

**MID  
ATLANTIC  
CONCRETE  
EQUIPMENT**

# CONCRETE ANSWERS

**100%  
SOLUTIONS**



## Berks Products

Diverse & Growing



*Big Plant On Campus: This CON-E-CO SLP-CM, erected in 1996 by Jay Robinson, is twice the size of most batch plants.*

**W**hat has five plants, two quarries and a barn...and makes its customers feel cool? Berks Products. The privately held company based in Reading, PA produces high-quality ready-mixed concrete at five locations, but also sells residential and commercial building products, delivers fuel oil, and sells and repairs HVAC systems.

Founded in 1896 by James O'Rourke and Horace Fehr to sell wood, coal and feed, the company expanded and eventually consolidated all its businesses under the name Berks Products. Today the family-owned business is a 325-employee organization that serves Berks, Lehigh and Montgomery counties, with a fleet of over 300 vehicles that includes 82 ready-mix trucks and four cement tankers.

Concrete plants are located in Allentown, Gilbertsville, Kutztown, Nazareth and Ontelaunee. Two quarries, one in Ontelaunee and one in Kutztown,

supply the concrete operations with the aggregates they need.

The most important of the company's locations is its Ontelaunee, PA campus, which at 500 acres has room not only for its largest plant (a CON-E-CO SLP-CM) but also the precast division, the building products division—and some day, corporate offices as well, according to Bill Seiders, vice president of ready mix, quarry and fleet operations.

Erected in 1996, the CON-E-CO SLP-CM is twice the size of most plants. Its specs include:

- Two 36 inch conveyors feeding two turnheads.
- 475 tons of overhead aggregate storage in six compartments.
- 752 tons of storage in four cement silos.
- Two material handling systems with a total of eight in-ground hoppers each holding 125 tons of stone and sand.

*(See "Berks Products," page 2)*

## Preventive Maintenance

### Spring Cleaning Tips

**N**ow that spring has sprung and the snow has melted, it's time to get serious about cleaning, because:

- It's easier to detect problems with clean equipment.--
- It's easier to repair clean equipment.
- It's easier to identify clean parts (what was that model number again?)
- Clean equipment runs cooler than dirty equipment.
- Plus, a clean, well-kept workplace has the intangible benefit of boosting employee morale (and the tangible benefit of impressing customers who stop by).

Here are some tips from Jay Robinson on spring cleaning:

1. Inspect the dust collector ductwork for buildup from use of steam and hot water. Take it apart and look—usually most of it is at the pickup point, because you're picking up steam and cement at the same place.

2. Hot water systems that have been working all winter should be drained. Inspect for buildup of

*(See "Preventive Maintenance," page 2)*



# President's Letter

Is it April already? Seems like we just got back from January's World of Concrete show in Las Vegas, which was a record breaker with over 90,000 attendees and more than 1,700 exhibitors.

It was a big success for Mid Atlantic Concrete Equipment too, and I want to thank everyone who took the time to stop by our booth. We enjoyed many lively conversations on topics ranging from batch plants to bass fishing.

In February, we attended the Manufactured Concrete Products Exposition in Orlando, which also set records for attendance and square footage. It's proof that the precast sector is thriving, and we're glad to be active in that area, and to be a member company in the National Precast Concrete Association (NPCA).

We are also members of the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, because we believe national associations provide tremendous value to their members. Besides bringing together manufacturers and producers, they generate a wealth of training, research, and standards information that

you just can't get from individual companies. They also issue certifications, and their government affairs divisions advocate for the entire industry.

I highly recommend attending at least one yearly conference. I've never met anybody who didn't think they were worth the investment. For example, several sessions on safety and maintenance could very likely prevent costly downtime this year for concrete producers who attended, took notes, and went home with a different perspective on their operation.

We've added new pages to our Web site and recommend that you browse it at your convenience at [www.maconcrete.com](http://www.maconcrete.com). As you know from our last newsletter, our acquisition of the New York and New England territory is exceeding all our expectations. We were not quite prepared for the volume of inquiries and requests for visits.

Fortunately, our representative in that territory, Ray Peterson, has been working hard to meet every one of you. Ray, along with his wife Melody and their three children, resides in Danville, Vermont. You'll find Ray extremely helpful and willing to do whatever it takes to help you keep your plant running at peak efficiency. He can be reached directly at 888-378-6214 or [rpeterson@maconcrete.com](mailto:rpeterson@maconcrete.com).

Thanks again for your continued support. We look forward to serving you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Jay

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office/cell/fax 888-378-6210

## Berks Products

(Continued from Page 1)

Water heating is handled by a single 25,000 gallon Infern-O-Therm tank and single oil-fired burner, equipped for summer with a dual-compressor Carrier chiller unit.

