

# Strategic Partnerships

FLOW-TECH INDUSTRIES AND AURORA PUMP WORK CLOSELY TOGETHER TO COMPLETE PROJECTS TOO COMPLEX FOR MOST COMPETING FIRMS.

By Elizabeth Wright

Since 1986, Houston-based Flow-Tech Industries Inc. has maintained a strong focus on the customer, providing a broad, reliable range of fluid-handling equipment and control solutions. Regardless of the size, scope or complexity of a project, Flow-Tech's goal has always been to 'say yes when everyone else says no.' ¶ "We are well aware that our customers satis-

faction is our strength and our future – therefore, we strive to give 100 percent satisfaction," Flow-Tech states. "We are confident that our services and implementation of new innovative products will add significant value to your operation."

Flow-Tech has become the industry's leading fire pump systems supplier, offering brands such as Aurora, Fairbanks and Layne Vertiline. With more than 90 years in the business, Aurora fire pumps have earned a well-deserved reputation for superior quality, dependability and performance. Flow-Tech is one of the few companies of its kind to specialize in the industrial fire pump market. This particular market requires a deep understanding of the complex set of regulations found in NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) 20, which is entirely unique from other project types. "It seems other manufacturers of fire pumps still concentrate mainly on the commercial market, while industrial projects are largely overlooked," said Flow-Tech's Fire Sys-

tems Manager Kaymichael Johnston. "But we know the industrial marketplace and we're able to take our knowledge and give the customer exactly what they need for their application."

The regulations involved in the industrial fire pump market are often reason enough for competitors to emphasize more common, traditional markets. As a result, when one of Flow-Tech's industrial customers set out to establish a fire pump in its liquid propane holding facility, most companies were unable to find a way to successfully install the system.

"There are so many plants in the Houston area, that there's no room to place a fire pump in a non-hazardous area," Johnston says. "We've had plants that were forced to buy land beside the buildings in order to install the fire pump system. This particular customer had no access to city water and had been turned down by just about everyone else in the market."

If the operation had been forced to move lo-

cations, millions of dollars would have been lost, but Johnston was determined to find a solution for the customer. "I called Rob [Mueller, engineered systems product manager for Aurora Pump], to ask if there is anything at all that we could do."

According to Mueller, there are very few products available that are both Class 1 Division II (explosion-proof) and UL (Underwriters Laboratories) and FM (Factory Mutual) listed for fire duty. "We were able to provide a UL/FM listed fire pump system while meeting the very difficult environmental requirements of the specification due to the pump house being located in a hazardous area," Mueller says.

Eventually, the team successfully installed the system and tested the unit. "We were able to provide the customer with the first hazardous duty

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—Kaymichael Johnston, fire systems manager for Flow-Tech

Flow-Tech Industries offers well-known brands to the chemical, paper, refinery, marine and oil and gas industries, but its role as a leading fire pump systems supplier has set it apart from the competition. The company offers brands such as Aurora, Fairbanks and Layne Vertiline.



Class 1 Division II fire pump house,” Johnston says. “We were able to provide a service that others refused to attempt.”

If the project had proven too difficult, the end user’s only option would have been to become a self-insured facility – a very costly move. “The environment is a very big issue, and this particular project location did not have any options of placing the fire pump system anywhere else,” Johnston says. “The company would have most likely lost their insurance but we have the skills and desire to find a way to meet the customers’ needs.”

Mueller and Johnston have long worked together in similar projects to share knowledge and insight that may mean the difference between successfully completing a project and being

### “THESE PRODUCTS GIVE FIRST RESPONDERS AND FIREFIGHTERS ADDITIONAL TIME.”

—Robert Mueller, engineered systems product manager for Aurora Pump

forced to walk away from a significant job.

“Rob and Aurora help on so many levels to accommodate our customers in ways that others can’t,” Johnston says. “A lot of times, the projects we take on are things that no one’s ever done before. With Aurora being the largest fire pump vendor in the world, they’re able to help us be successful.”

Fluid-handling equipment and systems provided by Flow-Tech Industries include pumps, pump skids, flow meters, meter systems, valves, fire Pumps and fire pump systems.



Mueller believes it takes a representative like Flow-Tech’s to bring these types of projects to life in spite of a number of difficult challenges. This has been key to Aurora Pump’s longevity and stellar reputation. “We look at Flow-Tech as a breath of fresh air,” he says. “It is refreshing to take on something completely new and mold a system that the customer and the fire marshal can accept.”

The team at Flow-Tech have enjoyed long-standing careers, and employees have gained a level of knowledge not often found in competing firms. Johnston virtually grew up in the industry, cleaning the shop floors and learning to repair pumps at a young age. In between semesters at Baylor, the 27-year-old executive gained even more experience and knowledge of inner workings of the equipment and company alike. “This was supposed to be a temporary job after college, but I fell in love with what I was doing,” Johnston says. “I realized the industrial fire pump market is an area we can expand in, so I started learning all about it and calling Rob as much as I could.”

The dedication and experience of Johnston and the team at Flow-Tech employees have allowed the firm to stand out from the competition. “We may be a company that has been around a good, long time, but we have laid our claim to the industrial market, and we do it well,” Johnston says.

There is little room for error for companies like Flow-Tech, tasked with developing and installing systems designed to save lives. “These products can give people the time they need to get away safely,” Mueller says. “We want to make sure we keep as many people safe for as long as we possibly can.”

Flow-Tech & Aurora Fire Pumps will continue to take on projects many others will shy away from and be trailblazers in the industrial fire pump market. ■



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