



CASE STUDY: DUAL SHAFT AIR MIZER® | CONTINUOUS MIXER

AN EFFECTIVE SHAFT SEAL FOR CLOSE PROXIMITY SHAFTS

THE DOMINO EFFECT OF A LEAKING MIXER

In February 2012, a large Midwestern chemical plant contacted Inpro/Seal® seeking a solution for a leaking continuous mixer. The mixer was using packing to seal the shaft, but the seal was proving ineffective. Packing uses contact on the shaft as its sealing mechanism. Over time, packing wears at the point of contact due to friction. When the packing wore out on this mixer, it opened a gap and allowed powder to leak out of the mixer onto the floor and surrounding equipment. The powder needed to be washed away periodically, causing water to enter the application and damage the components. The leaking mixer increased total cost of operation, decreased reliability and created a hazardous working environment.

AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION FOR A UNIQUE APPLICATION

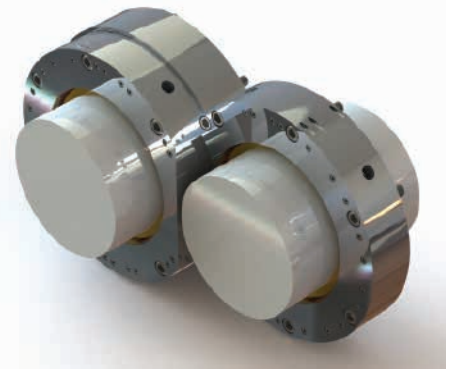
For standard mixer applications, a Smooth Bore Air Mizer® would be used to seal the shaft. The Smooth Bore Air Mizer is a non-contacting permanent shaft seal that uses a small amount of air, gas or water pressure to create a positive purge along the shaft to effectively seal product in the vessel. This proven technology has been installed on many mixers around the world with great success. However, the continuous mixer at this chemical plant was anything but standard.

The leaking mixer had two shafts positioned very close to each other. The typical dual shaft Air Mizer configuration has a separate seal on each shaft, each with a flat side. The design has a limited cross section between the two seals and neither seal extends beyond the halfway point between the shafts. The shafts at the chemical plant did not allow for this configuration, however, as there was not enough room between the shafts.

The Inpro/Seal engineering team needed to think outside the box to provide an effective sealing solution to this unique application. The right technology was there; it was a matter of applying it in a new way. After months of product design, an innovative solution was developed that created enough space to seal both shafts. The design called for two Smooth Bore Air Mizers with a staggered orientation. Operation and performance of the seal was identical to the standard Smooth Bore Air Mizer with the exception of the placement of the seals. The first sealing interface and an adapter plate were mounted against the housing, while the second sealing interface was mounted to the adapter. This design allowed the seals to overlap, giving them enough cross-sectional space to operate correctly. The symmetrical design of the solution made orientation a non-issue and allowed for easy installation and repair, if needed.

A RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The seal was manufactured and installed in October 2012 and used a nitrogen gas purge to seal both shafts. Since installation, the seal has been running continuously with no problems, reducing product loss, downtime and costs. The plant has been pleased with the design and has told the company's other facilities about the success. Since then, the staggered dual shaft Air Mizer has been installed on other applications and has become a standard solution in Inpro/Seal's growing Air Mizer product line.



Inpro/Seal® staggered dual shaft Air Mizer® for mixer applications with close proximity shafts