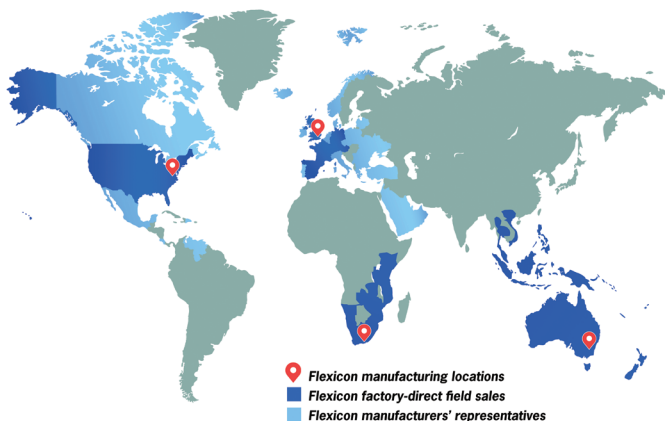




Pharma Powders Fed to Packaging by Automated Conveyors

JJ-0637



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LAURELTON, NY — Epic Pharma develops and manufactures a range of generic pharmaceuticals for the treatment of pain, lipid disorders, hypertension and infection, and provides contract manufacturing services to some of the largest US pharmaceutical companies.

As part of this service, the company packages cholestyramine resin, a fine, dusty yellow powder that is hygroscopic and can be difficult to convey.

Epic Pharma originally fed the resin to pouch filling machines by raising 220 lb (100 kg) drums approximately 6 ft (1.8 m) above the plant floor, requiring operators to manually scoop the material into each filler's infed hopper. With three to four drums emptied per shift, the process proved awkward and prone to dusting and product spillage, a problem that was rectified by installing four automated flexible screw conveyors from Flexicon Corporation.

The 14 cu ft (396 l) capacity floor hopper of each conveyor fits within the limited space of the packaging suites and allows operators to dump the drums at floor level with less product spillage, dust and risk of injury. "The flexible screw conveyors have brought a "more efficient process as well as a cleaner and safer plant environment," says Frank Mellone, senior director Packaging.

Each 4.5 in. (114 mm) diameter polymer conveyor tube encloses a flexible stainless steel screw that is driven by a 3 hp (2.2 Kw) electric motor. As the screw rotates, it propels material through the smooth, crevice-free tube and self-centers, providing sufficient clearance between the screw and the tube wall to prevent product damage. The motor is positioned beyond the discharge point, preventing material contact with bearings or seals.

The conveyors elevate the powder 10 ft (3 m) at a 45-degree incline, discharging through FDA approved flexible downspouting into each pouch filler's intake hopper. Each conveyor starts/stops in response to a signal from the pouch filler's hopper, maintaining a consistent amount of product in the hopper.

Sanitizing after five batches

Mellone says, "Each flexible screw conveyor is cleaned after five batches, which involves quickly disassembling the flexible screw and tube and washing each with water and an approved detergent." The pharmaceutical-grade conveyors and hoppers have stainless steel product contact surfaces, are validated and GMP compliant.



The enclosed hopper and flexible screw conveyor assure dust-free transfer. All product contact surfaces are of stainless steel.



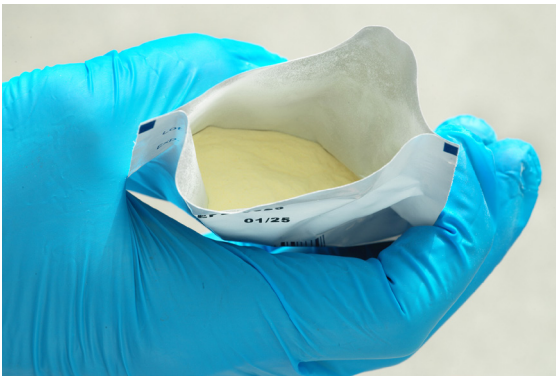
Operators attach bag loops to the lifting frame with Z-CLIP™ bag strap holders and hoist it into the discharger using a pendant.

Mahboob Rahman, VP Manufacturing and Engineering, says, "The conveyor systems function problem-free, being engineered with the correct length, diameter and convey angle, and with a hopper design that enables smooth flow."

Epic Pharma, LLC
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From the filling machine, operators assemble pouches of cholestyramine resin powder into cartons for shipment.



Pouches range in weight from 0.062 to 0.317 oz (1.77 to 9.0 gm).



The conveyor screw is driven above the point of discharge, preventing material contact with bearings or seals.



The flexible screw conveyor tube and spiral are disassembled and cleaned at regular intervals.

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