

SUPPLIER CLOSE-UP

Technology Spotlight

Transfer stations enable dual-pallet systems

Using one kind of pallet in your processing area and another for shipping is now easier with Load Transfer Stations from Columbia Machine.

Not all pallets are created equal. And neither are the systems that switch loads from one type of pallet to another.

Columbia Machine, Inc. has developed the Load Transfer Station (LTS) to gently and reliably transfer palletized loads between pallets. The LTS can transfer up to 50 loads per hour, without disrupting the load or requiring the forklift operator to leave his lift truck.

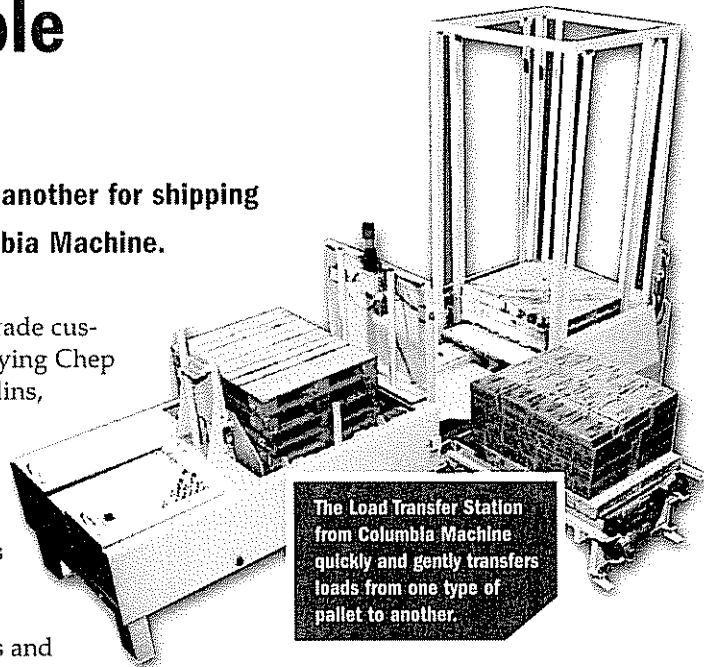
The pharmaceutical industry is one sector where pallet transfers are becoming common. A sterile environment is especially important in drug and medical device manufacturing. Many pharmaceutical companies are using either plastic or metal pallets in their process areas, which can be sterilized and are more durable. But a good plastic pallet, with the capacity to support loads typical to this industry, can cost five to 10 times more than a standard wood pallet. Because of the cost, the more expensive pallets must be kept at the plant as a captive or "in-house" pallet, with standard wood pallets used for shipping.

Transfers are also required when a customer wants goods delivered on a Chep or other non-standard pallet. Wal-Mart

and other important trade customers are now specifying Chep pallets, says Mike Collins, product manager for Columbia's load transfer division.

The three techniques commonly used to switch pallets are load inverters, clamp trucks and push-off devices. But all three methods have drawbacks. Inverters require the load to be turned upside down; the operator must then get off the truck and wrestle the pallet from the top of the load. Clamp trucks can crush products and cannot be used on some package types, such as bags, pails and drums. Push-off devices require the driver to ram one pallet out by forcing another under the load, which is slow and can damage both the pallets and the finished goods.

Columbia Machine has developed a complete line of Load Transfer Stations to allow operators to quickly switch loads from one pallet to another without leaving the fork truck. The standard LTS works in three stages. The loaded pallet is set on the carriage deck and the machine is cycled. As the carriage retracts, it gently pulls the pallet out from



The Load Transfer Station from Columbia Machine quickly and gently transfers loads from one type of pallet to another.

underneath the load, which is held in place by the backrest. Another cycle deposits the load onto a transfer plate, which then retracts, placing the load onto an alternate pallet.

The LTS line includes seven models with speeds ranging from 10 to 90 transfers per hour. The small, portable models, with pallet magazines, only require 5 x 8 feet for storage. Larger models include both pallet magazines to collect the pallets and dispensers to automatically dispense up to 20 pallets. These models also feature sheet feeders, and can handle plastic and wood pallets, deck sheets and slip sheets at speeds up to 50 loads per hour. F&DP

For more information

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