

Herzog Railroad Services Inc.: 'Constant engagement' key to development of the Automated Tie Down Car

For Herzog Railroad Services Inc., product research and development is not just talk — although talking plays a big role in the kinds of equipment and services the company provides, says Vice President of Marketing Tim Francis.

"We'll spend years researching and developing every product we offer. We talk to everyone, from those on the frontlines, right up to the VPs of engineering," he says. "We maintain a constant engagement with all of our customers."

It is that effort and engagement that helped play a role in the development of one of Herzog's most recent product: the Automated Tie Down Car. After years of discussion, development and collaboration, a Class I railroad will soon begin utilizing this car. It will be a signature moment for a product that responds to market demands for a safer, more cost-effective and timely rail train loading and unloading process, Francis says. And it is representative of Herzog's connection to its customers, he adds.

"The industry has been telling us that there is a need to develop a more efficient and safer way to unload," says Operations Manager Tim Shipley.

One of the Automated Tie Down Car's key features is

evident in its name: It's automated. Rather than employing manual labor to manually clamp and unclamp rails, rail unloading crews using the Automated Tie Down Car can operate the remote control clamps safely from the ground. The solar-powered clamps are also energy efficient and delays generally associated with manual clamps will be eliminated, according to Shipley.

The Automated Tie Down Car is particularly effective when it is used in tandem with Herzog's mobile Rail Unloading Machine (RUM), company officials say. Developed in 2004, the RUM is designed to mechanically unload continuous welded rail from conventional rail trains. It takes about 15 minutes for the RUM to be coupled to a rail train and begin pulling rails, Shipley says.

"There's no need for chains, joint bars or any contact between personnel and the rail," he says.

But when coupled with the Automated Tie Down Car, rather than a traditional tiedown car, the rail unloading process becomes even faster and easier, Shipley adds. Releasing rail from a traditional tiedown car, which can take several minutes, can be accomplished with the Automated Tie Down Car in about 10 seconds. And the manual clamps can prove difficult to operate when over tightened and in adverse weather conditions.

"When you put them both together, all you need is two Herzog operators," Francis says. "You can minimize work windows and spend that time running revenue freight, and this is the safest and most efficient way to unload rail trains."

The time savings enables capacity-strained railroads to direct manpower and resources in other directions, Francis says — critical at a time when railroads continue to pour billions of dollars into capital improvements.

And like other Herzog products, the Automated Tie Down Car will continue to be refined and improved, based in large part on customer feedback.

"The ideas will continue to go back and forth," Francis says. ■

Herzog Railroad Services Inc.'s Automated Tie Down Car features remote control, solar-powered clamps.

HERZOG RAILROAD SERVICES INC.



AS SEEN IN: The Information Leader for the Railroad Industry ■ DECEMBER 2014

Progressive
RAILROADING