

Chip Mill Drive Repair and Recovery Service

Fulghum Fibres, Dillwyn VA 8/11/2010

Standing from the crane tower, Tommy Oglesby could see the arch flash below as the main drive motor of the chip mill failed. The catastrophic failure would ground the stator. Even worse, there was no spare to be found, putting the entire mill down with a yard full of inventory. The situation was critical.

Just a few months earlier, the motor had endured damage from a single phase incident. Tommy Oglesby, Mill Manager and 18 year veteran of Fulghum Fibres, contacted Mitchell Skinner of Industrial Motor Services. "IMS sent a team out from Raleigh NC that night and got right on it. Working with their sister shop in Richmond VA, they actually removed several coils in the field, and had us running the next day. I cannot tell you how much that meant." While very happy with the results of the surgical operation, Randy Elswick, the team foreman, would warn that the repair would only be temporary and the motor would fail again if not completely rewound. And on August 11th it happened.

Tommy again contacted IMS for help. The 1285 horsepower, 450 RPM unit was shipped to Raleigh NC. Over the next several days, exhaustive tests would be taken on the stator and rotor of the open frame GE motor. Coils were flown in from Birmingham to fill the 180 stator slots. Bill Hanson, winding team supervisor, would schedule work around the clock to complete the rewind. Though the motor was indeed an emergency rush, every step of the strict IMS specification had to be adhered to. Core loss testing, insulation, burn out, VPI, and mechanical specifications such as air gap had to be held to ensure a quality job. A chip mill is one of the most violent applications for an electric motor, and as it was assembled every technician was aware that this motor would be grinding mature southern yellow pine logs in a matter of hours.

Meanwhile in Dillwyn VA an entire chip mill lay idle. Tommy worked to ensure his crews had something to do as they anticipated startup. The mill typically accepts 85-120 tractor trailer loads of logs daily, and everyone from loggers to the local Ford dealership had been affected. "It was just never understood how much this chipper motor meant. The entire community was affected. Even the Birmingham Branch Railroad temporarily cut back service to Dillwyn until we could come back up." During lunch at a local restaurant, a waitress approached the field service team, strangers in the tight knit community, and asked "Are you guys here to fix that chip mill?"

The motor was reinstalled by Billy Flinchum, an experienced member of the IMS field team. Covering the unit with tarps, he worked in the rain until the roof could be placed back onto the building. After successful alignment and vibration testing, the motor was returned to service with acres of waiting logs to be chipped.

Tommy Oglesby later described his sense of relief. "I was so glad to see it back. That motor was our bread and butter. I cannot say enough about the people of Industrial Motor Services, especially Mitchell Skinner and Billy Flinchum. Everyone with IMS was there to help. They have the best attitude, and it means everything." Fulghum Fibres, Inc. specializes in owning and operating world-class chipping facilities for the pulp and paper industry-creating peace of mind and filling the outsourcing need. The Dillwyn VA mill produces an average output of 300,000 tons of chips annually for MeadWestvaco in Culpepper VA.

For over 80 years, Industrial Motor Services (IMS) has specialized in electric motor repair, aftermarket solutions, and asset management. From full diagnostic electrical testing to IEEE and NEMA specifications, to onsite service of rotational equipment, to complete redesign of electric motors, IMS has become a premier provider in the Southeast. Locations are in Richmond VA, Raleigh NC, and Augusta GA. For more information on our chip mill motor services call (919) 754-5106.