Sealed Air’s control system for its packing foam process includes Siemens PLCs, Intellution Dynamics iFIX SCADA software running custom batch software from WEI Inc., and Microsoft Windows NT inventory management system.

Manual to automated control
Ten years ago, the plant was a “glorified filling station” with almost all manual controls, which required extensive intervention by eight employees over two shifts to process and package the foam’s ingredients, according to Mark Chateauneuf, plant manufacturing director. The plant’s control system was proprietary, based on an Intel RMX processor. It also was cumbersome, prone to crashing, and designed and maintained by only one person.

Three tiers yield results
WEI subsequently designed a three-tiered system. At the control level, it implemented a plant-floor system using three Siemens programmable logic controllers. On the SCADA level, Sealed Air picked Intellution Dynamics iFIX software to run WEI’s custom batch management software.

“We’d download a recipe into the system, but someone would have to manually weigh ingredients and fill out tracking forms. Actual control of the process was done through manual and pneumatic valves and single-loop controllers,” says Mike Westkamper, president of WEI Inc. (Old Saybrook, Conn.). WEI developed Sealed Air’s process control and inventory tracking systems.

In 1992, Sealed Air implemented a WEI-developed supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system using MS-DOS-based Fix DMACS software from Intellution (Foxborough, Mass.). In 1997, the Sealed Air asked WEI to implement a SCADA system based on Microsoft’s Windows NT.

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