



IN-HOUSE HELMET TESTING SYSTEM SPEEDS UP PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

Media release, 30 April 2009, Nightside Test Design, Christchurch, New Zealand:

Nightside Test Design's expertise in helmet testing has led to the successful implementation of a new testing facility for emergency service helmet manufacturers, Pacific Helmets, enabling the testing process to be completed in New Zealand instead of offshore.

According to Nightside managing director Peter Brown, the new test facility has saved Pacific Helmets significant costs of sending helmets to the UK for testing, and reduced the test cycle from two months down to days – speeding up the development process for new helmet designs.

"Being able to implement a streamlined testing system, onsite, for Pacific Helmets has meant a significant improvement in their turnaround time, and has greatly speeded up their ability to innovate with new product designs," Brown says.

Pacific Helmets required assistance with developing a drop testing system for their helmets so they could complete batch testing in New Zealand before sending them overseas to clients. Previously helmets were sent to the UK for testing.

The company commissioned Nightside to put together a new computer based package for monitoring and drop testing their full range of helmets. The helmets need to meet up to four different international standards, and the testing was also required for Pacific Helmets' own internal R & D.

Nightside used National Instruments and LabView technology to create a system that accurately records and displays the impact of drop testing on each helmet. The system captures the data, which is displayed in graph form and also produces a print out that shows a Pass or a Fail for each of the four international standards that have to be met by the helmets the company manufactures.

Pacific Helmets' engineering manager Glen Spink says the system is extremely easy to use, with simple drop-down menus to navigate through the different standards and types of tests being done.

"After just one minute of instruction, our managing director was able to sit down and run a test using the new system," he commented. "With our old system, the staff running the testing were closeted away in their own little world that no-one else could run or understand."

As a direct result of the new system fully meeting all expectations, Pacific Helmets is now investing further in creating a stand alone test laboratory that will be a

significant improvement on the previous situation, where all testing for research and development purposes was being sent to a lab in the United Kingdom, costing many pounds per test, and taking up to two months before results came back. Now all testing can be done on the premises, enabling the product development cycle to be dramatically shortened.

Because of the successful outcome of this project, Pacific Helmets is now working with Nightside on other product testing projects.

Spink says that the benefits of working with Nightside include the fact that the company has delivered exactly what was asked for; the performance of the system has been flawless, and Nightside's staff have the ability to design systems that take into account the varying levels of expertise of Pacific Helmets personnel.

"Everything is very easy to use, even for people like myself who are not highly computer literate. We recently needed to make a modification to the system and Nightside were able to talk me through the required changes over the phone – it was done in an hour."

Spink commented that he would recommend Nightside to any other customers without hesitation.

"It's almost an anomaly to find a company that delivers so well on exactly what we required – it shouldn't be that way, but too often we pay thousands of dollars to experts who fail to deliver. Nightside have given us exactly what we needed, drawing on their experience with similar set ups and it has worked flawlessly from day one."

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About Nightside Test Design:

Founded in 2001, Nightside is one of New Zealand's largest specialised test engineering businesses, offering independent test engineering solutions to exporters and manufacturers throughout New Zealand.

Nightside's professional services cover the full product development lifecycle from design to production, including software testing, production testing, embedded development, industrial control, measurement and data logging.

Nightside clients include Meridian Energy, Airways Corporation, Dynamic Controls, AgResearch, Pacific Helmets, OBO, Eaton, Energy Intellect, General Cable, Industrial Research and Humanware.

Nightside came 47th in the 2008 Deloitte Unlimited Fast50, and won a 2008 EDN Award for "Best application of test or data acquisition equipment".

More information at www.nightside.co.nz

About Pacific Helmets:

Wanganui based Pacific Helmets has been owned by CEO David Bennett and his wife Marion since 1982. Initially the factory was built to manufacture motorcycle helmets for the Australasian market. By the mid 1980s Pacific Helmets had won the tender to produce fire helmets for the NZ Fire Service and now the product range is almost entirely focused on safety helmets for emergency services around the world. The company has a full quality assurance programme which is certified to ISO 9001.

Over the last 20 years, the company has built up a distribution network in approximately 50 countries, and in excess of 90% of its production is exported.

Pacific Helmets employs up to 80 staff and this year expects to manufacture around 70,000 helmets of all types, rising in the next two years to possibly 100,000 units.

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