

PROCESS FIRE PROTECTION IS A PRIORITY AT WEST FRASER OSB—ALLENDALE

With the purchase of Norbord in February 2021, West Fraser launched into a new role as a predominant supplier of OSB in North America. An important part of that emphasis was realized with the subsequent procurement of the 760MMSF Allendale facility in South Carolina in December of that year. Formerly operated by Georgia-Pacific, the mill was shut down in 2019 due to prevailing market conditions.

The \$280 million dollar acquisition of the mill is believed by management to be a strategic investment to lower costs and benefit from the favorable location which is in proximity to both an abundant fiber supply and a significant market.

“Due to its strategic location, modernization and ample access to fiber, we believe the large-scale Allendale mill, with the help of our skilled OSB team, will be among the lowest cost mills in our OSB portfolio when it’s operating at full production,” says Kevin Burke, Senior Vice President, Wood Products.

West Fraser recently completed an approximately \$80 million dollar modernization project prior to the re-start of the mill in June. The effort upgraded and optimized processes to position the company to take advantage of future market opportunities.

An important part of this project was the installation and upgrade of the process fire protection systems in the plant consistent with the corporate emphasis on safety.

“Our approach to safety is a culture of continuous improvement, combining well trained staff with best-in-class technology advancements,” Burke says. “Our top focus is the mindset that all accidents are preventable and when coupled with best-in-class systems, we have preventative warnings and an immediate response, protecting our people, our reliability standards and our assets.”

Having a clear understanding of the fire hazards inherent in the production of composite panels, the company chose FLAMEX Inc. to provide the necessary protection systems to address the risk of fire in a number of critical areas throughout the facility. These systems include a MINIFOG Press Protect Water Mist system for the multi-opening press, a foam system for the press pit, 95 zones of spark detection to monitor pneumatic material handling ducts and conveyor systems as well as 66 deluge valves for protection of the forming line, blender, weigh belt,



Screening and conveyor deluge valves

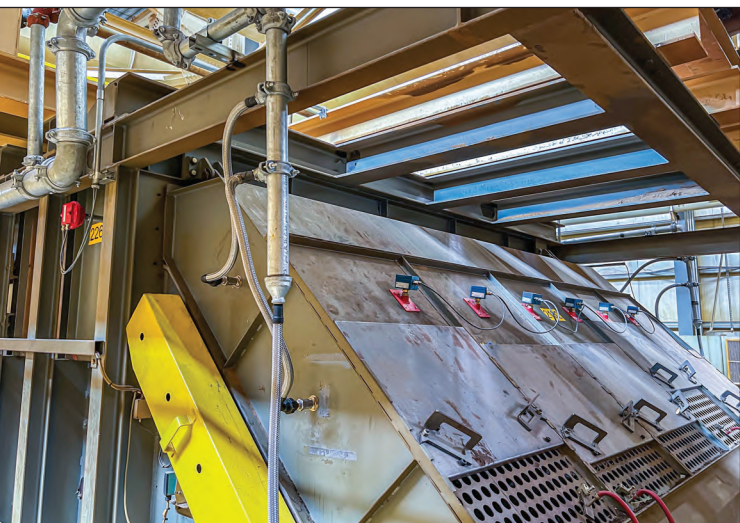
baghouses and cyclones. These systems utilize a variety of detectors such as heat, smoke, flame and spark detectors as deemed appropriate for the various protection applications.

The monitoring and supervision of the protection systems involve six independent control panels located throughout the plant which are networked by an INVERON HMI system to allow control of the plant process fire protection from a single computer.

“Since I joined West Fraser 24 years ago, I have been involved with seven FLAMEX startups of press fire protection systems in our divisions,” comments Avery Smith, General Manager, Allendale mill. “I have witnessed their continuous advances in technology, helping move West Fraser forward in asset protection. These changes have reduced downtime and improved recovery and startup from incidences of fire tremendously.”

Ed Pridgen, VP and MINIFOG Product Manager at FLAMEX, has been responsible for the supply, implementation and commissioning of the process protection systems at the mill. He states, “FLAMEX is proud of its partnership with West Fraser in protecting the mill and its employees from the recognized fire hazards inherent in the production processes found in engineered wood facilities. We appreciate the trust and continued confidence that they have placed in our systems and support over many years of a successful working relationship.” **PW**

Article and photos submitted by FLAMEX and West Fraser.



Forming bin detection systems and deluge