

Time is on Hoist Liftruck's side

Hoist Liftruck Mfg. is benefiting from the positive ripple effect surrounding breakbulk demand. The Bedford Park, Ill.-based maker of large pneumatic tire forklifts for breakbulk and roll-on, roll-off commodities is one of only three North American-based companies that are home-grown producers and manufacturers of the forklift equipment. Being one of the continent's select few manufacturers enables Hoist Liftruck to quickly answer the call on imports entering the U.S., and positions it to be the go-to company in the event a forklift goes down and a replacement or an emergency part is needed.

"Users are much more familiar with North American-manufactured equipment than with equipment made overseas. In addition, replacement equipment and parts made here are readily available whenever the customer needs them. Those are real value-added benefits to manufacturing in the U.S.," said Marty Flaska, the company's president.

He said that because labor represents such a small component of the overall cost pie and with shipping rates considerably higher than

two or three years ago, there is little advantage to outsourcing the production of forklift equipment to offshore locations.

From a longer-term perspective, the growth of U.S. exports — driven largely by the declining value of the dollar — makes U.S.-manufactured goods more competitive on world markets. This is triggering increased usage of forklift equipment, with some of Hoist Liftruck's putting as many as 15,000 to 20,000 hours on their equipment. As users want to avoid the downtime that may accompany the use of aging equipment, forklifts that may have been kept for 20 years may currently be replaced in much shorter intervals, a trend that bodes well for Hoist Liftruck.

"Equipment uptime is the most important factor for users," Flaska said. "Because of this, in the foreseeable future, I believe the standard for replacing equipment will narrow to three to five years. Should the currency remain weak relative to our trading partners, U.S. exports will grow, demand for and usage of our equipment will grow, and replacement will take place at much more compressed cycles." ■

An independent growth spurt

It is projected that the global breakbulk industry will increase from 553 million tons to 612 million tons in 2010. This will be driven by continued demand for a broad range of energy services and infrastructure needs from developing countries. Breakbulk volumes are also expected to grow independent from global gross domestic product because of the proliferation of globalized production processes.

"Shippers are demanding dependable access to capacity, reliable and predictable service, competitive pricing, transparent and time-tested procedures, and safe and secure transport solutions," said Gerhard Janssen, general manager, marketing and sales, Rickmers-Linie.

Rickmers is adding capacity with newly built vessels and ad hoc charter services. It is also looking for opportunities to add terminals and to partner with companies in barging, feeder and inland transportation, Janssen said. ■

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