

NEWS

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For further editorial information contact:
Ed Szykula – Kracoe Szykula & Townsend, Inc.
PH 248-641-7500 – FAX 248-641-4779
Email: rkracoe@kship.com

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Creform Corporation
P.O. Box 830
Greer, SC 29652-0830
800-839-8823
Fax 864-877-8363
Email: sales@creform.com
Online: www.creform.com

A METALWORKING MANUFACTURER'S PROBLEM OF HANDLING OVERWEIGHT TOTES SOLVED.

A mobile flow rack guaranteed FIFO material presentation moving overweight totes from multiple height conveyors to work cells by individual associates.

Recently a manufacturer faced the problem of moving and transporting totes containing a variety of tooling and metal stocks that could weigh up to 80 lb each. The totes, presented from varying height conveyors needed to be transported to various work cells and machines at different locations within the plant. Because the tote's weight was too heavy to handle manually, lifting them off the conveyors to a delivery cart and then from a cart to a work cell did not comply with OSHA weight lifting restrictions.

To address this problem, Creform® Corporation, Greer SC, created a new mobile flow rack design that allows a.) handling of heavy totes by individuals and b.) allows the totes to be easily moved from conveyors to work areas. Since the conveyors that were feeding the totes were of varying heights, the structure needed to have a height adjustable function.

The flow rack's two-level design includes a self-contained hydraulic and ergonomic positioning system that raises and lowers the upper flow lane. The rack is moved into position at the conveyor that contains the totes. Then a single hand crank raises or lowers the upper flow lane to match the height of the feeding conveyor. After the tote(s) are loaded, the mobile flow rack is transported to a work cell, the flow lane is either raised or lowered to the height of the receiving point, and the tote(s) are easily rolled off. The bottom lane is a fixed height and only used for transporting empty totes. All lanes feature retainer pipes on each side for safety and ergonomics.

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The flow lanes are constructed using Creform's unique Placon® roller conveyor system and designed to work with totes containing heavy loads, or those having soft bottoms or open cell designs. The 3-inch wide Placon rollers provide the extra support required to handle the heavy load challenges of this application and their low friction characteristics work well with the shallow angles of the flow lanes.

The rack structure is built using Creform's unique 42mm plastic coated steel pipe and metal joints that provide the strength to give it a 500 lb weight limit. For some less heavily loaded parts of the rack, Creform 28mm pipe is incorporated using 42mm/28mm metal joints. The system has four, 4" stem casters with urethane wheels for stable and safe movement. Two casters feature brakes for secure positioning while the two fixed casters provide easy transport.

The flow rack's presentation levels guarantee FIFO product presentation in the ergonomic "strike zone" and are easily adjusted to associates' varying heights. An electrically powered lift can be incorporated if a 12-volt battery is added to the cart or AC power is available at the transfer points. Creform offers many other accessories that can be used to customize these structures with special features such as label holders and a variety of pipe colors.

This flow rack design is also well suited for warehouse kitting operations. It can also be designed to accommodate a Creform BST style AGV to make it part of an automated kitting system.

The Creform System consists of over 700 cataloged items, allowing users to build a wide variety of custom designed carts, workstations, flow racks, storage units and AGVs. Creform also has thousands of engineered structure drawings on file, available to customers and it offers a custom design and build service. The Creform System is a proven component in continuous improvement and Lean Manufacturing programs and Creform Corporation partners with its customers in developing and implementing these programs.

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CRE-247 Caption: The Creform lift assist flow rack's two-level design includes a self-contained hydraulic and ergo-positioning system that raises and lowers the upper flow lane for handling heavy totes.