

# nexAir Upgrades



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It has been said that necessity is the mother of invention. If that is true then determination is the father, or at least it has been for nexAir.

While businesses across the country eliminated overhead and cut costs, nexAir has quietly re-invested in its infrastructure, and cylinder plant operations and processes. By upgrading its cylinder fill plant the company has also shed overhead and eliminated waste while contributing to the betterment of the economy.

“There was a sense within nexAir that we had to take advantage of the recession and funnel our resources in order to prepare for the future,” stated Chuck Britton Vice President of Plant Operations Memphis TN. “We took a good hard look at our plant operations, targeted areas that needed improvement, came up with a game plan, and then worked out the plan,” continued Britton.

The plan was, in a word, aggressive. The goal: upgrade the existing plant facility into a modern, lean cylinder filling machine. In theory, the dismantling of the original Linear Manifold High Pressure Cylinder Facility and the installation of a modern Palletized Cylinder Fill System was difficult, but do-able. If all went to plan the reward would be a stream lined, cleaner, safer,

and more efficient facility that would position nexAir to grow aggressively for the next decade. The downside of the plan was the possibility of complications during the change over from old facility to new. If this occurred how would they be able to fulfill orders to their clients?

“We knew we had one chance to get this right so we scanned the playing field for an experienced partner to help us with what we were referring to as our “Future Strategy.” After talking to several people within the industry that had experience in this area it became very clear to us that everyone who had worked with Weldcoa had not only had great success with their project, but they also went on to partner with them on other projects after the fact. In our business that really speaks volumes about the level of trust that people felt for the company,” explained Britton.

“nexAir did all the heavy lifting on this project. We basically helped them fulfill their plan. We worked this project as true partners, each contributing towards a mutual goal. The end result is a facility that we are both proud of. They trusted us to help them spec the necessary equipment and to provide guidance on how best to stage the transfer from the old plant to the new one,” said Hector Villarreal President Weldcoa. “Today the nexAir fill plant not only churns out cylinders it has also become part of the sales process as nexAir regularly brings in customers and potential prospects to tour their upgraded cylinder fill plant facility,” continued Villarreal.

“The partnership with Weldcoa was better than good. We have seen a 40% gain on our investment in year one. As we worked with them on this project we began to understand that their breadth and depth of knowledge in the industry is immense. We truly feel that they are the best in the business. In fact, after the High Pressure facility project was complete we had Weldcoa partner with us on a new Hydrogen Fill Plant and they are currently working with us on our new Specialty Gas Lab,” said Britton.

## Palletized Fill Plant Factoids

The 3800 sq ft Palletized Fill Area is made up of three islands and a total of eight moving filling heads. Each fill head comes standard with sixteen cylinder quick-connections, isolation valves, and a cylinder cap rack. The Fill Islands are delivered pre-piped and oxygen cleaned.

## Hydrogen Project

“For years we had been growing our hydrogen business organically, but the volumes, historically, were not enough for us to commit the capitol necessary for a new Hydrogen Fill Facility here in Memphis. On an annual basis we had been paying over \$80,000 a year in freight costs to supply the fledgling market,” said Britton. “Prior to the recession we were happy to grow the hydrogen business, but now we had the land to do it and we didn’t have the expertise in house to commit. Praxair and Weldcoa helped us get there,” continued Britton.

“Praxair was providing the bulk tank and the product to nexAir, but Praxair wanted us to provide the total installation. Through our relationship with Cryostar we had learned that they had developed a pump specifically for Hydrogen service. To our knowledge it was the only commercially available pump that had been designed from the ground up to work in Hydrogen service. All of the other available pumps were modified to work with Hydrogen but had not been built for this duty,” stated Bud Klotz Vice President of Operations Weldcoa. “Cryostar was making some very bold claims in regards to how efficient this pump would be in service. We wanted to see some field data on the pump but at that point in time the unit had not been put into service in the field. In other words, it was all theoretical. My gut reaction was to pass on the pump, but their claims were so aggressive that we negotiated a deal for nexAir to use the pump. We took great pains to explain to nexAir that they were going to be the Alpha site for this pump and we explained why it was worth the effort.” continued Klotz.



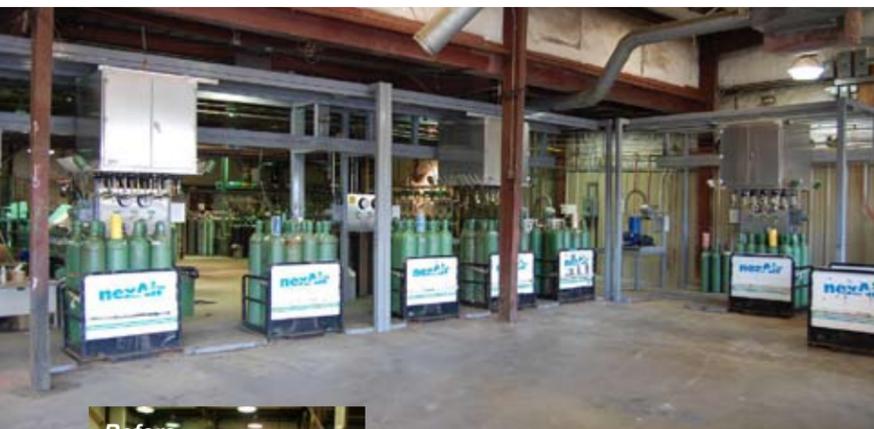
“When Weldcoa came forward and explained how they wanted us to be the test site for this new pump we were a little concerned, but they had already proven themselves to be trustworthy with the previous project so we considered it. In the end Weldcoa guaranteed the success of the project. That was all we had to hear. We felt we had little to lose and everything to gain so agreed to be the test site,” stated Britton.

“The pump has worked flawlessly since day one and the data that Cryostar provided prior to the start up proved to be right on the money. The project has been a huge success and we are very proud of our part in it,” said Klotz.

“The Hydrogen project for us was further proof that we had picked the right people for the job. Weldcoa worked with our Supplier [Praxair], they leveraged their vendor relationships [Cryostar], introduced new technology and met our time line and budget requirements. In every way this has been a win, win, win,” stated Britton.

As the economy emerges from the down turn nexAir’s investment in upgrades, modern processes, and new equipment have positioned them to aggressively expand their market share.

nexAir’s Hydrogen facility features a fully automated variable frequency drive (VFD) pump control with remote monitoring. This Weldcoa exclusive allows one pump to accurately fill cylinders, cylinder banks and tube trailers by adjusting the pump speed and flow rate. The remote monitoring technology constantly monitors the pumping process 24/7 and alerts Nexair and Weldcoa of any possible issues.



Before

Nexair contracted Weldcoa to update, upgrade and stream line their aged high volume, fully functional Memphis Tennessee cylinder fill facility, and to palletize the filling process of a dock high facility while it remained in operation.