

Customer Success Story



Larkin Helps Anheuser-Busch Beer Keep Its “Cool”

PINE BLUFF, ARK, September 2001—The M&K Distributors center in Pine Bluff, Arkansas serves as a temporary home for Anheuser-Busch products delivered throughout the state. Because it's a support site and not a warehouse, beer isn't kept for a long period of time, but is instead brought in and shipped out in relatively quick fashion.

“We're what they call a wholesale support center,” says Jack Davis, a project manager for M&K. “Anheuser-Busch ships into us and we distribute to other wholesalers in the state.” M&K's territory for its support center, says Davis, covers the entire state of Arkansas.

Keeping beer properly cooled and “fresh” requires careful and consistent attention to detail. Anheuser-Busch has strict guidelines that must be scrupulously followed at any warehouse or storage facility that houses its products. Those guidelines need to be kept in mind when planning for the proper cooling system for such a facility.

Neely & McAlister Commercial



James Sims, with R&E Supply, recommended that Larkin units be installed at the M&K Distributors center in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

Refrigeration Service, Inc. was the contractor assigned by M&K to install the refrigeration equipment. Neely & McAlister in turn contacted James Sims, an assistant manager for R&E Supply, to recommend the appropriate units for the M&K facility.

Sims says that Anheuser-Busch “actually sends to the contractor the guidelines of what it needs.” For a 24-hour operation the amount of beer delivered in peak and off-peak delivery months can vary. “You need to calculate temperature at the facility for beer arrival,” says Sims, “based on the higher temperature between the daily temperature as provided by

the National Weather Service, but not to exceed 85 degrees, or 70 degrees, according to the month.”

In addition, says Sims, “beer must be brought to temperature requirements within 24 hours after placement. The minimum allowable temperature is 35 degrees.” After reviewing these requirements, Sims recommended that Larkin refrigeration units be installed.

Neely & McAlister installed four 15-horsepower Larkin condensing units, another Larkin condensing unit at 7.5 horsepower, and a total of six evaporators. The four higher horsepower units were for the main area of the storage center, where cans, bottles and cases are kept,

“(Larkin is) doing a really good job for us.”



Larkin evaporators are used in the main storage area at M&K Distributors to cool cans, bottles, cases and kegs of Anheuser-Busch beer.

while the fifth one was recommended for the draft cooler where kegs are stored. All of the evaporators are hung from the ceiling. Installation, including piping, took about six weeks.

Although M&K already had a beer cooler at its previous building on the site, James figured the load “a little heavy,” says Patrick McAlister. “The beer cooler M&K had at the previous location was for their use in their immediate area, just a couple of counties. But this new facility is for the entire state.”

Sims deals directly with Larkin sales representative Phil Smiddy and Heatcraft application engineer Robert Thornton. Smiddy, who is based in St. Louis, oversees a territory that includes Arkansas. Thornton is based in Stone Mountain, Ga.

Sims based his calculations in part on the configuration of the new building. It’s a very large structure, one that allows for beer to be stored on pallets stacked

three pallets tall, and one that is filled to capacity at any given time. “The weight of the structure itself is significant,” said McAlister. “It’s a metal building, and we had to hang coils from ‘Z’ purlins. The coils are heavy at about 800 pounds apiece, so we had to span several purlins with steel.

“We had to build the steel frame for the coils to hang from,” added McAlister. “Since the ceiling was 24 feet high we had to chain-hoist the frame into place. We had to build special jigs just to get the chain-hoist high enough to hang the coils.”

The storage center is divided into five bays. “We hung a coil in each one of the sections,” said McAlister, “with each coil blowing toward the center.

McAlister said that special consideration was made for draft kegs in the specially constructed cooler room. “The room is strictly for

kegs, and it has two separate coils.” Davis adds that, because the keg room is a good-sized area, “it needs a quick cooling down.” Two coils help to do that and provide better air circulation.

Through an automatic chart recorder, the temperature is monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The temperature is changed to accommodate the difference between the outside temperature and the inside temperature, and ranges from about 42 degrees in the winter to about 70 degrees in the summer. This is done to keep the product above the dew point to prevent condensation from forming on bottles and cans. The keg room stays at 35 degrees all year long.

Since the units were installed, it’s been a real ‘cool’ operation. “The Larkin pieces seem to be real efficient,” says Davis. “They’re doing a really good job for us.”



(Pictured left to right): James Neely, Patrick McAlister and Rick McAlister of Neely & McAlister, and Clint Granderson of Central Crane Services, prepare to transfer and install a Larkin condensing unit.



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