

Sensitizing the Asian market in safety matters

Rieckermann Group provides maintenance for VENTEX® valves in Asia



Regular checks are imperative in order to ensure that explosion protection products function smoothly and without interruptions. There is no doubt that the maintenance of safety-relevant components in plants is highly important for the protection of employees and products. Errors due to insufficient maintenance work can, in case of emergency, cause huge economic damages and endanger the integrity of staff and equipment. The manufacturers and distributors of explosion protection products are aware of this responsibility. That is why RICO Sicherheitstechnik AG and the Rieckermann Group cooperate

since 2016. The latter provides, among other things, the maintenance of VENTEX® valves in the entire Asian region. Aleksandar Agatonovic, deputy CEO of RICO and Sebastian Daldrup, Head of Technical Services at the Rieckermann Group answered our questions regarding important safety topics.

Why is the topic of maintenance in Asia of particular importance so that a partner company had to be entrusted with the task?

Aleksandar Agatonovic: First of all, it is generally important that the valves are maintained regularly –

whether it is in Asia or any other part of the world. Many companies that work in the powder-processing industry are located in Asia. This market recorded a double-digit growth and became more and more interesting in the last years for us as explosion protection component suppliers. Hence, the need for subsequent services and maintenance works has grown correspondently. Having a partner on-site is also an advantage – not least because of financial economic reasons. The employees are domestic in said market and are therefore able to provide quick and competent help. This was our aim and we found the ideal partner with Rieckermann.

Mr. Daldrup, what characterizes Rieckermann as the right partner?

Sebastian Daldrup: We operate for over 125 years now on the market and function as industrial solutions suppliers. We have been focused on the Asian market since our foundation. Rieckermann provides an all-around carefree package: A customer needs for instance a product line, we provide the complete execution of

the project – starting with the engineering and the component acquisition, the development, the commissioning, to the maintenance. Safety technical components that are implemented are a part of that. Explosion isolation solutions are correspondently a part of the package, since our customer base is set, among others, in the powder-processing industry. The worldwide proven VEN-TEX® explosion isolation valves of RICO are commonly used here. Therefore, it was obvious that we operate as certified service partner for RICO products. Not least due to our long-time experience, we are able to conduct service and maintenance work in a professional manner.

Experience alone probably does not qualify the maintenance of certain products, does it?

Sebastian Daldrup: The qualification and expertise for these special services have been acquired by our employees by means of intensive



trainings in Herisau (CH) at the RICO HQ. We flew in employees from Asia, since the Asian region is the focus for our cooperation, so that they could take on the topic on-site. The knowledge was deepened in another training session, in order to accelerate the main market further. We maintain in Asia own country branches, which transport our European standards in the market. Especially the topic safety plays a decisive role and needs to become more present for plant users. Our team had already experiences with safety products in the field of dust explosion production before the cooperation with RICO. This knowledge was intensified with the specialization of all VENTEX® valve types.

Aleksandar Agatonovic: As manufacturers of the valves, we searched for a partner, who was not completely without prior knowledge regarding our products. We pursuit the aim with each sale that our valves have a very long lifetime and fulfill its safety functions throughout their complete life cycle. Many operators in Asia neglect unfortunately the mandatory maintenance intervals, since we are talking about a passive system with-

out external power, which works reliably during normal operation.

It is a fallacy to draw such a conclusion from the reliability of the product! We also want to set a position at this point and show presence to ensure that our components work optimally in case of emergency within the scope of the plants or products.

This means that the safety standards for plants will be maintained on a consistent level due to the cooperation?

Sebastian Daldrup: That would be great – this is currently unfortunately not the case. The prescribed maintenance intervals are not called into question in Europe for instance. In Asia, it is generally somewhat different. Here, a hard piece of work is still ahead of us. We also endeavor to raise awareness in this matter and to obtain a permanent safe production environment. The valves need to be inspected annually in order to ensure the functionality and maintenance intervals are set on every 5 years. There is no liability in legal terms for the supplier, if these instructions are not followed. There should be no negotiation margin regarding the topic

of safety. Therefore, the manufacturer specifications should be fulfilled 100% - in other words: regular maintenance is mandatory to fulfill the obligations of the plant operator. We inform on-site, in order to support our Asian customers and try to convince the operators regularly that shorter intervals raise the safety. The awareness is unfortunately missing at too many places. We see usually production environments, in which no maintenance work is conducted. I explain it to the people in charge in such cases with an example: I ask them to consider, if the airbag of car should be neglected during its inspection.

Aleksandar Agatonovic: We are currently working on a list, on which we collect the companies in Asia who

are using VENTEX® valves. The colleagues from Rieckermann are getting by and by active, in order to offer services and maintenance contracts and to push the

safety topic in this way. This is of course very close to our hearts, since our complete company philosophy is based on it. We are safety technology manufacturers in different areas and would not develop and distribute them, if it wasn't our concern that the products are in perfect condition at all times to prevent worst case scenarios best possible.

Sebastian Daldrup: In fact, many plant operators do not know what safety technical components are used - therefore they do not know that they have VENTEX® valves. But only because they are functioning reliably in normal operation that does not mean that there is no need for examination.

Which advantages result from your cooperation for the clients in Asia?

Sebastian Daldrup: A decisive advantage is that we work via local subsidiaries all over Asia. For the users this means faster response times, no language barriers and lower costs. We have overall more than 140 service engineers who perform repair and maintenance works. It should be stressed that we set European



standards in our local subsidiaries! Every employee in Asia is trained in accordance with said specifications and implement them strictly.

Aleksandar Agatonovic: From our side it needs to be said that the possibility to be able to send out technicians that are trained by RICO and are domestic in the different regions is a gain. Because these do not only perform the mandatory standards, they also have a completely different insight into the market, on its needs and customs. Many Rieckermann employees build quickly a good connection to the customer and foster the contacts in this way better.

How is, in your assessment, the explosion market in Asia generally positioned?

Aleksandar Agatonovic: The need for explosion protection products is big, our sales in this field raise constantly. We were able to multiply our direct sales within the past 5 years. We registered a great plus especially in the pharmaceutical and food industry. There are many important trade fairs in Asia regarding said industries, in which we took part for the first time in 2017 due to the high

demand. We were also here able to generate new contacts where there is a real need regarding explosion isolation solutions.

Sebastian Daldrup: The market grows but has, in my opinion, definitely more potential. The explosion protection topic has still a too low significance in Asia. Internationally acting companies located in Asia show, on the other hand, high standards. We see in local companies that the awareness is growing slowly but steady. There is still a lot of room for improvement and we are working to also establish here high safety standards. We are, to this end, in contact with RICO for further development of the service products to find the best possible solution for the customers.