

Automechanika—

The European Petroleum Equipment Trade Show



by Wolf H. Koch, PhD

IN SEPTEMBER, I ATTENDED MY SIXTH Automechanika, an automotive trade show held in Frankfurt, Germany, biennially. While there are plenty of international trade shows throughout Europe and the world, the Automechanika is one of the oldest and can only be described in superlatives: this year's show covered over three million square feet of exhibit space; almost 4000 exhibitors were present, two-thirds of them coming from outside Germany; and show organizers expected in excess of 150,000 visitors during the 5-day show.

In addition to service station and C-store equipment, the show featured at least 50 operating car and truck washes, vehicle diagnostics, workshop and body shop equipment, dealership and service center organizational systems, automotive accessories and environmental technology for station and service center operations. In short, the show had everything necessary to operate and maintain automobiles.

Innovation prize winners

As was the case for the last two shows, the



Robotic fueling system developed by JRS GmbH.

organizers awarded Automechanika Innovation Prizes in eleven categories. Winning products of interest to *PE&T* readers fell into the categories of "Filling Stations and Auto Care" and "Environmental Protection".

Brugg Rohrsysteme GmbH won the first category with its double containment flexible metallic underground piping system. The system consists of corrugated metal pipe, either in stainless steel or copper, surrounded by a polymeric outer cover with an interstitial space for leak monitoring. The system was developed to provide the same installation benefits of double containment polymer systems without the potential for hydrocarbon permeation

through the inner pipe.

The environmental prize went to Öl-Jaeger, an absorbent for hydrocarbon spills manufactured from old tires. The product exhibits high absorption rates and can be disposed of by burning. It is claimed to be applicable to surface and water spills.

Other highlights

Marconi Commerce Systems, with its German subsidiary Salzkotten, showed solutions for the dispenser of the future: convert a system designed for gasoline retailing into an e-commerce platform for retailing non-hydrocarbon products. The company showed integration

with cellular phones for retail operations and hinted at becoming a supplier of hardware and software for e-commerce and communications systems.

Wayne Europe showed a new suction pump which integrates air separation, check valves and meter and pulser into one package, minimizing leaks and optimizing pump performance. Another product, the Wayne Infocenter, integrates a color monitor into the dispenser. The unit can offer directed advertising and provides internet connections for weather, traffic information and news.

Tokheim offered a new vapor recovery system which measures vapor flow in real time and can correct for vapor-to-liquid ratios which are outside established parameters. One variation of the system has automatic calibration and may be connected to a network for remote monitoring. The system features a patented flowmeter which provides rapid flowrate data and contains no moving parts. This may very well be the first commercial vapor recovery system capable of CARB's new Enhanced Vapor Recovery (EVR) requirements.

Also shown at the Tokheim exhibit was a new robotic fueling system developed by JRS GmbH, together with six other partners, including Tokheim's contributions of a flowmeter and hydraulics. The unit uses a 6-axis industrial robot with a reach of about four feet. It will be able to handle four products and includes vapor recovery. The first applications for the robot are planned by year-end for initial fills at auto assembly plants in Germany.

Vapor recovery in Europe

During the show I had several discussions with German regulators and industry observers regarding the current state of vapor recovery. This topic was discussed by Ted Tiberi in his September article, "Vapor Recovery Around



Brugg Rohrsysteme GmbH's prize-winning double containment flexible metallic underground pipe system.

the World" (p. 16), which provided information pertaining to Arid Technology's membrane system, Permeator. A number of important events have occurred which need to be mentioned.

While TÜV Rheinland had responsibility in Germany for testing and certifying vapor recovery at its Cologne facility, the personnel active in the program have retired or have been reassigned. As of July 1, 2000, certification of vapor recovery systems became the responsibility of TÜV Süddeutschland in Munich. The laboratory for certification activities is now located near the Munich airport.

Some time ago, testing of existing vapor recovery systems by environmental agencies in Austria, Germany and Switzerland determined that, without periodic testing and proper maintenance, system performance tends to deteriorate. The three countries have been cooperating on developing new requirements for continuous monitoring of system performance. Until the regulatory process is

complete, the German oil industry has agreed to monthly function tests of vacuum assist systems using a tester marketed by Elaflex. During the third quarter of this year, all stations were to be equipped with the Elaflex unit. The tester consists of a sleeve that is placed over the nozzle spout and that emits a whistling sound when dispensers operate at a minimum flow rate of 5 gpm, providing a qualitative, not quantitative, operations check. The association of station operators, BTG (Bundesverband Tankstellen und Gewerbliche Autowäsche Deutschland e. V.), has voiced strong opposition to the test program.

A worthwhile event

Overall, Automechanika, held every two years during the first week of September in Frankfurt, is worthwhile for anyone looking for new equipment or markets for existing equipment. Obviously, I have only provided a superficial view of some of the highlights of the trade show. There were additional vendors of vapor recovery equipment and countless sources for aftermarket accessories and services. ☐

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