

# RAPISTAN SYSTEMS RELY ON CI LASERS

*To Keep Pace with Production Demands Rapistan Systems, North America's largest material-handling systems supplier, and a division of Mannesmann Dematic, has been adding more equipment in order to keep up with increasing demand.*

The Grand Rapids, Michigan-based company manufactures and integrates a comprehensive range of material-handling products, including medium-to-heavy duty unit load and package-handling conveyor systems, automatic guided vehicle systems, automated storage/retrieval systems, automated electrified monorail systems and the software and controls to provide complete turnkey solutions.

"We process miles and miles of tubing and hundreds of tons of steel per month," said plant superintendent Dale Rosema. "We're definitely in a growth period."

## Versatility and Flexibility

An array of CINCINNATI machines helps Rapistan keep pace with growing demand. The plant currently operates four CL-707 Laser Systems, all outfitted to run cold-rolled and hot-rolled steel. A fifth CL-707 installed in July is equipped with a filtration system that will allow for cutting galvanized steel. The plant also uses four Form Master press brakes and three shears. "Our CINCINNATI lasers can lase as many parts as a shear will cut with half the manpower. They are much better at nesting parts for optimum material utilization," stated Rick Zelmer, plant engineering manager. "We produce components anywhere from 18 gauge up through 5/8 of an inch thickness on the lasers."

Rapistan produces some 12,000 individual, unique parts in runs ranging from one piece, just one time, up to thousands of the same piece annually.

"The biggest thing we get from our CINCINNATI lasers is the versatility to be able to produce an unusual part that our engineers design-and to be able to produce it the same day," Gary Heeringa, senior CAM programmer said. "We put our lasers through their paces."

Rapistan engineers and laser operators have even made a forming die on the laser. "We have come up with some creative demands," Heeringa said. "If you can draw it, you can come up with some

inventive items-your imagination is about the only limit as to what you can do."

## A Long Track Record

When the company began its search to acquire a laser system, it investigated two other laser makers in addition to CINCINNATI. Having already relied on other CINCINNATI equipment-namely, shears-for 30 years, "we stayed with CINCINNATI because of their reliability," said Tom Owczarzak, cutting department supervisor. "We chose CINCINNATI because of their track record."

The justification for purchasing that first laser was simple: "To eliminate all of the expensive hand operations we were doing, when we had two or three people working on a piece," Rosema said.

CINCINNATI's warranty on its lasers "has been very important," said Tom Wilcox, maintenance manager. "It covers big-money items we don't have to worry about."

Now with five lasers Rapistan has five laser operators on the first shift, five on second and three on third shift.

Counting laser and press-brake operators, more than 30 people have attended instruction courses in recent years, either at CINCINNATI or on-site at Rapistan. Because shifts are expanding with additional personnel, more Rapistan employees are regularly involved in CINCINNATI training programs.