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Manufacturing Restart

An analysis on how lubricants can help in smooth restarting of manufacturing operations post lockdown and how lubricant companies are meeting these requirements.

- Subhajit Roy, Executive Editor

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted industries across all sectors and has led to several manufacturing units being shut during the national lockdown. As the country moves forward and resumes operations, manufacturing firms too, are focusing on bringing production back on track.

A crucial element, critical to their restart is industrial oils that are used in key machinery and equipment. Industrial Lubricants allow less friction, wastage, reworking, downtime and reactive maintenance and can make a big difference in reducing total cost of ownership, across every industrial sector.

Industrial lubricants can be broadly categorised into metal-working fluid (includes soluble and neat fluids) and maintenance lubricants like greases, hydraulics and gear oils. However, due to the lockdown, many lubricants have unfortunately had to remain idle in the equipment. Hence, making sure that lubricants are in the right condition is critical for the smooth restart of manufacturing operations, observes Sagar Vira, Vice President - Heavy Duty and Industrial Sales, Castrol India Ltd.

For instance, equipment filled with water-soluble coolants which lie unused for more than a week, have the potential to corrode and smell with added safety risks. This is mainly due to the tendency of the used idle coolant to turn acidic because of bacterial growth. Water-based coolants too, degrade over time owing to lack of appropriate air circulation and reviving the health of these lubricants is extremely difficult once it deteriorates beyond certain limits. Comparatively, neat metal working oils offer better stability, unless they are cross-contaminated with other oils or water. Likewise, lubricants used for maintenance applications attract and accumulate humidity or water along with dirt when the equipment is set to standby mode, making the equipment vulnerable.

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Thus, in Vira's opinion, in the absence of proper checks before restart, equipment may be susceptible to corrosion of critical components, non-performance of lubrication leading to the gearbox and bearing failure and accelerated damage to the equipment.

Jogesh Sharma, Head, Industrial Lubricants, GP Petroleums Ltd. said, "Lubricants and greases counteract the friction generated by the moving parts in factory machinery so that they don't overheat and break down. So they are critical to the smooth operation of any factory and play a very vital role during the restarting of machinery and equipment."

He suggests, "As factories begin operating again as part of the gradual easing of the lockdown rules, it is important that certain precautions are taken before powering up all of the equipment and machines."

Sharma adds, "There are many factories that have been dormant for months now. The machinery, which practically ran non-stop, has now remained unused for an extended period of time. As a result, thorough maintenance must be carried out before restarting operations. This includes not just the machinery itself but also lubricants especially coolants."

According to Yatendra Kumar, Business Head, MotulTech India, "Lubricant to the equipment is similar to blood in body. Hence if equipment is idle for a long period of time, one needs to take lot of care while restart, since there is a very high risk of damage to key parts of equipment or even complete equipment. This was also the time to check the capability of the lubricants in use as many users are able to restart their machine as it is thanks to the right quality lubricants used by them and not just depending on low cost products."

How lubricant companies are enabling smooth restart

Today, as many manufacturing facilities are restarting (or have restarted) their operations post prolonged lockdown, it becomes essential for them to use right kind of lubricant at right condition to achieve overall efficiency. Commenting on how lubricant companies are meeting these requirements, Vira said, "During the lockdown Castrol has served its customers by helping monitor the condition of their lubricants virtually through our team of technical experts. They also have provided the right product solutions depending on individual client requirements."

Along with that, Castrol India recently announced the introduction of two new initiatives to help manufacturing companies with their lubricant-related requirements as they resume business operations post lockdowns.

"We introduced the Castrol Restart offer which aims to provide remote assistance and virtual technical support to manufacturers in the industrial and heavy-duty space to test the condition of their lubricants, as they begin production. The offer is led by a dedicated team of technical specialists and Castrol's extensive network of

warehouses and distributors across the country makes securing the complete range of products as well as servicing all lubricant requirements possible through a single touchpoint," informed Vira.

Castrol's Restart service is provided remotely through digital tools and communications owing to the social distancing measures due to the ongoing pandemic. Also, Castrol brings to manufacturers the Castrol Labcheck – an advanced used oil analysis solution that helps optimize fluid performance and improve productivity.

