



Application Report

Product Reference
4.12

Reliable, Durable, Crown Equipment Generates Cost Savings For Kehe Food Distribution



Lift Truck Maintenance Supervisor Chuck Condon carefully monitors his company's lift truck fleet and says Crown trucks have provided Kehe Food Distribution with a strong service record, saving the company valuable dollars.

When Chuck Condon watches Crown lift trucks moving products throughout the Kehe Food Distribution Center in Romeoville, IL, two words quickly come to mind for the veteran lift truck maintenance supervisor.

“Electric trucks save us more than \$400,000 over the course of a year.”

“Reliable, durable” is his description of the fleet of 28 Crown lift trucks, which range from the largest, the Series TS Turret Sideloader, to the smallest, the Series PTH hand pallet truck.

Reliability and durability are requirements in this high-volume, full speed environment where downtime can be very costly. The 400,000 square foot warehouse remains a stage for constant motion – workers and machines continually transporting grocery products from trailers to rack and

shelving and back to the dock. More than 32 million cases are shipped annually – an average of approximately 90,000 cases daily to grocery store chains and independent food retailers throughout the United States. During peak seasons, up to 120,000 picks can be made during a 24-hour cycle.

“Outside of a small amount of time on the weekend, we’re up and running a three-shift, 24 hours a day operation,” says Director of Warehousing Mike Leitner.

“We cannot afford downtime.”

Seven Crown TS Turret Sideloaders have long been a cornerstone in the Kehe Food Distribution material handling process. In 1987, the company became one of the first in the Chicago market to have a Turret Sideloader. Today the truck still remains an active part of the company's fleet.

Twelve different operators, all on incentive, use Crown Turret Sideloaders to pick pallets in massive 800-foot long aisles at heights exceeding 41 feet in the bulk storage area. Pallet loads weigh up to 2000 lb with handling occurring in 72-inch aisles.

Operators normally pick at rates between 28 and 55 pallets per hour and can average up to 300 pallets per eight-hour shift during



The Kehe Food Distribution Center located in Romeoville, IL, ships more than 32 million cases annually from the 400,000 square foot facility shown above.



The Crown SC 4000 sit-down counterbalanced truck proves to be a versatile tool for Kehe Food Distribution. The truck proves capable of moving products in and out of truck trailers or working in the company's freezer space (as shown above).

a "normal" day, says Leitner. "But it depends on the shift, the situation and time of year," he adds.

The four-point stability associated with the Crown TS Turret Sideloader provides a major advantage over the competition. "It allows for operator comfort and safety when picking the higher pallets," says Leitner. "It has a good, rigid base with stability at 495 inches and no sway."

Operator George Suchomski agrees on the truck's stability and points out the truck's quiet, smooth drive is another

positive. "From the operator's viewpoint, that (quiet, smooth) makes it a great ride," he says. We also have additional lights, making it better for us to see in the narrow aisles."

Condon believes the operators like Suchomski tell the most accurate story of the Crown TS. "We have 12 different operators. All of them speak highly of the truck," he says. "That alone says a lot. With 12 different personalities and preferences, the truck really does the job. Its design makes it a very operator-friendly truck."

Sit-down counterbalanced trucks, the three-wheel Crown SC 4000 Series, are used to break down goods and load or unload trucks; the four-wheel cushion tire, FC Series, goes the longer distances, moving materials to and from staging and bulk storage areas.

Operators were also part of the selection process with the FC Series – they picked Crown over several

competitors' trucks. "Our operators gave it high reviews for its design and comfort," Condon says. "Backed by our good history with Crown, the decision was easy."

When new truck purchases were considered, Condon asked the decision team to toss out the competitive quotes. "With their performance and history, there was no need to change from the Crown

"With their performance and history, there was no need to change from the Crown FCs There's no better service history than what's on those trucks."



Performance and service history rate high remarks from Kehe Food Distribution management on the Crown Series FC. The durable truck (shown above) stacks a pallet of product in the company's busy distribution center.

FCs,” says Condon. “There’s no better service history than what’s on those trucks. The FCs can go to 300 to 400 hours before maintenance without any problems.”

Condon carefully analyzes operational and repair costs, noting the company realizes a sizeable savings by using electric over gas trucks. “Electric trucks save us more than \$400,000 over the course of a year,” he says.

A meticulous planner when it comes to lift truck maintenance, Condon has developed a program that has been described as the “epitome of planned maintenance” by industry peers. The system carefully plots each lift truck’s parts and service status on hourly usage. The pro-

gram keeps trucks operational, extending their life and reducing costs. For example, the company still uses a Crown RR Rider Reach Truck, purchased in 1983, after more than 32,000 hours of operation.

This attention to detail is shown in the company’s battery charging and maintenance area. The work area remains clean and well organized despite the challenge of managing more than 138 batteries.



Crown TS Turret Sideloaders have long been important in the material handling philosophy at Kehe Food. Twelve different operators use the Turret Sideloaders in keeping up an efficient flow of goods from the storage area (above).

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New Bremen, Ohio 45869 USA
Phone: 419/629-2311
Fax: 419/629-3796
crown.com