"It's big enough for everything we produce," says Jim Reber, plant manager and sales for the Ontelaunee plant. "It uses hot water stored overnight and then does a good job of maintaining temperature during the day." Production at the plant averages 160,000 yards per year. "We can produce 200 yards per hour... just coasting," says Reber.

Before Ontelaunee, all Berks Products concrete production was dry batch. "Ontelaunee was our first central mix plant," says Bill Seiders. "Wet batch plants are more maintenance, but the benefits outweigh the disadvantages in terms of better productivity, and less wear and tear on the mixers. We found all of those things to be true...also customers like the consistency."

The Berks Products quality control lab, started in 1989 with one employee, further pleases

customers—a conclusion based on customer surveys, says Seiders. Today's staff of five designs and adjusts mixes, tests air, slump and temperature, adds admixtures on site, runs yield tests, and offers a variety of other services. Although most of their work is in-house, the lab serves outside customers as well.

The precast department, also sited at Ontelaunee, makes concrete basement entry stairwells, several kinds of concrete blocks and pads for A/C units. "We've been doing precast since the early 1980s," says Seiders. "We started it up at Kutztown and moved it down here in 2004." Two pole barns house the PermEntry machines.

Speaking of barns, the site of Berks Products' other CON-E-CO plant at Kuhnsville (Allentown) is unusual—it's inside one. Originally a dry batch plant owned by QC Concrete, it was converted in 1993 to a CON-E-CO central mix plant. "It was built with LO-PRO components to provide the most storage capacity inside the existing barn-type structure," says Jay Robinson, president of CON-E-CO dealer Mid Atlantic Concrete Equipment. "We used the existing silos from the original plant."

Sounds easier than moo-ving out.

## Preventive Maintenance

(Continued from Page 1)

minerals on the fire tube, and look for sediment on the bottom of the tank.

Those fire tubes are 18 inches in diameter, and we've seen over the years where they have dirt half way up the fire tube! That's obviously inefficient and you can damage the fire tube from overheating. While you're there, change the oil filter and nozzle. You can take a look at the electrodes, but they are easily replaced on failure.

3. A caved-in silo can ruin your day, so check silo filter vents and pressure relief valves. Reseat the valves if necessary and make sure all silo filter vents are clean. If you really want to know what your silo dust emissions are, put lights near all filter exhausts to highlight any visible dust emissions. This works especially well during non-daylight hours.



# MID ATLANTIC VENDOR PROFILE



## 40 Years of Hot Water:

Bobby Giannetti Jr., president of Infern-O-Therm, builds sturdy, efficient water heaters (and chillers) for concrete production.



*Infern-O-Therm President Bobby Giannetti Jr.*

*In the four decades since Robert Giannetti Sr. and a partner began building a new kind of water heater for concrete production, customers of the family-owned firm have become more sophisticated.*

*Today, most concrete producers understand the difference between a water heater and a boiler. The simple design pioneered by Infern-O-Therm warms water with a fire tube in direct contact with the water. This differs from a boiler in that there is no "process water" being circulated under pressure.*

*Since the tank is an unpressurized vessel, it can be maintained more easily by the user. Also, there is no need for certified boiler inspections or special operating permits, the cost (initial and maintenance) is lower than that of a boiler, and plumbing is simplified.*

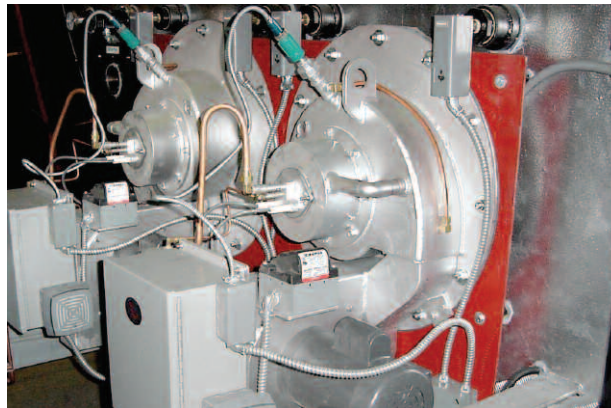
*But these days, concrete producers are comparison-shopping on the finer points, such as:*

- Overall efficiency (a product of combustion efficiency and heat transfer efficiency)
- Multi-fuel capability
- Low-maintenance design
- Long life materials

*Talking about these things with Bobby Giannetti, Jr. kicks his enthusiasm into—pardon the expression—full afterburner mode.*

"Infern-O-Therm is a full vertical manufacturer," he says. "We build every component in house." In contrast, competitors' designs are not purpose-built: "We are the only heating manufacturer who does its own burner, designed specifically for direct fire tube heating."

Giannetti seems especially proud of the unique burner design, which is protected by U.S. patent (and illustrated by the company logo). In it, a



baffle located five feet from the base of the flame and made of silica-based refractory material forms a cloverleaf-shaped aperture that imparts turbulence to the flame within the fire tube.

