

(inside) marine

SUPERYACHTS

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ICON YACHTS
*Dutch yacht
building mastery*

WILSON YACHT MANAGEMENT
*A discreet, friendly and personalised
yacht management service*

OCEANSAVER
*Dedicated to ballast
water treatment*

Knowing the ~ ropes ~

Ship Board Training, United States Coast Guard, Mobile, Alabama USA



Back in the early 1980s the Kirkpatrick Group developed a wire rope maintenance programme for its own fleet. Today the Texas-based company is the global go to name for pressure lubrication systems that have revolutionised cost cutting and durability. Colin Chinery reports.

Wherever rope safety and longevity are esteemed as key operational issues, the Kirkpatrick product line is at the forefront.

First developed in 1982 to support its own 450 crane fleet's wire rope maintenance, the Kirkpatrick Group's pressure wire rope lubrication systems are used worldwide; the Rolls-Royce of their sector.

"We invented the process 34 years ago and quite frankly we know our competition's strengths and shortcomings better than even they do. Most have copied our technology and not very well at that," said founder, President and CEO Bob Kirkpatrick.

Delivering the most innovative, well-supported and easy to use method to maintain wire ropes available, Kirkpatrick is a major player in the marine, offshore and mining markets, while its impressive showcase includes luminaries such as the United States Navy and Coast Guard, and the Royal Australian Navy.

Huge Cost Savings

"Wire rope pressure lubrication has changed the way people maintain their wire ropes on a worldwide basis, extending wire rope working life and with labour savings proven to be 50 times lower than labour costs using manually applied methods."

In pressure lubrication, wire rope passes through a 100 per cent pressurised and controlled immersion, many times faster than manual applications. This in turn reduces labour costs and enhances safety as well as increasing the working life of the treated ropes.

The outer surface and groove pattern is wiped clean of water and contaminants which then allows optimal penetration of coating. With less lubricant waste and more fluid film support between the strands, friction wear is reduced.

Kirkpatrick offers nine different systems covering the broadest scope of field applications, each developed from the group's three decade experience in reviewing customer requirements.

"Our business is unique in that it has to cover so many different areas in regard to troubleshooting our customers' applications," said Mr Kirkpatrick. "Our personnel not only focus on a customer purchasing a system but they also must discern what system best supports their particular preventative maintenance application.

"I thoroughly understand the end user's maintenance operations because I used to be in the crane business. In other words I have had the same wire rope maintenance concerns as they have. As a consequence I

know what to quote them and what they require - whether for offshore cranes, port cranes, mooring lines for tankers or whatever it may be."

Case cook benefits of Kirkpatrick Wire Rope Lubrication Systems are striking, spanning safety, extension of working life, and labour saving. The US Navy for example was able to bring annual \$365,000 maintenance spend down to \$32,000.

For San Diego's Public Works Centre, the automated wire rope lubricator cut an annual \$320,000 bill to \$34,000, a massive savings of \$286,000. At the same time the five eight-hour workdays per crane needed under the old manual system was down to a single eight-hour day.

Revolutionists

Since perfecting the pressure lubrication process in the early 1980s for its own crane fleet, the Richardson, the Texas headquartered group has gone on to revolutionise global wire rope maintenance from manual to automate.

"In doing so we have absorbed information in every area where wire rope longevity and safety is key to our customers' maintenance programmes," said Mr Kirkpatrick. "The continued success of our product line revolves around the goal to provide our clients with



the most innovative and well supported method to maintain wire ropes available.”

For Kirkpatrick, research and development is intrinsic. “We consistently perform testing to verify flow rates, internal pressures, sealing capacity, and system performance of every component used with our systems as well as those we may be considering.

“This also applies to the many different consistencies and brands of greases used with our systems and what operational tendencies are best suited to optimise system performance and penetration.”

In 1993, the Kirkpatrick Group developed the first bio-degradable seed oil based wire rope lubricant to meet the growing concern by environmental agencies worldwide. “Since that time, seed oil based greases are common place in industry. However, our product continues to lead the pack in wire rope protection and marine environmental safety.”

In 2013 Kirkpatrick developed laser technology to manufacture groove cleaners to a perfect dimensional match for any wire rope configuration. Kirkpatrick Groove

