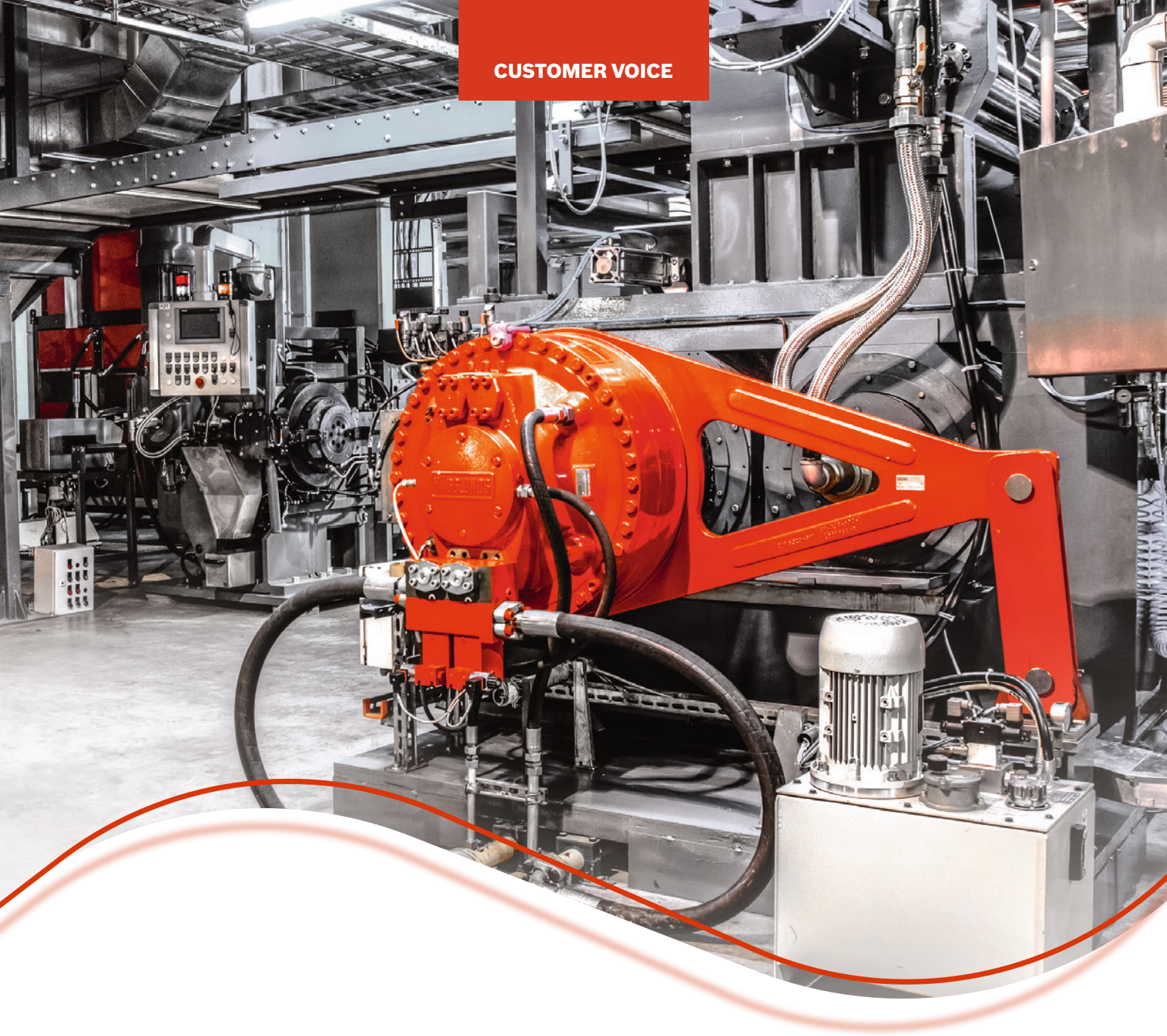


CUSTOMER VOICE



Polymer-Technik Elbe GmbH

Hägglunds drive systems are indispensable for rubber compounder PTE

HÄGGLUNDS 

Häggglunds drive systems are indispensable for PTE

Headquartered in Wittenberg, Germany, Polymer-Technik Elbe GmbH (PTE) is a leading producer of rubber compounds for automotive engineering, construction, medical technology and other sectors. With additional operations in France, China and Mexico – and Häggglunds hydraulic direct drive systems from Bosch Rexroth – the company is positioned to succeed in a changing global market.

