

Associated Air Center, LP

TEEA 2013 Winner: Pollution Prevention



With all the modifications it takes to maintain and transform aircraft into custom-designed planes, you might not expect that the Associated Air Center in Dallas produces only the most minimal amounts of hazardous waste. Through a series of projects that began in 2006, the facility team has implemented changes targeting chromium-based waste as part of its overall pollution prevention mission. The Love Field center achieved final success only after years of research, testing, and repeated requests to airline industry regulators.

Throughout the aircraft industry, hexavalent chromium is the standard commonly used for inhibiting corrosion, meaning that parts must undergo a chromic acid (Alodine) bath that results in a significant amount of waste for disposal. To reduce that waste, AAC management officials recognized the giant hurdle they needed to jump to gain permission from their original equipment manufacturer and the Federal Aviation Administration to modify the existing industry standard.

For two years, AAC worked to receive approval to remove chromic acid baths and replace the cleaning and pre-priming stages with a nonhazardous detergent and surface preparation that promotes adhesion of the required chromate primer. An additional project calling for the use of a less hazardous primer for all nonstructural pieces allowed chromate primers to only be used on structural components, significantly reducing total waste at the facility and reducing potential avenues of employee exposure to chromium.

Though full elimination of hexavalent chromium is the ultimate goal for Associated Air Center, the projects already in effect have allowed the facility to change its status as a large-quantity generator of hazardous waste to a conditionally exempt small-quantity generator of hazardous waste. Changing an existing standard practice for an entire industry proved a significant challenge, but through

dedication to waste reduction, Associated Air Center now sets itself apart by its workmanship and its commitment to environmental excellence.