

Tablet maker keeps powder out of the manufacturing environment

Australia's largest contract manufacturer of generic prescription pharmaceuticals upgraded its waste disposal system in 2004 to maintain best practice standards in the vital area of occupational health and safety.

Alphapharm, at its large manufacturing plant in Brisbane that employs up to 550 people in a round-the-clock operation five days a week, revamped with new generation technology the way it handles dusty waste from tableting and capsulation.

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Within six processing rooms where compression or blending takes place, the company previously relied on what was hitherto optimum technology. It had been running a standalone Torit-DCE self contained dust extraction unit in each room, but now a single, integrated system handles all extraction and provides an added benefit by safely collecting and storing all waste in an external unit.

Project Engineer at Alphapharm, Mr Vince Broom, says the company's commitment to operating a clinical operation drives the integrity of its sterile product as well as excellent standards in working conditions for its employees.

"Our OH&S operation is geared to using the latest technology, so for that reason we replaced an existing Torit-DCE dust extraction system with new generation Torit-DCE equipment," said Mr Broom. "The greatest challenge was to modify the new standard Torit-DCE collector to fit an existing external waste compressor. Engineers from supplier Donaldson Torit-DCE did this so that it integrated perfectly and created a scenario where our internal operations are virtually free of any major dust build up.

The system installed by Donaldson Torit-DCE is a Dalamatic DU30 dust extraction and containment system capable of extracting 24,000m³ per hour simultaneously from the six tableting and blending rooms.

"Staff find working conditions cleaner than ever before and they appreciate that now there is no dust extractor and enclosure in the room with them, with the only visible element of the new system being a portable manifold that plugs into a hole in the wall," said Mr Broom. "The external collection unit is seen as a space saver and can survive in all weather conditions.

"Eventual disposal of powder is also very simplified. Whereas the previous generation technology relied on relatively frequent disposal of powder collected in cardboard boxes, now it is all pneumatically carried to the external compressor and easily transported by forklift to an incinerator where we deposit the unwanted material simply and evenly."

