customers that really need you, that really have an issue," he says.

Calstrip started its progression into a flat-roll steel service center in 1974 by installing a Schiller Park, Ill.-based Braner USA Inc. 24-inch slitter. In the years that followed, Calstrip added four additional pieces of Braner equipment, including a

48-inch slitter in 1980, an automatic packaging line in 1984 and a 60-inch-wide triple turret slitter in 1990.

The company's most recent Braner equipment acquisitions include a 60-inch-wide 10-gauge precision carbon and stainless cassette leveler cut-to-length line and a 60-inch by 1/4-inch-thick triple turret slitter. Calstrip's first four pieces of Braner equipment are located at the company's Los Angeles facility. The 60-inch triple head slitter is located at the company's Southwest Steel Coil plant in Santa Teresa, N.M.

"Calstrip has a wide range of product lines," says Chuck Damore, president of Braner. "They run from mild carbon steel to high-strength steel to cold-rolled steel to exotic and stainless alloys and in a variety of gauges. That presents a lot of different challenges for equipment," he says.

In business since the mid-1950s, Braner focuses on providing coil-processing equipment, including coil slitting and packaging lines, cut-to-length lines, stretch leveler cut-to-length lines, multiblanking lines and specialty systems, notes Damore.

The full range

The Braner equipment has the ability to process Calstrip's full product range, and it assists the company in providing solutions to potential customers' "difficult-to-solve material challenges," says Nelis.

When the company installed the 60-inch-wide cassette leveling cut-to-length line, "we set out canvassing our



Five finished multis winding on the recoiler of the triple turret head slitting line at Calstrip's facility in Santa Teresa, N.M.

marketplace looking for customers that had flatness problems," says Nelis. Calstrip had worked closely with Braner to ensure the line could process steel in intermediate tempers, which requires knowledge and precise equipment to make flat.

The line is designed to level and shear 50,000-pound by 60-inch-wide coils of stainless steel, galvanized and cold-rolled steel in gauges from 0.024 inch to 0.135 inch. The line is capable of producing sheets and precision blanks from 12 inches to 240 inches long at line speeds to 250 feet per minute.

Calstrip's most-recent Braner slitting line, installed in its Southwest Steel Coil subsidiary, has the capacity to process coils weighing up to 50,000 pounds in widths up to 60 inches and diameters up to 72 inches. The slitting capacity is from 0.010 inch

through 0.250 inch thick at line speeds up to 1,000 feet per minute.

Calstrip's Braner lines, all of which are in use today, have exceeded specifications, says Nelis. "They do a wonderful job of over-engineering the equipment," he says. "The equipment delivers excellent reliability with high-speed performance and quality support to Calstrip Industries' ongoing growth."

Braner's engineers listen and work hard to meet a company's equipment expectations. "Their goal is to build the equipment to exceed those expectations," says Nelis. "People make the difference."

Early adopter

During the two companies' multi-decade relationship, Calstrip actively has worked to find new ways of improving productivity and quality while maintaining its complex

VIP SUPPORT

TO ENSURE ITS CUSTOMERS CONTINUE receiving prompt maintenance and troubleshooting support, Braner USA Inc., Schiller Park, Ill., recently introduced Virtual In-Plant (VIP) tech support. The technology makes coil-processing equipment technicians or engineers available "virtually" to clients at their facilities, says Chuck Damore, Braner president.

VIP support uses Skype, a free Internet-based video-conference service, and a client's Internet-enabled smartphone or iPod. Using the service, a client is able to show and explain a problem to a Braner technician in real-time. Clients who use the service do not have to exchange emails, phone calls and photographs with technicians to diagnose a problem, which can save time.

"Customers can be describing the problem and displaying a movie via a smartphone of what's going on and what the problem is," says Damore. "The advantage is that it allows us to really troubleshoot maintenance and problems a lot more intelligently."

Reception among clients of the VIP service since its introduction last year has been fantastic, says Damore, noting the service is free. "If it can save a customer a tech support service call, it's well worth it," he says. "Everybody wins."



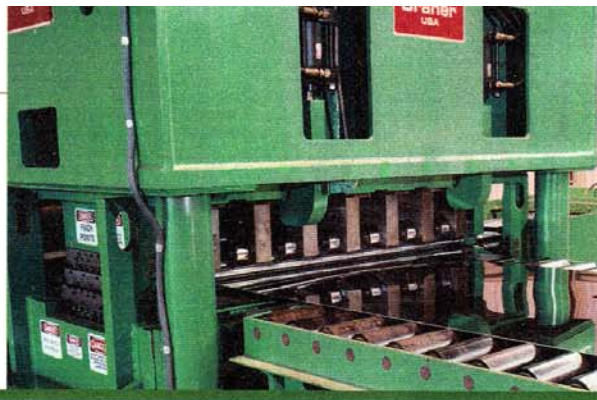
Calstrip's 60-inch triple-head Braner USA slitting line located at the company's Southwest Steel Coil plant in New Mexico.

mix of metal products, says Damore. For example, Calstrip was among the earlier service centers to adopt three-head turret slitters to address rapid setup changes to minimize downtime, he says.

Additionally, Calstrip was among the first to use Braner's hydraulic leveler technology to generate improved strip shape correction and sheet flatness on its cut-to-length line, says Damore. The company's cut-to-length line also incorporates Braner's high-speed hydraulic shear that requires less maintenance and operates more smoothly and quietly than conventional mechanical shears, he says.

The people at Calstrip are "very willing to get involved, share ideas and cooperate with us to generate new designs to advance the equipment to the next level of coil-processing technology," says Damore. "Having that interaction with customers like Calstrip allows us to supply modern, state-of-the-art coil-processing equipment because they communicate their problems, concerns, different issues to us, and

Calstrip's 60-inch-wide 10-gauge hydraulic leveler from Braner USA.



we can supply equipment that better meets their needs."

Braner appreciates the long, close relationship it has had with Calstrip for nearly 40 years, says Damore. "Many of our customers have been working with us for 20, 25, 30 years," he says. "It's always hard to get your foot in the door, but once we're in there and we've been able to supply a piece of equipment and we've been able to perform and prove ourselves, hopefully, we'll have the opportunity for them to come back to us."

During and after equipment installation, Braner supplies support and service to customers, says Damore. "Many of our customers have older lines that require support and service. If there's any training,

troubleshooting or maintenance that comes up, we're there to support them," he says.

Braner's quick response time to any equipment questions is appreciated, says Nelis, noting a problem that, in the past, could have taken days to solve, now takes a matter of minutes. "We sit 2,000 miles away from them. It isn't like we can run over to the Braner office at will. We're a good ways away, and yet we feel very close to them," he says. ■

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