

# Pump speeds precast production

*Pump proves beneficial with wet slurry*

By Rosalie Johnston

Concrete pumps in precast plants may increase productivity and simplify plant operations. Pumps have been speeding up the transport of concrete at construction sites for many years, but their introduction to the plant is rather recent.

Precast plants that use concrete pumps generally do so to save on labor costs, production time, and maintenance. Plants without a pump often use a forklift and dump bucket to transport concrete. This method has drawbacks: it involves at least three laborers, is often sloppy, and consumes extra space. Tasks which earlier took all day to complete with a forklift and bucket can be finished in two hours with fewer workers using a pump.

## **Pump assists with retaining wall**

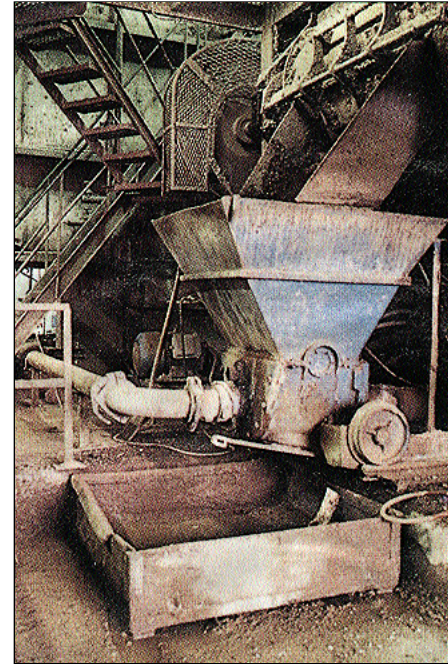
One precast plant that uses a pump in its work is Tremca, located just south of Montreal. Formed by a merger in 1985, Tremca manufactures a wide variety of concrete products ranging from steps to furniture. Serge Plante, vice president of operations, says Tremca decided to get involved in a very specific process of manufacturing concrete retaining wall blocks six years ago. For this application, the company uses a Fielding machine that runs only with a concrete pump. The machine functions by beginning with a liquid mix which becomes a dry unit after water is released through perfora-

tions in the machine's sides. This machine can accommodate many sizes of blocks from 18 to 30 inches long in different widths. Because a pump was a necessity, Tremca studied the available styles and purchased a pump from a Minnesota manufacturer.

Plante says the pump runs at least 40 hours a week, usually for 48 weeks a year. Plante has not experienced any problems with the pump and is most impressed with its reliability. He says, "The pump saves time and labor and supplies a continuous feed." To maintain the machine, employees keep the pump well oiled and check daily for leaks. Inspectors check the pump yearly and replace any necessary parts.

## **Pump performs specific function**

For Tremca's situation the pump has worked well. It is the perfect counterpart to the Fielding machine and, therefore, has assisted in Tremca's success. However, despite his company's success with the pump, Plante cautions precasters on their expectations. He believes a precast company should not expect a pump to improve its business unless there is a definite function the pump will assist in. Furthermore, precast producers must learn more about their pump before exposing it to different types of concrete. Certain pumps may not be able to handle particular

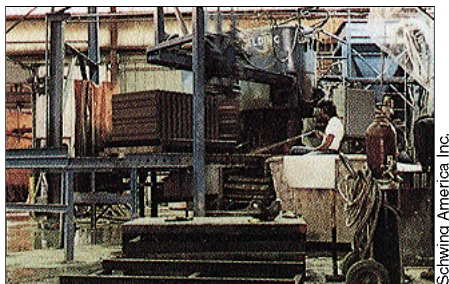


Schwing America Inc.

**Tremca uses its concrete pump to assist in the production of retaining wall block. The company has found the pump reliable and time-saving for this application.**

mixtures or textures.

Purchasing a pump will not generate new business on its own. In fact, depending on the type of work your company does, it may not even help. Plante stresses evaluating both the way your company uses the pump and the type of concrete you process. Tremca only works with a very wet slurry, 7 to 8 inch slump, because the process and type of machine they use require a wet mix. This, Plante believes may be partly responsible for his trouble-free experience with the pump.



**Tremca employee cleans pump and Fielding machine. Maintenance includes oiling and checking for leaks.**

As the people at Tremca recommend, before purchasing a pump consider the specific function it will perform and how this will benefit your company. ■

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