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# AMERICAN TOOL, DIE & Stamping NEWS™

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E-LITE TOOL AND MANUFACTURING COMPANY FINDS

# FLEXIBLE PRESS SOLUTION WITH AIDA FOR HIGH PRECISION STAMPING WORK

By Scott Jones, Tool Designer

While some manufacturers might overlook a gap frame press for high precision and progressive die work, Belleville, Illinois-based E-Lite Tool and Manufacturing Company chose the equipment for its flexibility. After purchasing two AIDA NC2 160-ton gap frame presses and one AIDA NC2 110-ton gap frame press, Rick Baltz, Production Manager for Elite, says, "We needed equipment that was reliable enough to meet new customer delivery schedules but versatile enough to handle any future work that might come through the door."

E-Lite knows something about what it takes to consistently meet customer requirements. In business since 1957, E-Lite emerged as a tool die and stamping facility in 1960. Baltz says E-Lite's first customer in 1957 is still a customer today. The stamper's primary market is the appliance industry. E-Lite produces sheet metal parts that include brackets and hinges for air conditioning units, gas and electric stoves and blower housings for furnaces and fireplace inserts. For E-Lite versatility is perhaps best defined by its commitment to its customers. "We're a job shop," Baltz said. "If a customer wants a part, we do everything we can to make it."

Combining its capability to design and build tools with on time production, E-Lite provides a wide variety of production processes such as draw, progressive and multi-station blank tooling. Materials range from copper and brass to aluminum, stainless, hot rolled and cold rolled steel. In addition, E-Lite's total turnkey stamping solution includes a fully equipped tool room with CNC machining and wire EDM.

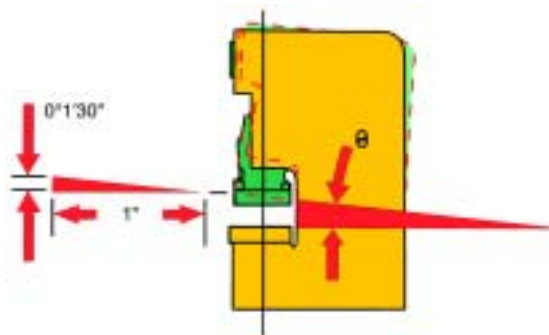
"We purchased the first AIDA NC2 160-ton gap press in 2000 because we needed a draw cushion with a large bed area," Baltz said. "The job called for blower housings made from aluminized steel. We needed a die cushion with a large pressure area so we could vary the pressure from side to side. AIDA was willing to customize the cushion die application to meet our requirements. As a result we're able to perform deep draw operations." E-Lite added the AIDA 110-ton gap frame press in 2001 and a second AIDA 160-ton gap frame in 2006 to perform secondary blanking operations for the part.



*The versatility and reliability of the gap frame press helps E-Lite compete in a global economy by eliminating unscheduled downtime and making stamping operations more effective.*

While E-Lite produces the majority of its parts from lighter gauge material, the manufacturer has the capability to run material ranging in thickness from .008 up to .200. "With the gap frame presses, we found we didn't have to restrict ourselves on the width of material we ran," Baltz said. "The open accessibility of the gap press to the die space allows us to use the full width of the bed area. With a straightside press you are limited to the width of the window."

With AIDA's gap frame presses, E-Lite sometimes runs material wider than it could run on a straightside with the same bed area. In addition to allowing a customer like E-Lite to take advantage of the entire bolster area, rigid construction gives the AIDA gapframe press an angular deflection of 50 percent or less and the tightest clearance



*Because AIDA's gap frame press offers an angular deflection of 50 percent or less and the tightest clearance available, the negative effects of working at a significant distance from the center line of the bolster are minimized, tool life is extended and part accuracy increased.*



*E-Lite produces electrical junction box for electrical connectors for recessed lighting.*



*Being able to perform draw, progressive die and blanking operations all on one press is an advantage.*

available. The negative effects of working at a significant distance from the center line of the bolster are minimized, tool life is extended and part accuracy increased.

Lean stamping environments like E-Lite's are also seeing smaller unit volumes and increasingly shorter production runs. To keep track of parts, E-Lite originally used an external counter. "If the mechanism broke during a production run, the operator would have to stop production and count parts manually," Baltz said. "The touchscreen setup and batch counters built into the AIDA control allow us to control container counting and eliminate the possibility of downtime due to a stopped production run. We're also able to perform activities like setting the control for the number of parts we need to run before conducting an inspection. AIDA's electronic control has really helped us raise our efficiency levels."

In addition to a control that is handy and convenient to use, E-Lite operators find press operation to be reliable, requiring only routine maintenance. The reliability of the AIDA gap frame presses has also delivered other advantages.

"We're competing in a global economy," Baltz said. "Foreign companies typically have cheaper labor. In the US we have to depend on better equipment that has the capability to make us more efficient."

"Being able to perform draw, progressive die and blanking operations all on one press is an advantage," Baltz explained. This type of press versatility also means less equipment on the shop floor and less overall capital equipment costs. On a more fundamental level, press equipment that is dependable and well maintained allows stampers like E-Lite to avoid downtime due to unscheduled repairs. These factors - versatility and dependability - are key to a competitive stamping operation.

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