

Hydrated lime maker upgrades gangway for truck-loading area

Unbeknownst to many, the mining and refining of limestone is one of the building-block commodities of our nation's economy. The use of lime—a limestone byproduct produced by heating natural limestone to very high temperatures—has evolved over the centuries, from mainly being used in building and agricultural applications to now being adapted to many sophisticated manufacturing and environmental uses. In fact, lime rates among the top-five chemical compounds produced in the United States on an annual basis.

When it comes to the production of lime, one of the companies that sets the standard is Chemical Lime Co., Fort Worth, Texas. Founded in 1966, Chemical Lime opened its first limestone quarry near Clifton, Texas, in 1968 and began producing lime in 1971. In 1981, the Lhoist Group, Brussels, Belgium, Europe's leading lime producer, made an initial invest-

ment in Chemical Lime and, in 1998, acquired full ownership. Under the Lhoist Group's leadership, Chemical Lime has expanded to consist of a network of 19 lime-production plants and 29 terminals, operating in a total of 20 states, plus Canada and Mexico.

Chemical Lime's Brooksville (Fla.) Plant, located about 30 miles north of Tampa, produces hydrated lime, which is a dry-powdered lime made from the slaking of limestone with

water. Seventy percent of the

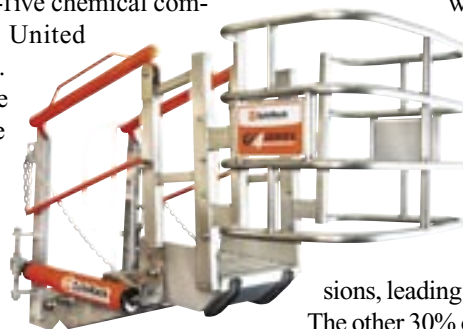
hydrated lime produced by the Brooksville Plant is used for flue-gas treatments for coal power plants. This flue-gas desulfurization is used to remove sulfur dioxide from smokestack emis-

sions, leading to a healthier environment.

The other 30% of hydrated lime that is produced at Brooksville is used in industrial wastewater treatment, where it neutralizes a variety of industrial waste streams, and as a reagent for environmental-remediation projects.

Overseeing the operations at the Brooksville Plant is Hanspeter Dietiker, the facility's manager of terminal operations. In this position, he not only is responsible for monitoring the production of the hydrated lime, but also ensuring that it is loaded safely and efficiently onto outbound trucks. Part of this job is seeing that the drivers who are tasked with climbing to the tops of the trucks and opening the pneumatic hatch before loading are kept safe from slip-and-fall incidents. It's a process that takes place hundreds of times a week.

To ensure this safety, in 2004 Dietiker contracted with SafeRack LLC, for a single-hatch, truck-loading gangway that would be easier and more convenient to operate—not to mention safer—than the facility's existing harness-and-lifeline safety setup. After that gangway was damaged recently, it has been retrofitted with SafeRack's G4 Series gangway technology, which uses a cutting-edge, metal-stamping process to create a stronger gangway that is both lighter and smoother to operate.



SafeRack's new G4 Series Gangway is the most user-friendly gangway the company has ever offered to the industry.

SafeRack gangways give operators the freedom to work on top of the vehicle while providing safe access and fall protection.



"The gangway is being used around the truck hatches," explained Dietiker. "We go up on the truck, open the hatch, load the truck, then the truck goes on the scale. After that, we use the gangway to go back up on the truck and either close the hatch, or if the load needs more, fill them up, go back to the scale, weight them again, make sure the weight is right and then go back up and close the hatch when it is."

The benefits of this self-contained gangway system are readily apparent to Dietiker, who even recommends SafeRack equipment to other plants in the Chemical Lime family when their operators are looking for a safety upgrade. G4 gangways are constructed using metal-stamping technology and a tool-and-die process to cut out pieces of aluminum, which are then bent into the required shape, eliminating the need for as many welds and creating a stronger, more durable gangway. Other features of the G4 equipment include spring-loaded gangway and platform operation, slip-resistant tread on the stairs, powder-coated handrails and mid-rails, heavy-duty

bumpers, and four-rail design for maximum fall protection.

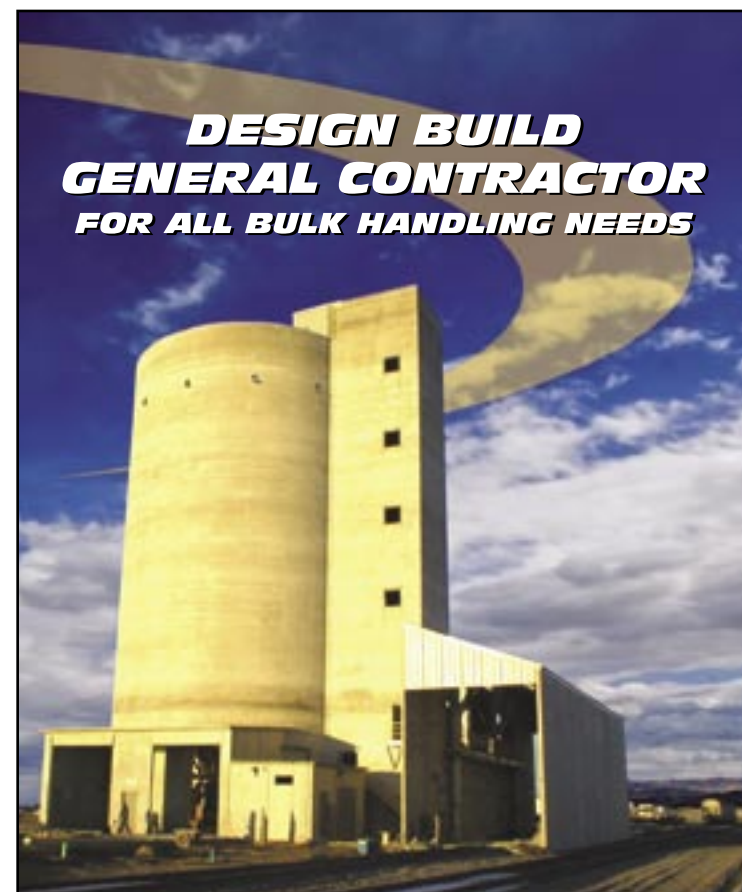
"The SafeRack gangway gives the truck drivers a lot of freedom to work and still feel safe on top of the truck," said Dietiker. "They are totally surrounded by the gangway and even when they trip, they won't fall off. There's no hassle with a harness and lifeline; all they do is walk up the stairs, tilt the gangway onto the truck, and walk out there."

Dietiker also points to the rapid response he received from SafeRack after the recent need for a quick gangway replacement and the company's ability to see that his operation was up and running in short order as benefits inherent in a SafeRack system.

"The customer service is excellent," he said. "We stay in touch and once a month we get a phone call to see if everything is fine. They are a really nice company to work with."

This article was adapted from material provided by SafeRack, (+1) 866-761-7225; www.SafeRack.com

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