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**Italian Steel Pipe Manufacturer Tracks WIP Materials**

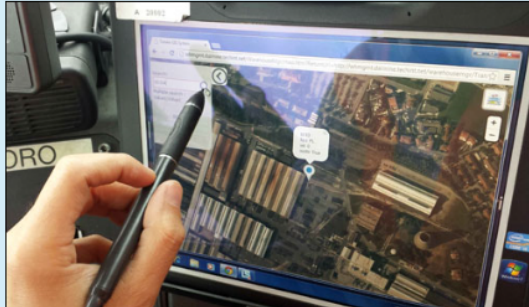
Since deploying an RFID system to track pallets in a large industrial area, TenarisDalmine has increased production efficiencies and inventory accuracy, and improved worker safety.

By Bob Violino

Tags: Automotive, Energy/Utilities, Logistics, Manufacturing, Supply Chain, Transportation

**Jun 09, 2014**—Tenaris is a global provider of steel pipe products and related services, which it offers through a network of manufacturing facilities, service yards and commercial offices worldwide. TenarisDalmine, the company's steel pipe operations in Italy, is that country's leading producer of seamless steel tubes for the automotive, energy and mechanical industries, with an annual production capacity of 950,000 tons of finished products.

To improve its production efficiency, TenarisDalmine wanted to be able to track, in real time, its work-in-progress (WIP) materials—on average, 20,000 tons of steel pipes daily—that move between 34 production lines via 500 metal storage pallets within a 370-acre industrial area. The pallets are moved by two types of trucks: One is a lifting platform made by Cometto, in which one or two pallets are loaded on top of the vehicle, while the other, from MAFI Transport Systems, tows industrial trailers.



TenarisDalmine wanted to be able to track, in real time, its work-in-progress materials—on average, 20,000 tons of steel pipes daily—that move between 34 production lines via 500 metal storage pallets within a 370-acre industrial area.

TenarisDalmine's existing process for tracking material was manual, which had a number of shortcomings, says Massimo Mariano, the company's product warehouses and service centers manager. Team leaders or drivers had to look for WIP material on an order or item basis, to assure the proper sequence was being fed into each of the company's 34 production lines. That involved searching for identification numbers that were painted on each pallet or trailer. Inevitably, there were breaks in production or shortages of materials due to inaccurate traceability. In addition to reduced productivity (because of the time it took to find the correct pallet), there were safety risks for those looking for WIP pipes in certain areas during operations.

To address the traceability challenge, TenarisDalmine deployed an RFID solution in November 2013 to automate the processes. Within three months, Mariano reports, the company was seeing benefits.

**A Solution in the Pipeline**

In early 2013, TenarisDalmine began exploring RFID solutions. It focused on RFID technology for three reasons, Mariano says: the huge physical area in which the tracking activities would be performed, the need for real-time location data in order to feed production lines without interruptions or delays, and the large number of objects to be tracked.

To help identify the best system, the company brought in LIUC Lab#ID, of the University Carlo Cattaneo-LIUC, an educational institution founded in 1991 by 300 Italian entrepreneurs. LIUC Lab#ID specializes in RFID industrial project design and implementation, according to Mariano, who served as the project leader. "Our main goal," he says, "was to find a partner that could speed up the technology selection and system design, and at the same time have a good knowledge of the system integrators market."

TenarisDalmine created a crossfunctional team with representatives from its supply chain, IT, industrial automation, production and help desk operations. It also included individuals from La CISA and CGI—two companies Tenaris subcontracted to manage mechanical activities related to transportation, and to repair and manage maintenance activities on pallets—as well as representatives from Lab#ID and Aton SpA (the firm selected as the project's systems integrator).

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