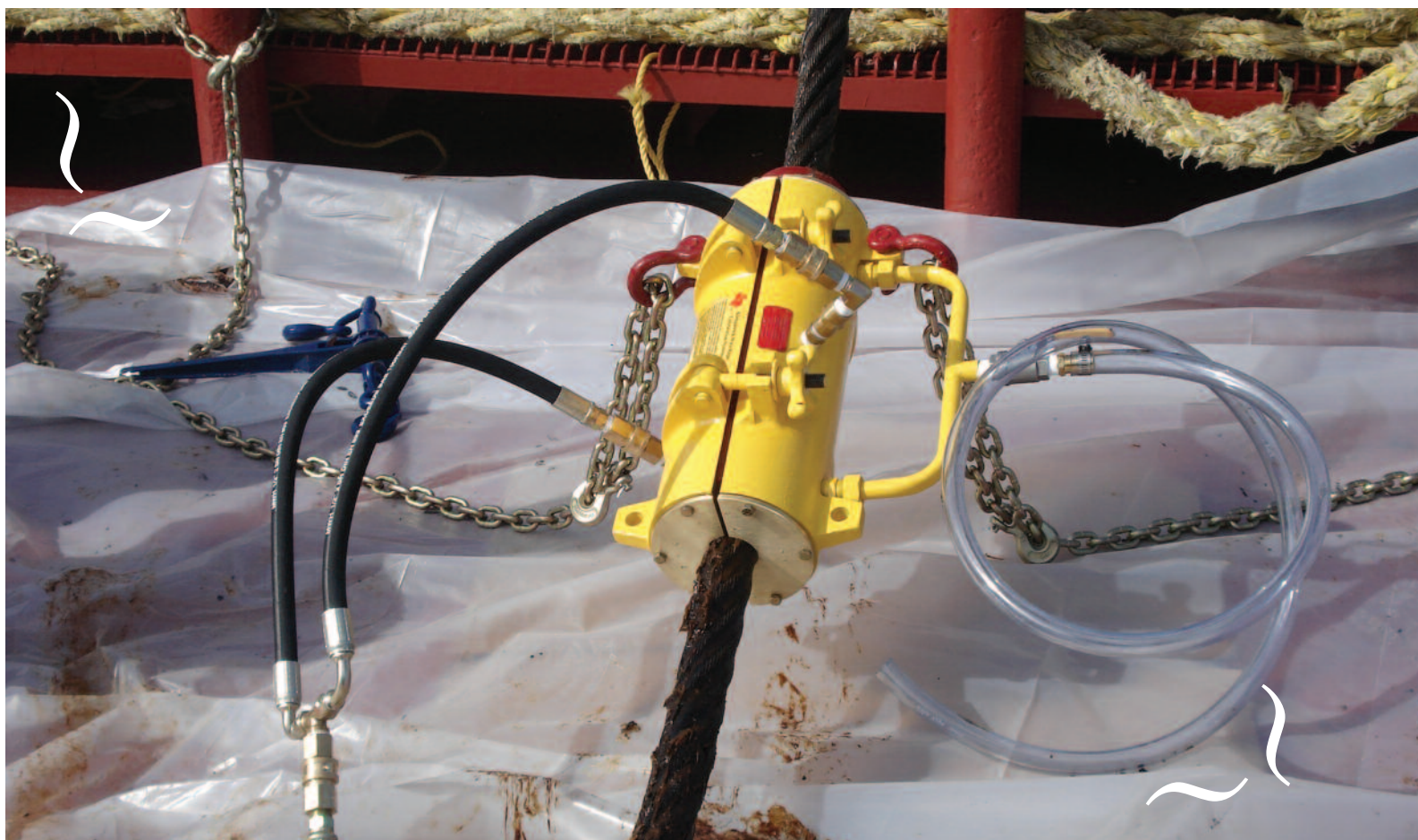
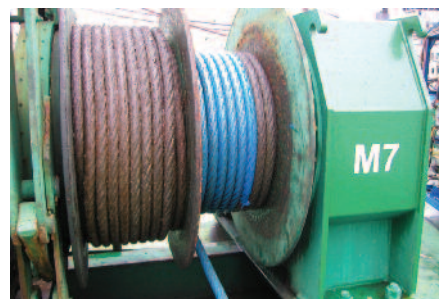
Cleaners come in many sizes to remove contamination from the rope before lubrication pressurisation occurs.

“Even though several companies copied the Groove Cleaner technology without authorisation, their efforts have been watered down immensely by our production of the proprietary laser perfected Groove Cleaners.”

“We have been blessed with numerous United States Government evaluations for the US Navy Atlantic and Pacific fleets, dealing with top engineers to help us understand their shipboard and port facility wire rope maintenance requirements.”

Much of Kirkpatrick’s system development began with the engineering challenges faced and resolved over 30 years. “We also study our civilian customers’ field applications and operational requirements. We integrate what we learn from them into our system design to optimise performance in as many different operational scenarios as possible.”

It’s another defining Kirkpatrick approach and one supported by independent evaluations and customer experience input.



Supplier-client interchange - and a powerful testimony to its market strength - is exemplified in a 10,000 record database, and a library of more than 40 field application videos.

The result, said Mr Kirkpatrick, is an “unsurpassed knowledge of the wire rope pressure lubrication process, and one we share with our customers.”

Kirkpatrick troubleshoots applications worldwide on a daily basis. “We ask the right questions and provide the right answers due to our extensive experience both in the field and evaluating system performance in our lab.”

Kennedy SOS

And the response to a troubleshooting call is informed, job-specific and immediate. When John F Kennedy Junior’s plane crashed into the ocean off Martha’s Vineyard in 1999, the US Navy called Kirkpatrick.

“They would not make the airplane lift off of the bottom of the ocean until the shipboard crane’s load line had had been pressure lubricated with our JU120 System,” recalled Mr Kirkpatrick. “They had to make certain every precaution had been taken to

avoid a wire rope failure mishap. Due to the urgency of the situation we shipped a new system overnight without paperwork or a purchase order.”

The success for any sales enterprise, said Mr Kirkpatrick, is reflected by the volume of after sale repeat business from customers. “We are well ahead of the curve in this area, with customers we have served for over 30 years.”

“We deal with some of the largest corporate entities in the world and also some of the smallest. All are treated equally. We will not sell them a product or system without completely analysing their application to make certain that that system is the correct one for their requirement.

Loyalty and Delivery

“Many times we have turned down an order for a more expensive system when a smaller one was more in sync with their application. I know that the loyalty shown by our friends and customers is not based on price but on our ability to react quickly implementing appropriate quality care, and making certain they are properly supported operationally and financially.

“This equates to loyalty, return business, and their knowing when they call our offices they are getting straight answers.”

Heading a dynamic \$4m turnover enterprise, Mr Kirkpatrick looks to major growth ahead.

“I see our business doubling in size over the next three or four years if it continues on the path it’s currently on. And new proprietary technology being introduced in the next year will only enhance the momentum.

“Our reputation as a dependable and knowledgeable supplier for wire rope lubrication systems and environmental wire rope lubricants has always been known in the market and will continue to be so.” ■