While at the 2019 International Elastomer Conference in the US city of Cleveland, Ohio, PTE Managing Director Dr. Wolfgang Keil received a disturbing phone call from the company's recently opened factory in Mexico. "Due to a power grid issue, the main board had failed and we needed a spare part for the Spider control system of our Häggglunds drive systems," Keil recalls. "50% of our capacity was down, so it was force majeure – we couldn't keep our promises to our customers."

Knowing that Bosch Rexroth was showing at the same exhibition, Keil took a brisk walk to the drive supplier's stand. Not only did the staff there offer a listening ear, they also secured a solution. In less than 24 hours, the part had been specially delivered to Cleveland and dispatched by plane to Mexico.

"In huge companies there are lots of rules, but these guys were so open-minded and helped out without any bureaucracy," Keil says. "That superior service meant we could limit our force majeure situation to just two weeks, which is incredible. There you can really talk about minimizing downtime."

VITAL ADVANTAGES ON THE FACTORY FLOOR

Having used them for over 25 years, PTE today has a fleet of almost 50 Häggglunds drive systems that are integral to its compounding business. Keil was deeply impressed by the flexibility of the Häggglunds team in Cleveland, and he is similarly enthusiastic about the drive systems themselves.

"From a layout and design perspective, the hydraulic drive systems are very flexible," Keil explains. "You have just a cabinet and pumps, with the motor mounted directly on the shaft. That very compact design is a strong advantage that helps us save space and create a better working environment for the operators."

"After a stop, we can easily go from zero to mixing speed with no problem thanks to the high torque"

Keil notes that the compounding environment can be dusty, hot and noisy. However, the enclosed design and low noise output of Häggglunds drives make the problems fewer and the work more pleasant. Above all, Keil praises the drives' torque capabilities and industry-leading safety.

"After a stop, we can easily go from zero to mixing speed with no problem thanks to the high torque," Keil explains. "But the quick-stop function on roll mills is the strongest feature, because it makes these workplaces really safe. In an emergency situation, we can stop the mills immediately – say, in just one or two centimeters. With an electromechanical drive and breaker, that kind of precision simply wouldn't be possible."

AN ASSET THAT FOLLOWS EVERYWHERE

Speed and agility are important on PTE's equipment, but also for PTE's business, especially



The roll mills at PTE are driven by a complete Hägglunds drive system.

as uncertainties in the automotive sector raise questions for the rubber industry as a whole. The company's expansions into France (2005), China (2006 and 2018) and Mexico (2016) have been strategically important, offering multiple ways to protect profitability.

"We serve the rubber industry, and depending on its development we'll be more successful or less successful. But going global was the right decision for us. Even as a smaller player, working in different regions gives us sourcing advantages and flexibility for what the future brings. Mexico was our best market in 2019, for example," Keil says.

At every site PTE operates, Hägglunds drive systems are a part of the equation. "At PTE we have very standardized downstream equipment," Keil says. "Hägglunds drive technology belongs to that standard layout – so it's not open for discussion."

MEETING TOMORROW'S DEMANDS WITH HYDRAULICS

In truth, PTE did try other drive systems on its first roll mills in China. However, the experience is not one Keil wants to repeat. "Starting in

Wuxi was a huge risk with a lot of cost pressure, so we decided not to use hydraulics there," he explains. "Looking back, that was a failure. Electromechanical drives demand a lot more space, create a lot of noise and require much more frequent maintenance. Yet they supply less torque. Hydraulic drive technology offers a lot of advantages that we don't want to miss."

As PTE addresses new challenges, including tighter CO2 regulations and demands to reduce energy consumption, Keil says Hägglunds drives will remain part of its recipe for growth.

"We've invested heavily in Hägglunds drives since 1993," Keil says.

"We believe in quality and technology, and installing state-of-the-art equipment is still our policy. We're working on different strategies to grow, but they will be based on technology and technical customer service. So we'll see what the development of the drive technology brings in coming years." ●