

NEWS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release

FKM-USA/Freudenberg and Ford Motor Company Roll Out Significant Savings by Improving Metal Preparatory Processes for N.A. Stamping

Glenwood, Ill., July 12, 2004 – Since specifying FKM-USA’s non-woven rolls as the standard for all blankwashers throughout its North American stamping operations, Ford Motor Company is realizing an excellent return on investment – a 60% average reduction in downtime minutes as related to quality defects resulting from dirt incidents that, in the past, made it into the first forming operation. Other benefits realized have been dramatic reductions in fluid consumption, reductions in die maintenance, enhanced product life and a much drier and cleaner work environment for production personnel.

Starting in late 2000, Ford embarked on an extensive program to modernize the way it approached blankwashing. After nearly a year of intensive study and collaboration between its Wayne Stamping plant production team, Vehicle Operations (VO) engineering team and a group of dedicated suppliers, Ford developed and implemented a new approach to how it prepares outer body panel blanks prior to its first forming operation. The team uncovered root causes of dirt incidents that can lead to quality problems and eliminated them one-by-one.

According to Jim Rusczyk, FKM-USA general manager, “It’s inevitable that automakers are going to encounter ‘dirt’ in a stamping environment. So, we worked with Ford to change the way we approach the entire process, with significant results.”

Ford implemented a program that replaced twenty (20) blankwashers throughout its North American stamping operations. The new systems are based on a cleaning and drying approach co-developed by Ford, FKM and Utica Automation (Utica, Michigan), formerly DCT Automation. The process of cleaning blanks is broken down into isolated steps that focus on specific tasks.

1. Clean the blank surface using a water-base emulsion and a specifically engineered FKM roll made of Freudenberg VNP10 nonwoven material. Backing-up this process is a centrifuge filtration system that keeps the fluid clean and free of debris.
2. Dry the blank surface of all remaining oil or blankwash fluid using a specifically engineered FKM roll made of Freudenberg VNP09 nonwoven material.
3. Lastly, strategically apply a controlled amount of lubricating oil to aid in the forming operation as is needed.

Key to the success of this process is the proprietary non-woven roll materials supplied exclusively by FKM-USA to Ford and its blankwasher manufacturer. According to Rusczyk, “FKM’s rolls proved to be an essential element of Ford’s success and cost-savings, compelling Ford to standardize on the product. FKM’s non-woven webs have proven to be excellent at removing dirt and giving our customers consistent, uniformly dry blanks.

“Our success is the result of a great team effort between Ford, Utica and FKM. We’ve seen other customers enjoy process improvements by using our rolls, but to Ford’s credit, they have really worked hard to maximize these gains and we are thrilled with the results they are realizing.

Ruszyk adds that they are continuing to refine the process for further gains. “With each question that we answer, new questions arise as we dig deeper into the process. We’re just now having our labs in Germany take apart a roll that has run for over eighteen months to

look inside and see what's been captured within the web to better understand the sources and composition of what we consider 'dirt.' This, I'm sure, will lead to more ideas and further improvements”

FKM-USA, LLC is a fabricator of industrial roll products, which exclusively use Freudenberg Vliesstoffe KG and Bayer-AG materials. FKM-USA rolls are configured for diverse automotive applications, such as support for tailor welded blank systems, wash rolls within sheet metal blank washers, and tensioning rolls in steel mills and toll processors. FKM's product line includes non-woven roll covers, lightweight carbon fiber roll core technologies and patented rotary cast polyurethane rolls. To learn more visit www.fkm-usa.com

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Note to editors:

Industry Scope, LLC, based in Grand Blanc, Michigan is the automotive sales and marketing arm of FKM for North America. To learn more visit www.industry-scope.com

Caption: FKM's process simulator where advanced testing was conducted prior to field installation of FKM product at Ford's NA stamping operations.