

## 'Flow rack helped increase our productivity 40%'

*Miltex Instrument Co. ships 200 more orders a day within 24 hours of receipt and is 35% more efficient in its use of space with a gravity flow rack system.*

**M**iltex Instrument Co. is one of the largest, most respected suppliers of surgical and dental instruments and complimentary products in the world. Instruments are hand-crafted to specifications through the company's subsidiary located in Tuttlingen, Germany, and then shipped to warehouses and executive offices in Lake Success, N.Y.

Incoming product at the warehouse was placed in narrow drawers of waist-high metal cabinets. As the product line

increased to over 6,000 items, it became apparent that picking from these drawers was no longer a feasible option.

Problems at Miltex abounded. The company could not assure first-in/first-out product flow. Too much time was taken in the opening and closing of the drawers. Workers suffered injury due to drawers

left open. The waist-high cabinets wasted storage space. And finally, there were difficulties locating drawer locations from computer printouts.

In October, 1997, Miltex converted its order selection to gravity flow racks. In one area, the company installed seven rows of six, 5 ft wide sections of rack. In an adjacent area, six rows of four, 5 ft wide section of rack were installed. Each of the 66 sections is 4 ft deep and 8 ft high, and supports eight or nine shelf frames. The

frames are fitted with track (polyethylene wheels on 1½ in. centers for optimum load distribution) and rugged steel lane guides, providing fast adjustment at ½ in. intervals across shelves.

"Obviously, since the picking-shelves span from the floor to near the ceiling, versus waist-high drawers," says Art Levy, manager of logistics for Miltex, "we're utilizing at least 35% more space formerly wasted.

"Our productivity has increased approximately 40%; that is, now we ship 200 more orders the same day, with less manpower," explains Levy. "Picking errors have been reduced."

Typically, the rows of rack are spaced to provide a common picking aisle between the first two rows, followed by a common shelf-stocking aisle between the next two, and so forth.

"We have used the gravity flow system for about a year," says Levy. "The results have been more than satisfactory."

Miltex ships domestically and worldwide, now averaging 10,000 orders a month, virtually all within 24 hours of receipt, to authorized dealers.

The company now guarantees first-in/first-out product flow, essential when dealing with sterile products having a limited shelf-life.

**Keneco, Inc. 800-932-0121**



**A Miltex employee re-stocks the gravity flow rack order-picking system which now guarantees first-in/first-out product flow.**

Reprinted from

**MODERN MATERIALS HANDLING**

January 1999 ©1999

by CAHNERS BUSINESS INFORMATION