



CASE STUDY 5

Z3 Welder

Northern Indian Commuter Trains (NICTD)
Dave Timmons

Mechanical Management staff has reported that the rail car welding project time has been cut in half. The Z3 Welder did play a part in this improvement.

About the Contributor: Dave Timmons NICTD

I was born and raised in Chicago-land Northwest Indiana. I am 42 years old. My hobbies include music, specifically I play guitar, bass and drums. I enjoy hiking, hunting, fishing and camping. As a railroader, I started out in the Mechanical Dept. as a certified Engineer and Conductor. In this position, I would move equipment around the terminal, switch cars in and out of the shop building and perform pre-trip inspections and brake tests. I did spend 3 years with the Gary IN Fire Dept. Where I became a firefighter, EMT, rescue specialist and Haz-Mat Technician.

With NICTD, blasting is part of our rail car maintenance. Blast cabinets are used for parts rehabbing. We do use large sand blasters for our heavy welding project too. (Same project as listed above.) That is why we also use the RPB Nova 2000 blast hoods.

Q: Before you used the RPB Z3 Welding helmet, what challenges did you face?

A: Like with any PPE, no one really wants to wear it. There has to be some other draw... some other tangible benefit to wearing it. In some cases, PPE manufacturers try to make PPE look cool. Smog Hog fume grabbers and fans do not provide complete protection from welding fumes without the use of a respirator. Respirators are cumbersome to wear and often hard to get a good seal for best protection. They provide very limited protection for those who wear a certain amount of facial hair. Many of our mechanical personnel and track welders, while professional in their trade, are the beard wearing, rough-cut type. (Think Duck Dynasty and ZZ Top.) Staying OSHA compliant with facial hair requirements and annual fit testing is a chore for anyone.

Q: What was the turning point? Was there a specific incident that drove you to change? When did you find out about RPB?

A: There are two things that drove me to look into air supplied welding hoods. First, our rail cars were in need of some heavy maintenance. The structure is fairly intricate with the need for close-up, detailed welding. The shop area is very large and is not air conditioned; making respirator use very uncomfortable, not to mention the added stress to breathe through them.

Test it with just one employee and watch them tell the others how nice it is, sit back and watch the rest of the team jump on the Z3 Welder band wagon!

Purchasing the Z3 Welder gear not only keeps them cool and comfortable, it provides them with superior eye and respiratory protection. Another need was for our track welders. They often weld on appliances made with Manganese, a very unhealthy metal. They too often work in very hot conditions, so the Z3 Welder is fantastic for them as well, for all of the same reasons as the shop welders. I found out about RPB products by looking through old purchase order req's and seeing we had bought RPB products several years prior and decided to give RPB a shot. IDS Blast out of Indianapolis is a certified distributor of RPB products. Both RPB and IDS customer service have been a great help to me.

Q: What has changed since you began using the RPB Z3 Welding Helmet?

A: The welders are quite happy to be able to keep their facial hair! They also report being much more comfortable while working. The extra purchase of the optional cooling tube air flow adjustment valves helps a lot with this. Since using this product, I no longer get reports of "blow black stuff out of my nose when I get home." So they rest assured they are getting the best respiratory protection available.

Q: What numbers can you put on your savings?

A: While the initial investment in the supplied air system, including the Z3 Welder, may seem large at first, it has been well worth it. You cannot put a dollar figure on employee morale, or the

long term health benefits when you protect your employees from hazardous exposures. I can say that productivity has risen. Mechanical Management staff has reported that the rail car welding project time has been cut in half.

Q: If there is another company out there struggling with the challenges you faced before changing, what advice or recommendations would you give them?

A: Priority number one is this: PROTECT THE EMPLOYEE. If the investment seems too large, or you are worried about the employees not wanting to use the system, buy it for one to try. Test it with just one employee and watch them tell the others how nice it is, sit back and watch the rest of the team jump on the Z3 Welder band wagon!

Q: Our mission is to "protect you for life's best moments". In your own words, how do you feel we do that for yourself?

A: All I can say is, the testimonials speak loud and clear. As the Manager of Safety and Rules, I do not personally use the product, but I follow up with the workers. Every single one of them have been thrilled to have and use them. As mentioned above, there is no more "blowing black gunk out of my nose" anymore.