

Smith-Cooper and Sharpe of Producing High Perfo

Smith-Cooper International builds on Sharpe Valve's 29 year history as an industry-leading producer of high performance stainless and carbon steel ball valves. The company offers one of the industry's most comprehensive valve product lines, including quarter-turn & multi-turn valves, as well as automation and control options.

By Sarah Bradley

Acquired by Smith-Cooper International nearly a decade ago, Sharpe Valve continues to grow and expand its capabilities in valves. Recently expanding into a new, state-of-the-art 130,000-square-foot warehouse in Elk Grove Village, IL, the combined company brought together its unique strengths with (a) an expanded assembly, actuation and testing department for its Sharpe Valve products and (b) a larger warehouse to distribute the full range of Smith-Cooper's industrial pipe, valves, and fittings products. With this upsized, enhanced facility in Midwest, the Company strengthened its U.S. footprint, which also includes three other facilities in Los Angeles, CA, Atlanta, GA, and Vancouver, WA.

"Our new Chicago-area facility brings together the full portfolio of capabilities that our organization can offer customers. We have a great diversity of product offerings between general service industrial PVF products and more highly engineered valves. With the expanded capabilities to support our Sharpe Valve products in Elk Grove Village, we expect to attract new customers as well as increase sales with existing accounts," said Bob Cooper, President-Smith-Cooper International.

The new facility has also allowed for growth of the engineering team, expansion of assembly and testing/inspection capacity, and the addition of a new clean-room environment for assembling certain high performance valves. In-house testing capabilities allow Smith-Cooper to position

the Sharpe Valve name at the forefront of industry requirements, ensuring its customers receive products that meet or exceed the stringent demands of current industry certifications. To this end, the company's facility in Elk Grove Village is certified to the ISO-9001:2008 standard, which confirms that its business practices support the company's ability to consistently produce and deliver high quality products.

"We test the quality of all of our valves, whether these products are general service or high performance valves. However, our team of engineers based in Shanghai, China work directly with our manufacturing partners across the Pacific Rim to audit their foundries and inspect product quality as close to the source as possible. For any products that we fabricate in Elk Grove Village, our local machine shops receive the drawings for the specified components, and when the complete work is returned to us, our in-house quality assurance team verifies all appropriate measurements, hydro-tests all welds, and performs other necessary

inspections based on the specification. For cryogenic valves, we conduct these tests in the clean room. We undertake this rigorous testing process to ensure 100% conformance to the design specifications," explained Shawn Mohon, Vice President Sharpe Sales.

Within Smith-Cooper's general service offering, Sharpe Valve products are also available in many product categories, including stainless and carbon steel ball, gate, globe, check, butterfly and control valve packages.

The diverse product offering is also available in Alloy 20, Hastelloy C, and Brass.

Besides carrying an extensive line of general service valves for a variety of applications, Smith-Cooper recognizes their customers' growing need for semi-custom products. As a result, Sharpe Valve products can be manufactured according to varying specifications, design modifications and special needs. This built-to-order service allows the company to ensure that it can offer customers an engineered solution for their specific qualifications and applications.

In recent years, Smith-Cooper International successfully expanded the Sharpe Valve product offering and range of services. Specifically, the company has designed its high performance product line to handle more demanding applications. These more highly engineered ball valves, specifically the 70 and 80 Series valves, can be configured in multiple ways to address a customer's unique specification needs.

"To support our semi-custom products and our high performance valves, Smith-Cooper maintains a 6-person engineering department in its Elk Grove Village location. This in-house engineering team works with our wholesale distributors to develop solutions for their valve projects. This in-house service allows us to remain competitively priced, while offering the quality and service that our customers expect. In some cases, we may not stock the exact product that our customer needs, but our

engineering capabilities may enable us to develop a great solution for our customer.

Despite a robust inventory of off-the-shelf general service valves, we still possess the ability to think outside the box to provide custom solutions," said Shawn.

The increased focus on engineering capabilities has made the Sharpe Valve brand synonymous with technical quality. Focused product development personnel have led to the creation of many new products in the last few years, such as the company's API 608 valves, wafer valves and the expanded butterfly valve package. New products will continue to play a key role in the company's future.

"Over a three-year period, we conducted extensive research to develop a new valve. Our goal was to build the best ball valve in the world. We listened to end-users and our distribution network, and many of these parties came to us with similar requirements. We heard many requests for a valve that met API 608, which is a specification that is gaining a lot of traction in



the market. To meet our customers' requests for an API 608-compliant valve and accomplish our goals, we built a completely new valve platform with an 800-pound ANSI class body. This valve also meets the API 607 sixth edition specification, and it has an option to be built with an integral fugitive-emission body," explained Shawn.

