

CASE STUDY

ASAP Systems' Inventory and Asset Tracking System, Passport, helps East Kansas Chemical Track and Maintain Chemical Containers



Case Study Overview

COMPANY:

East Kansas Chemical
www.eastkansaschemical.com

INDUSTRY:

Agricultural Chemicals/Seeds

BUSINESS CHALLENGE:

Track the location and maintenance schedules of tankers and bulk containers, along with the products stored within them, that are shipped throughout the Midwest in order to maintain compliance with Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Transportation regulations.

SOLUTION:

Passport Assets
 Several Motorola mobile scanners
 2 Zebra printers
 Bronze support package

BENEFITS:

- Extended asset life with automatic tracking of maintenance schedules
- Easily prepare for regulatory inspection and compile necessary asset information
- Improved shipping efficiency and visibility with real-time reports on asset location and status



EAST KANSAS CHEMICAL

“Serving our friends in farming”

East Kansas Chemical has been a wholesale and retail agricultural chemical and seed supply company since 1972 and is owned by several mid-western agricultural suppliers. The company has locations in Wellsville and Kingsdown, which serve Kansas, and surrounding states, with the best seed and crop protection products available.

“We want to track the movement of all our assets, the individual products that are stored and sold with these assets, and all maintenance activities over the life cycle of the assets,” says Gregg Weaver, Sales Representative at East Kansas Chemical’s Wellsville location. In order to improve the overall

performance of the asset tracking system in place, the organization wanted to avoid using a paper-based system, which would be overwhelming considering the large amount of assets they wanted to track. They needed a powerful barcode-based asset tracking system that could give them the capability to track tankers and intermediate bulk containers (IBC), as well as the bulk chemical and seed products stored within the containers, in real-time using mobile, commercial handheld scanners. Also, it was essential to track and document the maintenance activity on each asset due to the chemical make-up of some of the asset contents.



THE CHALLENGE

Monitoring the location, contents, and history of several thousand IBC containers was no easy task for East Kansas Chemical, especially when working with several suppliers throughout the mid-west region of the US. The company needed to store and ship various products from these suppliers, such as liquid fertilizers, nutritional additives, weed killers and seeds. The variety of products and the different ways in which suppliers sent them to the company warehouse (bulk or packaged quantities) added to the challenge of tracking them. Further, the hazardous substance within some of the containers required great attention to how and when they needed to be maintained. Each of these factors added a layer of complication. Hence, they required a powerful and flexible system that could track tankers and containers the way they needed, at the scope that they wanted.

Each IBC the company owns is reusable and could be stationed at a customer location for several months. Thus, for logistical and operational purposes, it was important to know if the IBC was actively being used, as well as, whether it was located within the central warehouse or shipped out to a customer. Not knowing if a tanker was in transit would be a logistical nightmare; any time spent waiting would decrease productivity and have negative financial ramifications.

Also, it is crucial to know what was currently inside the IBC, as well as the history of the products that had been inside it. When tanker trucks arrived at a location with empty IBC's to be replenished with new products, employees had to avoid mixing certain chemical contents or else there could have been dangerous health consequences. Without the ability to generate accurate and configurable reports for current and historical tanker information, employees would not have the visibility they require during replenishments, and the company would be vulnerable to costly mistakes.

"It is imperative that we maintain product integrity, as well as document proper cleanout procedures as needed," says Weaver.

Particularly for East Kansas Chemical, which required integrity testing every 30 months, it had been difficult

to keep tabs on all the maintenance and cleaning being performed on thousands of assets located at both company locations. It would be very crucial to find a system that could keep track of maintenance schedules and produce a maintenance history for each asset, in order to save them money on repairs and improve the accountability over the status of their assets.

FINDING A SYSTEM TO FIT THEIR NEEDS

For Weaver and his team to successfully meet prevailing challenges, they needed an easy-to-use, yet robust, asset management system that could cater to their operational needs and allow them to keep up with changes in the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations and the Department of Transportation (DOT) shipping laws.

As a depot for pesticides, hazardous substances, and active ingredients, East Kansas Chemical must follow EPA instructions with regard to the management of inventory and assets. They needed to register and file production reports with the EPA, as required under sections of environmental acts in place. To help them meet these requirements, a system must be able to store regulatory agency documents and information that link to certain assets in a centralized database. This would reduce administrative overhead and help support a standardized asset receiving and control protocol that can be easily integrated into daily workflow.

