



## Proco Products: The Rubber Expansion Joint Leader in Availability

*Proco Products, Inc. boasts one of the largest inventories of rubber expansion joints and PTFE-lined rubber expansion joints in the North American market. Consequently, the company has an extensive presence in water & wastewater, oil & gas, power generation, chemical & petrochemical, HVAC, marine industries and more. Wherever there is a need to pump fluids or move air, Proco can provide the optimum expansion joint solution to protect the pump/fan from thermal growth in a piping or ducting system or alleviate vibration.*

*Hose & Coupling World had the pleasure of speaking with Rob Coffee, Vice President Sales and Marketing at Proco, to discuss the company's commitment to distribution, their current marketing ventures – including their latest CAD (Computer Aided Design) initiative - and their time-honored focus on quality and customer service.*

*By Deirdre Morgan and Melanie Gogan*



*Founders of Proco Products, Inc., Gene Johnson (left) & Merv Vater*

Proco was built on a foundation of partnership, marketing “know-how” and deep-rooted knowledge in the expansion joint business. Established in 1984 by Gene Johnson and Merv Vater, Proco’s product line can be traced back to the original inventor of the expansion joint in the 1930s, Uniroyal. Gene previously worked for the company, Protective Coatings (the private label expansion joint manufacturer for Uniroyal) when the company divested themselves of certain product lines; one being expansion joints. Recognizing a profitable opportunity, Gene convinced Merv, who he had worked with prior at Hewitt Robins in Buffalo, New York, and Holz Rubber in Lodi, California, to come into business with him. As a result, the two gentlemen bought the assets of Protective Coatings and Proco Products was created.

Sharing his thoughts on Gene’s vision of the company, Rob says, “Gene was a dynamic marketing guy and it was his dream to have a large inventory of expansion joints with sizes ranging from 1 inch through 72 inch in diameter on the shelf, in various elastomers. When a distributor called looking for a part

for an end user, you could bet there was always something on the shelf that could be sent to the field immediately." He adds, "This goal drove Proco's success as an inventory specialist."

### Customer service that spans time zones

Proco continues to operate according to Gene's vision of being a marketing company first and foremost, in the business of selling expansion joints. The combined dedication of Ed Marchese, President; Scott Wallace, VP of Operations and International Sales; Mike Lassas, VP of Administration; Rob Coffee; as well as their sales task force and supporting staff, all contribute to the success of the company.

Proco has an extensive agent/distributor network, selling more than 65 percent of their products through distribution channels. Since Proco's inception, the company has developed a more project-oriented business however, working closely with EPCs (Engineering, Procurement and Construction) for large capital projects.

"While we primarily sell through distribution, that doesn't mean that we don't work with engineers, contractors, EPCs and end users. Invariably, all of these customers are calling us. We are always asking end users, 'Who do you buy from?' If they don't have a distributor they're currently dealing with, we can refer a distributor that we deal with on a regular basis in their particular geographic location to help the end user fulfill their needs. I think we're really in tune with making sure we take care of our customers because that's our main goal. Customers are everything to us," explains Rob. With a product line that is able to cross

all continents, people recognize Proco, whether it be at the power plant, in the oil fields, in mining, at the water treatment plant and wherever fluid pumping applications are required.

Based in Stockton, California, Proco makes availability a priority by responding directly to customer needs, no matter what time zone they are in.



Opening at 5:30 a.m. Pacific Time and staggering their sales staff throughout the day, there is always someone available to speak to the customer.

"Our goal is to make sure that whether we're dealing with someone on the west coast, Mountain Time, Central Time, Eastern Standard Time or even Newfoundland time, we are always going to have someone available to help

global standards. When asked how Proco drives brand awareness and an effective communications network, Rob explains, "We are everywhere and continue to build our network overseas. That's not just because of the products we have to offer, but also our marketing prowess. We work directly out of the U.S. office but we have agents in various places around the

world, whether it's in India, the Middle East, Turkey, Russia, Poland, Australia – we are everywhere."

Further stressing the company's commitment to distribution, he adds, "I think our distributor base understands that we're for them and it is reflected in the amount of orders that we take from distributors where they have it shipped direct to the customers. It

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*"People recognize Proco as the rubber expansion joint leader in availability... Today we have an inventory of products hovering around \$2 million."*

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the customer. When someone calls in they are going to be speaking to someone directly in the customer service department. We don't have an operator to go through," he explains.

doesn't always happen that way for obvious reasons, but I think we have a great track record with distributors; they know that we're serving them and the end user at the same time."



Proco's main company values are to provide quality durable products at fair prices and maintain a large inventory to support distribution. Moreover, being a marketing company at its core, Proco promotes a strong international presence with products aimed at accommodating various

### Hose & braid solutions

While rubber expansion joints and PTFE-lined rubber expansion joints are Proco's primary focus, the company also offers hose and braid solutions necessary in certain applications. While a rubber expansion joint is designed to absorb all types of axial, parallel and lateral movements, they are limited to temperature pressure. In higher temperature applications, customers may be better served by alternate products, such as metal





Hose & Coupling World met-up with Rob at the IDCO 1st (Industrial Distributor Co-op) tradeshow on February 13-16, in Fort Worth, Texas.

hose and braid. "Typically what we have in our inventory and stock is what we call a short style hose and braid for a little bit of offset and some vibration. But we do offer hose and braid in specific overall lengths to compensate for lateral offsets. If you have compression in a line then it may be that you need to put hose and braid in a dog leg, or a U-type shape or V-type shape to get the movement that you're looking for. So, for us it becomes temperature dependent and for higher temperatures applications we have to look at possibly a hose and braid solution," he explains.