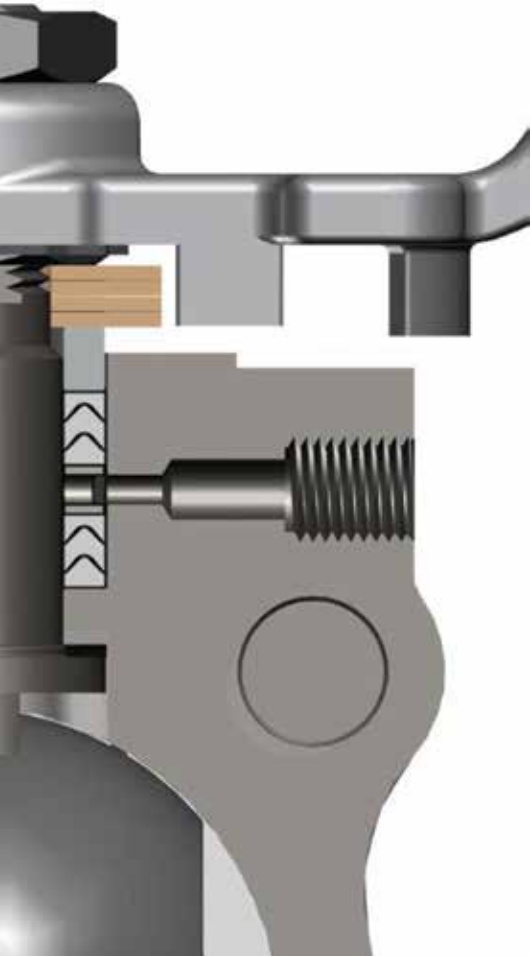
SURPASSING INDUSTRY EXPECTATIONS

The American Petroleum Institute ("API") is seen as a world leader in specifications that ensure plant safety and valve performance. Smith-Cooper International is committed to engineering Sharpe Valve products that comply with all these specifications, while in many cases exceeding them by designing products that are on the forefront of new API standards.

API 608 is a spec that has been in place for years, but the new 5th edition increases the scope of the specification and strives to enhance safety through valve design. A major part of API 608 mandates that the valve manufacturer design the valve stem to fail only outside of the pressure cavity. In other words, if the stem breaks, it must break outside of the valve body.



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is much larger, and the valve has a greatly increased stem sealing area," revealed Gary Skeber, VP Sharpe National Sales.

With an ever increasing number of valves in the market, verifying product quality is a big concern in today's plant environment. API 591 is a specification that tests and confirms the design and manufacturing quality of a valve. API 591 is typically done for a specific end user by a designated third party to capture a complete picture of the valve. Every aspect of the valve is tested to ensure proper performance in the field. Dimensions are checked against the manufacturers published data. Pressure tests of the castings and soft parts are performed. Radiography and metallurgical tests are done to verify the quality and composition of the material. Documentation and valve tagging are also checked. It is an extensive test procedure designed to ensure quality valve performance and safety. Several Sharpe Valve products have recently gone through API 591 testing for a major oil company, and as a result, the company has been added to that large customer's AML list.

The American Petroleum Institute has also recently addressed the subject of valve fugitive emissions. API 641 is being written to establish a uniform procedure for the evaluation of emission performance of process valves. This specification is being driven by the new EPA fugitive emissions requirements and the need for end users to comply – or face accelerating federal fines.

"When Sharpe designed the API 608-compliant 80 Series valves, we took a new approach to monitoring stem emissions by incorporating monitoring ports tapped directly into the stem seal area; by adding this product functionality, we are able to detect a stem seal leak before it gets outside of the valve," Gary recounted.

"Most valve manufactures avoid this issue by using a stem made from a hard material like 17-4 stainless, which does not have the corrosion resistance of 316 stainless. When Sharpe designed our new API 608-compliant 80 Series valves, we listened to many of our customers who told us that they wanted a 316 stem for corrosion resistance in a valve that complies with API 608. To meet the requirements of this specification and use a 316 stainless stem, we designed a much larger heavy duty valve, which has increased stem diameter to meet the higher torque requirements. By increasing the stem diameter, our stem to ball engagement



Series 70 & 80
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TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

Smith-Cooper International remains committed to listening to its customers' needs. The company continues to provide the semi-custom and engineered product solutions that Sharpe Valve customers have come to expect, and this commitment is also evident in the highly diversified product portfolio and service offering.

With this diverse product offering, Smith-Cooper can serve a broad array of industries. This multi-industry approach has allowed the company and its Sharpe Valve products to not only stay competitive but also to operate on the cutting edge of the market. Accordingly, the value proposition remains quite compelling. For Sharpe Valve products, the value proposition continues to be supported by a high level of service, an experienced staff of valve specialists, well-trained technical support, and strong inventory levels. All these factors have helped the company maintain its leading position in the marketplace.

"Known for offering superior customer service, Smith-Cooper continues to build strong brand awareness through Sharpe Valve products and the services that support this offering. We strive to simplify the significant complexity facing our customers, and provide them with high quality products and responsive solutions in a timely fashion. We take advantage of our four strategically located facilities and continually work with our shipping partners to improve service across the world. Our goal is to exceed customer expectations, and since many customers require just-in-time deliveries, we provide same-day will-call, same-day UPS, and one or two-day deliveries on many shipments. For Sharpe Valve products, we provide quick turnaround of actuation and testing



services as well," said Jason Hild, Chief Operating Officer.

"Our philosophy is simple: always take care of the customer, which is why we have expanded our distribution centers to Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, and Vancouver. We have had to outperform the older, more established domestic valve and fittings companies in America. Our logistical advantages allow us to work faster, better and more economically than our competitors. With a commitment to having the right inventory, in the right place, at the right time, we have gained a lot of recognition in the industry throughout the years. And our commitment to quality and customer service drives the core of our company. We listen to the customer... and our company is small enough that we can respond quickly, but big enough that we can take care of business for the most demanding customers in the United States," said Bob Cooper.



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