

Hoffer Pursues New Avenues in Flow Measurement

by Matt Migliore

Hoffer Flow Controls (www.hofferflow.com), a long-time manufacturer of turbine flowmeters, launched electromagnetic and ultrasonic flowmeter lines late last year – a bold move at a time when most companies are playing a cautious hand on the heels of an historic global recession. And by the time this article is published, Hoffer will be expanding its new flowmeter lines to include not only general industrial solutions, but also a high-temperature, high-pressure ultrasonic flowmeter and two abrasive-service electromagnetic flowmeters. One of the magmeters will be for general slurry and abrasive service, while the other will be for extreme abrasive and large solids service.

Beyond Turbine

According to Bob Carrell, president of Hoffer Flow Controls, the development of ultrasonic flowmeters ranks as one of the key trends in flow measurement technology over the past 10-20 years. As such, he says there were some applications for which Hoffer's customers were inquiring about ultrasonic technology. "The decision to add new meter technologies was the result of direct customer requests for metering solutions for applications where turbine meters were not the best fit," says Carrell. "These customers have a strong loyalty to our brand based on their prior experiences with the company, and as a result they will regularly inquire with us on all of their flowmetering requirements."

Some of the typical applications Hoffer is trying to meet with its electromagnetic and ultrasonic flowmeter lines include:

- Larger-line water flow applications that require inline meters;
- Corrosive-service applications; and
- Fluids with physically large solids.

A Strong Commitment Remains

Despite the broadening of its product line, Carrell says Hoffer will remain committed to turbine meter technology as well. "Our sales for [turbine flowmeter] technology have grown substantially in the last several years, and we anticipate this trend continu-

ing," says Carrell. "We are fortunate to have an exceptionally broad range of turbine meter designs that permit us to thrive in an equally broad range of markets." Carrell says Hoffer will also introduce a new patent-pending turbine meter design in early 2010.

Specification Advice

With its ever-growing solution set, Hoffer has experience working with end-users to specify a variety of flow measurement applications. And with this experience, the company has achieved a high level of understanding of the pitfalls end-users typically encounter when specifying flow measurement solutions. "The most common mistake we seem to see these days is not getting the initial application and specification details right," says Carrell. "Too often we hear of customer meters being mis-sized because the application details provided at the time the quote was prepared were incorrect – flowrates are wrong, temperatures are wrong, operating pressures are wrong, etc."

Carrell believes improper flowmeter specification may be a reflection of the workload designers and engineers face in today's leaner and meaner business environment, but he says it is nevertheless a costly misstep to correct for all parties. To avoid such errors, Carrell recommends end-users read the quote details from the supplier and make sure they meet the expectations for each application.

Looking Ahead

Going forward, Carrell says he sees the emergence of wireless standards as a key enabler for wireless in flow measurement applications. However, he believes security concerns will remain a long-term issue,



Hoffer's newly released Transi-Flo I unit is an ultrasonic flowmeter used for general industrial applications in conductive, non-conductive and aggressive liquids. It is available with an AC-powered rate indicator (pictured here) or as a battery-powered unit.

and thus limit the use of wireless to non-critical application environments.

Unfortunately for many industry segments, Carrell says the unit price for flow measurement will likely increase in the years ahead due to projected trends in commodity materials used in flowmeters, as well as the steady and so-far unending drumbeat of ever-more certification requirements.

He says declining remote telecom prices will lead to more maintenance and calibration being done from off-site, allowing users to maintain less staff on-site, thus reducing the chance of an accident injuring an employee.

Regarding applications, Carrell says he sees growth in flow measurement of natural gas, as it offers a temporary fuel to reduce carbon emissions as other alternate energy sources develop. Also, he says there will likely be demand for additional flow measurements as countries adopt and enforce cap-and-trade systems and taxes on carbon emissions.

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