Sharma of GP Petroleums said, "Our plant in Vasai was one of the first plants in the non-essential categories to receive permissions to begin operations amidst the lockdown. This was mainly due to the importance of lubricants to help major manufacturing plants run smoothly. Our priority was to cater to the sectors which fall under essential services such as sugar and power generation industries." GP's industrial lubricants brand IPOL is used in operation of machineries engaged in coal production and the company managed to supply lubricants in order to continue their operations.

Talking about the initiatives taken by MotulTech India, Yatendra said, "We have provided personal services to our customers and organised online training for customers, distributors and their staff on maintenance lubricants including greases, metal working fluids, cleaners and rust preventatives. All of them plays significant role in smooth running of the equipment."

MotulTech has also invested in advanced online and app-based tools like "iCast EVO" to help its customers and show them ways to generate money by reducing the manufacturing cost inside their plant.

Industrial lubricant offerings

MotulTech's industrial lubricants for diverse applications

MotulTech, the industrial division of Motul group, offers huge range of industrial lubricants including water miscible and neat metal working fluids, forming fluids, huge range of greases like high temperature, extreme low temperature, plastic contacts, water & steam resistance, chemical resistance & wire rope etc, synthetic, high performance mineral and food grade maintenance lubricants like hydraulic oil, compressor oil, gear & transmission oil, chain oils, slide way oil & engine oil.

Their products are sold to automotive OEMs and component manufacturers, general engineering, metals, textiles, mining, off road, process, food & pharmaceuticals and pulp & paper industry. The company also offers complete solution for lubricants and mold release to high pressure die casting & aluminium extrusion industry.

Castrol's lubricants for harsh conditions

Castrol India offers lubricants for the B2B sector focused especially in metals, machine manufacturing, wind, aerospace and automotive. In India the company also provides efficient solutions for industries like sugar and textiles. These premium products are liquid engineered to help optimize performance and come with a firm commitment to help reduce the environmental impact of operations, claims Vira.

Additionally, Castrol also offers advanced analytics that enables data-driven maintenance and lubricant services that help drive down the total cost of ownership for customers.

"While catering to the demands of HSSE and environmental regulations, Castrol's products and service offerings improve operational efficiencies and stamp out the inefficiencies caused by breakdowns and unscheduled maintenance," Vira said. He adds, "In products, Castrol metalworking fluids help to reduce biocides, achieve high performance with new alloys, and protect tools and products – all while ensuring high productivity, and a quality surface finish. These include categories like soluble coolants, cleaners and corrosion preventives."

Making sure that lubricants are in the right condition is critical for the smooth restart of manufacturing operations.

▸ *Sagar Vira, Vice President - Heavy Duty and Industrial Sales, Castrol India Ltd*

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▸ *Yatendra Kumar, Business Head, MotulTech India*

Castrol's service offerings include Castrol Complete Chemical Management System program which takes care of end-to-end lubricant requirements in manufacturing units, supports efforts to increase manufacturing productivity through product selection, fluid monitoring and dedicated on-site technical support. We focus intently on opportunities to enhance efficiency, reduce costs and waste, and improve uptime, productivity and safety delivered across customer sites.

Another unique offering is Castrol SmartControl which allows manufacturers to make use of real-time condition monitoring giving them the opportunity to monitor and control the central system of metalworking fluids automatically, ensuring processes are more efficient, reliable, and can operate continuously without the need for human intervention. With Castrol SmartControl, the most important parameters of the metalworking fluid are monitored real time including concentration, pH level, conductivity, temperature and volume flow.

GP Petroleums offers wide range of industrial lubricants

GP's Brand IPOL caters to a wide range of industrial lubricant requirements across the industries. The product line comprises of different types of metal working fluids, rust preventives, quenching oils, cleaners, hydraulic, way lubrication oils, sugar mill specialty greases and even sanitizers. The range also consists of products tailored to suit different techno-commercial requirements of a particular customer. IPOL products are widely accepted across a wide base of user industries such as automobile, engineering, steel, tube mills, thermic fluid segment, sugar, machining etc. in India and overseas.