



Dust collector stands up to tornado

When a tornado flattened this Minnesota countertop shop, the only thing left standing was the dust collector.

When it was all over that Saturday afternoon, not much was left of Mal-O-Sen's 17,555-square-foot manufacturing plant in Hastings, MN. What was still standing were parts of a cinder block office and the company's Murphy-Rodgers dust collector, installed two years earlier.

A tornado had struck Hastings, located near the Wisconsin border, in the early afternoon of June 29, 1996. "I was the only one working that day and I left one hour before it struck," recalls Jerry Joswiak, Mal-O-Sen's president and owner since 1975. "Luckily it occurred on a Saturday when no one was working. If it had happened during the week, there would have been major injuries, if not fatalities."



(top) After the tornado struck there was little left of Mal-O-Sen's plant.

(bottom) Even though the rest of the structure was demolished, the Murphy-Rodgers dust collector was still standing.

FDM

dust collector

Joswiak describes the storm as a straight line of wind that blew off roofs and damaged homes and garage doors in the area surrounding the industrial park. Mal-O-Sen's building was the only one with extensive damage.

Keeping the Mal-O-Sen business running while the plant was being rebuilt proved to be a logistical challenge for its president and staff. The company, which produces a variety of solid laminate countertops and distributes Corian and other solid surface counters, set up offices in a suite at a nearby Super 8 Motel until things dried out. "The office was under a half foot of water and could not be used for a week and a half," Joswiak recalls.

Keeping the manufacturing process running smoothly proved to be more daunting when some production work was shifted to a rented building. Mal-O-Sen's sister facility in Marshfield, WI, was used to complete countertop orders. At night the counters were produced and the next day transferred back to the rented building for fabricating and shipping. This allowed Marshfield to continue its core shaping schedule by day.

Joswiak says that not one phone call or fax was missed. Mal-O-Sen continued to ship countertops to home



The Mal-O-Sen facility has been rebuilt, and the same dust collector stands outside the new building.

improvement centers, lumber yards, and cutting stations in the three months it took to rebuild the Hastings factory. On Labor Day 1996, Mal-O-Sen moved back into its rebuilt plant on the original location where the company has operated since purchase in 1975. Within three weeks, the plant was completely back on line.

At the one-year anniversary of its reopening, Mal-O-Sen hosted a party for its 21 employees and their families; a second year anniversary party was celebrated in late August of this year. "We are really grateful that we only lost a building, not lives," states Joswiak. "We were able to keep everyone employed, and we ended up with an improved workplace. We even got the new roof that we were going to replace."

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collector running.*

Rebuilding the facility allowed Joswiak to develop an updated production plan. Floor space was increased by building an upstairs lunch room, machinery was replaced, and a new layout allowed for more efficient material handling. Joswiak also added a third loading dock with a leveling system for better shipment processing.

But one thing didn't change — the Murphy-Rodgers MRM-14-RAL dust collector still stands as it did before the storm. Only new ducts and piping were needed to get it running. The University of Minnesota just conducted a study for Mal-O-Sen reporting that the Murphy-Rodgers dust collector continues to do its job.

Joswiak is so pleased with the survivor of that fateful tornado that an upcoming 10,000-square-foot plant expansion will include another Murphy-Rodgers dust collector. Mal-O-Sen selected Murphy-Rodgers because the MRM offers a lot of benefits. Joswiak cited the dust collector's low maintenance and automatic bag shake-out system as important advantages. ▲

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