With the type of inventory and assets the company ships to customers, the team needed to abide by often-changed Department of Transportation laws. The DOT keeps track of the company shipping fleet size, purchase orders, drivers, mileage and other information in order to give consent on company shipping practices and assign a safety rating. A configurable system designed to track selected asset information categories such as these would help the company comply with federal regulations and avoid legal issues, and accompanied fines, that could arise due to negligent shipping practices.

GETTING STARTED

Decision makers within the company began their research phase by looking online for an inventory and asset tracking system that could help them overcome their business

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challenges. The company website that most often appeared in search results was ASAP Systems.

Subsequently, East Kansas Chemical reached out to an ASAP Systems account representative to see what they had to offer and to set up a free personal demonstration of ASAP Systems' inventory and asset tracking software, Passport. One of ASAP Systems' technical engineers shared his screen and navigated through the Passport system, displaying new advanced features and configuration advantages that would accommodate the organization's individual needs.

ASAP Systems recommended a solution that included:

- Passport Assets with a few user licenses
- Several Motorola mobile scanners
- Two Zebra printers with durable labels
- Maintenance module for scheduled reports
- Bronze customer support package

THE SOLUTION

"It is nice to be able to go to one program and have all our required information just a few mouse clicks away," says Weaver.

East Kansas Chemical took advantage of the easy-to-use capabilities involved in ASAP Systems' Passport. After initial training, management and warehouse employees could navigate fluently through the Passport interface to perform daily shipment transactions and view current asset data through categories that they configured. It allowed them to maintain organization of products from every supplier and locate all assets at multiple locations. The use of Motorola mobile scanners and durable barcode labels to conduct transactions and quickly enter data became second nature for employees.

Weaver says, "Our warehouse employees take the scanners with them to start their daily task of shipping products. They easily scan each asset to track where it is being shipped and what product is shipped."

Meeting regulatory requirements

Passport provided the company with a system that could integrate with current warehouse procedures and improve



their efficiency with regard to following regulatory guidelines. The system augmented daily operations with its ability to provide accurate inventory and asset information in real-time and generate configurable reports for targeted information. One of the most important procedures for which that ability and information lends itself, was how the company met EPA and state agencies standards.

"Passport has helped us to remain in compliance with our regulatory requirements, and do so without the added burden of a paper-based system, which would be overwhelming considering the amount of assets we have to track," says Weaver.

Agencies conduct on-site inspections to determine compliance with federal environmental laws. Inspectors check to ensure that hazardous materials are correctly labeled and handled, and that asset records are in order. The EPA also has the authority to assess civil penalties to organizations that violate asset control technical standards or fail to meet financial responsibility regulations. Thus, with Passport's ability to take these inspections into account regarding data organization and asset labeling, the warehouse staff became better prepared.

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Generating configurable reports

"The reporting feature allows us to look at containers that are at a customer's location so that we can plan for returning those containers when we are in the area. A quick glance at a movement report can give us a sense of shipping activity over a period of time, which is useful for planning," says Weaver.

With Passport in place, warehouse activities could be verified and summarized through the reporting module. It gave Weaver and his team the power to organize consolidated, factual, and up-to-date information, which could be quickly put in the hands of operations decision-makers to plan for the short or long term. Also, since Passport allowed users to export reports as a PDF or excel file, the feature could be an effective means of communication within the organization by providing feedback to employees on individual or team performance, in readily available formats.

Track maintenance schedules

Aside from the obvious advantage of knowing the calendar dates of asset maintenance, Passport grants the ability to compile any task, service, or inspection information so that the group had a built-in tool for

monitoring the status of each asset. These features resulted in savings on asset replacement costs, extended asset life, and in the end, drove more efficient maintenance practices.

ASAP Systems' inventory and asset tracking system, Passport, significantly reduced the time and stress involved in knowing the location and status of assets within the warehouse or being shipped to customers. The ease and accuracy of using barcodes made the company's previous paper-based system obsolete in comparison. After quickly locating a selected tanker or shipping container, it could be filled with the appropriate product from the correct supplier and be issued out rapidly, in accordance with regulations. Ultimately, with the new software, the company could operate with a better version of business as usual by using one comprehensive system.

For more information on ASAP Systems' inventory and asset tracking solutions,
visit www.asapsystems.com
or contact at sales@asapsystems.com