The refractory material is heated to nearly 1,800 degrees, which along with the turbulence is claimed to promote complete combustion. "Think of it as a water hose," he says. "The water flows slowly until you put a nozzle on it. Now envision the spray in a cloverleaf pattern."

Durability is also a point of pride with Giannetti. "The Infern-O-Therm burner is manufactured using 1/4 and 3/8 inch steel plate, rolled, fitted and machined," he says. "Our competitors use sheet metal." Housed within a weatherproof enclosure, the IOT burner can run for years with no air adjustment and just periodic oil filter, nozzle and electrode changes.

### Waste Oil Burner

A recently introduced waste oil burner features a simplified heat exchanger. "Our design has a cleanout that is simple enough for minimal downtime," says Giannetti. Some concrete producers rely on the waste oil burner exclusively, since waste oil can be purchased at about half

the price of #2 fuel oil. Also for budget-minded customers, Infern-O-Therm manufactures a series of heaters called Econ-O-Hot that uses a mechanical float rather than electronic to sense water level.

Infern-O-Therm tanks range in size from 1,000 to 30,000 gallons. An IOT-built automatic water flow control system provides a steady supply of hot water for a day's concrete production. In a typical use scenario, water fills the tank at night. When it is drawn down

the next day, a limit switch opens and water moves through the water control manifold at a rate that does not reduce the temperature of water in the tank. Sized correctly, the tank should be nearly depleted at the end of the day's production.

Infern-O-Therm introduced a water chiller five years ago, and also has produced truck-mounted water heating units for customers desiring hot water at the job site. Other products include asphalt heaters and industrial heaters.

### Tanks for the Memories

Back in the 1960s, Bobby's dad used to build tanks in a field outside a sheet metal shop, and the burners inside. Things are a little different now. "I have a 25,000 square foot manufacturing facility here in New Jersey," says Giannetti. "We produce almost 100 units a year, shipped to 48 states and Hawaii, South America, Central America, the Virgin Islands and Canada."

Looking to the future, Giannetti is reluctant to reveal the direction of current research. "We are working on ways to increase efficiency. Say that."

Done. ■

# CONCRETE ANSWERS

SPRING 2007

Mid Atlantic Concrete Equipment  
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## Inside!

### BERKS PRODUCTS SUCCESS STORY

Diverse and growing

### HOW ASSOCIATIONS BENEFIT YOUR PLANT



### 21ST CENTURY PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

Increase plant efficiency with spring cleaning tips

## MID ATLANTIC CONCRETE EQUIPMENT

In this Spring 2007 issue of *Concrete Answers* we talk about the success of our long-time customer, Berks Products. This Reading, PA-based company has depended on CON-E-CO quality and Mid Atlantic service for many years—things we work hard to bring every customer.

Jay

Jay Robinson, President  
Mid Atlantic Concrete Equipment, Inc.



### MAINTENANCE TIPS

Download daily, weekly, monthly and yearly maintenance schedules at: [maconcrete.com/downloads](http://maconcrete.com/downloads)



### PARTS. PARTS. PARTS!

Remember, we sell parts for all makes and models of equipment. Have a parts emergency? Call our Hotline: **888-378-6237.**

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# Partners

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### Stationary & Portable Batch Equipment

Mid Atlantic Concrete clients benefit from our exclusive relationship with North America's leading supplier of portable and stationary batch plants, **CON-E-CO**, an **Oshkosh Truck Company**, providing quality since 1957.

### Automation & Observation Systems

**Control Solutions** provides efficient automated batch control systems. **Bosch** provides state-of-the-art observation and security. Additional resources include **Eagle Pneumatic** tube delivery ticket transfer systems, **Hydronix** microwave moisture measuring equipment, and **Monitor Technologies** offers material level monitoring.

**Command Alkon** offers batching, dispatching, mobile signaling, quality control, mix design and accounting products (*currently available*)



only with the purchase of a new CON-E-CO plant).

### Concrete Reclaim Systems

**BIBKO** provides a 100% concrete recycle system for ready mix and precast concrete producers.

### Bulk Handling Equipment

**WAM Inc.** provides equipment for bulk material handling, dust filtration, solids-liquid separation, and mixing & vibration technology. **Teka** has offered innovative mixing technology for decades. **Merts Inc.** provides parts for all makes of plants.

### Water Heating & Cooling

**Infern-O-Therm** provides the most reliable, energy-efficient hot water storage



systems and chillers on the market today. **Ludell** provides direct-fired instantaneous hot water heaters, and waste water heat recovery.

### Trucks & Mobile Equipment

**Trans-Flo Corporation** provides pneumatic bulk transfer systems and tanker unloaders. **McNeilus**, an **Oshkosh Truck Company**, offers concrete mixer trucks.

### Design/Build

**Horst Construction** has provided the Northeast with industrial and commercial construction solutions for over a century.

### Leasing

**Town & Country Leasing** provides affordable ways to acquire the major equipment you need.