#### Quality testing

In order to ensure their products are up to a required standard, Proco regularly visits their factories and performs routine batch testing and material identification testing to ensure that the formulations are correct and that their products will hold up to pressure. With an inventory of \$2 million, Proco performs durometer hardness testing to check the elasticity of products that have sat on the shelf for a period of time. Rob explains, "We don't want to put an inferior product out in the market and not have it last. Cure dates and shelf life are important to us. We are constantly rotating our inventory and checking to be sure the durometer hardness level is exactly where it needs to be."

#### SolidWorks™ CAD initiative

The company recently embarking on an exciting new project and is currently uploading it's full range of catalogue

*"Distribution is important to Proco! So we support organizations like IDCO, a rubber hose co-op and NAHAD, a larger rubber hose organization – to promote our products."*

*- Rob Coffee*

items to a CAD system to further facilitation engineering and end use applications. Rob explains, "We are in the process of taking all of our catalog products and creating SolidWorks™ drawings of these products, so any of our customers can download CAD drawings or performance data sheets." He adds, "Whether it's an engineer looking to get a SolidWorks™ model in a specific file format and put it into a piping diagram system to check dimensional values, or as a requisition sheet for somebody to purchase the products, customers can download the information to use it however they wish." This value-added initiative will help Proco clients and potential clients standardize their products by assisting in the initial planning stages.



Project Specialist, Nick Ponder

#### Endorsing best practices

Proco prides itself on its commitment to its customer and the industry as a whole, which is evident in the company's involvement with numerous technical and trade organizations. Proco has been an outstanding member of WEF (Water Environment Federation) in the water & wastewater market, not to mention being an active member of the Cooling Technology Institute (CTI) and the American Water Works Association (AWWA).

In addition, Rob is directly involvement with both the Fluid Sealing Association (FSA) and the National Association of Hose and Accessories Distributors (NAHAD). Currently on the Board of Directors of the FSA and the Vice President for a 2-year term, Rob is on-track to one day assuming the role of President of the association. He along with other contributing members of the FSA recently completed the eighth edition of the piping expansion joint handbook, which is now available in the marketplace. If that's not enough, last year Rob accepted the position of manufacturing board member of NAHAD.

He comments, "We want to make sure that we represent the industry and give back. I think it's important as a company to do that; to give your time to promote is the reason why you're in business. Some people don't see the value in tradeshow but we have the opposite opinion. We see that value and that's how we've grown our name throughout the world."



Proco headquarters in Stockton, California, USA

### Keeping an active pulse on industry trends

In a competitive industry, Proco manages to stay in tune with current trends by continuously looking at the market to define what's going on. "I scour the internet for projects, read a lot of materials, tweet a lot, share articles on LinkedIn that I have read, which I know people appreciate. It is important to keep the pulse so I am always looking at project-related items whether it be in mining, steel, power, water & wastewater treatment or automotive. Whatever it may be, I am always looking at the market to define what's going on so I can point our extensive agent network in the right direction," he says.

No longer just an expansion joint company, Proco has expanded its offerings to include duckbill rubber check valves and penetration seals for the water and wastewater treatment markets. Their series 700 ProFlex™ rubber duckbill check valves are designed specifically to control back pressures, ideal for use in sewage treatment plants, outfalls and tidal operations.

Proco is always looking to add product lines and will continue to add products that are in-line with their quality-focused business approach. Rob explains, "As time has gone on we have added products that make sense and fit with our business model." Similarly, the company

continues to explore new elastomers and improved formulations in the market. In terms of expansion joints, Rob explains how there has never really been any expansion joints that have been ANSI/NSF-61 certified. "For the last five to seven years we have been supplying ANSI/NSF-61 certified elastomer materials but the expansion joint itself was not certified for potable water applications. Proco has recently received certification for UL classified ANSI/NSF-61 EPDM and PTFE-lined rubber moulded joints. So that's something that no one else really has. We are the first to get UL classified ANSI/NSF-61 certification for EPDM."

On the inventory side of things, Proco has recently streamlined their warehouse capabilities, improving the flow of what comes in and what goes out, freeing-up shelf space and maximizing efficiencies for better economies of scale.

Rob concludes, "At Proco our aim is to continue to serve our customers well by providing excellent customer service and engineering expertise - whether it be through Proco ourselves or through the FSA - ensuring that we're always in contact with those people designing systems and giving them the best information that we can."

## PROCO AT A GLANCE

<b>Years in business:</b>	33 years
<b>Headquarters:</b>	2431 North Wigwam Drive, Stockton, CA 95205, USA
<b>Product offering:</b>	rubber expansion joints, PTFE pipe expansion joints, ducting expansion joints, braided flexible metal connectors, low torque gaskets, pipe penetration seals, rubber pipe connectors, rubber check valves
<b>Industries:</b>	water & wastewater, chemical/petrochemical, HVAC, industrial, marine, mining, oil & gas, power generation, pulp & paper, steel
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.procoproducts.com">www.procoproducts.com</a>
<b>Facebook:</b>	<a href="https://m.facebook.com/ProcoProducts/">m.facebook.com/ProcoProducts/</a>
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