

Naval Base Automates Control of Forklift Fleet With Hyster Tracker

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Babcock International Group has automated control of a complex materials handling operation in Plymouth, UK, using Hyster Tracker. The fleet management system helps manage 80 forklifts and other trucks, including a newly introduced VNA machine, deployed in various roles across the Devonport Royal Dockyard and Naval Base site in Plymouth.

Babcock provides 24/7 support for the largest naval base in Western Europe, where many of its 80 Hyster® forklift trucks are operating on a multi-shift basis. For convenient, automated fleet management, the trucks have all been fitted with the Hyster Tracker telematics system.

“Our trucks have diverse roles across the site as we have almost every type of materials handling operation here, from ship maintenance to logistical ship support,” says Mark Jackson, Logistics Centre of Excellence Manager, Babcock International Group. “Using the Hyster Tracker™ telematics system has automated control of our fleet, helping to support our existing processes which focus on safety and efficiency.”

The Babcock fleet includes Hyster® warehouse equipment ranging from reach trucks, electric counterbalance and pallet trucks through to various ICE trucks including higher capacity lift trucks. A new Hyster® Very Narrow Aisle (VNA) machine has also been introduced to work in a store which has racking over 10m high, alongside existing Hyster® VNA equipment.

With several hundred drivers, many of which are multi-skilled to operate various equipment within the fleet, Hyster Tracker ensures that only appropriately trained drivers can use the equipment by presenting their RFID site security/ID card.

The Hyster Tracker system transmits a range of data from the trucks via GSM which can be accessed via a secure online portal, HysterTracker.com. The portal allows clear, customisable reports, tables and graphs to be viewed and created. The data helps managers to enhance productivity, control costs and optimise their fleet using accurate business intelligence.

“We can see trends and peaks,” says Mark. “Some trucks are used less frequently for very specialised operations, and the reporting helps us to manage asset decisions according to over or under-utilisation.”

The system can also enforce pre-shift safety checks requiring the operator to complete a series of verifications on a control panel before a truck can be started. It reassures Babcock that drivers are complying with all legal requirements to carry out appropriate checks before starting work. For convenience, the questions included in the pre-use checks can be edited and managed via the secure online portal.

“Our focus is on maximum truck availability and reliability in a port environment which can be tough on trucks,” says Mark, explaining that should any issues be identified in the pre-shift check or through the fault code monitoring feature, Hyster Tracker ensures they can be addressed immediately, helping to reduce potential downtime. Automated email alerts can also be produced in the event of an impact to help investigation and management of any incidents that could occur.

In addition, the idle shutdown function is used to power off trucks after a pre-determined amount of time if the equipment is tracked as idle or unattended, helping to monitor and reduce fuel and power costs.

Prior to introducing the latest fleet, Mark visited the factory in Craigavon, Northern Ireland, where Hyster® counterbalance equipment is manufactured. Sea salt, seagulls and weather extremes are tough on trucks, particularly for those parked on the sea wall, so the build quality of the Hyster® equipment is very important. Features such as oil immersed brakes have helped Babcock maintain maximum availability of the fleet in tough and challenging applications.

“Babcock’s operations require a diverse fleet across a diverse site,” says David Worboys, Corporate Account Manager from Briggs Equipment, the Hyster distribution partner for the UK, which has two engineers based permanently on site to provide support.

“Working closely with Babcock to understand these unique needs means we have been able to identify the tough Hyster® trucks that are best for each different application, while helping to maintain efficiency and manage costs.”

Babcock were winners of the FLTA Safe Site Award 2013 as a result of the safety initiatives implemented, including the use of telematics on the site.

Source: Hyster ®

TRUCKS