

Simplify boat building

CUSTOMER TESTIMONIAL – NIMBUS PRODUKTION

It's full speed ahead for leisure craft production at Nimbus Produktion i Visby AB, a boat builder on the island of Gotland, Sweden. Demand skyrocketed, so boat building in its factory is continuously streamlined to meet production demands. One efficiency effort involved installation of Åkerströms' remote-control system for overhead cranes. Using portable, wireless radio transmitters, builders hoist heavy parts while working and moving freely around the boat. This enables quick, safe work. Builders who run the system now have full control over clumsy, heavy boat parts.

Precision, rigorous quality control, and genuine hand-crafted work summarize boat building at the Nimbus factory. Everything is built by hand – by boat builders who are organized into expert groups for tasks such as lamination, crafting special details, carpentry, motor installation, mounting all small details, and inspecting final results. The boats are built in modules that are assembled like a big puzzle: everything must fit exactly and must be positioned in the right place at the right time during production. Stringent quality-control procedures are built into each production phase.

"In the boat building industry, we're somewhat of a lone wolf when it comes to using wireless remote control," says Olle Grundström, quality manager at Nimbus Produktion i Visby. "And we continuously develop and improve ways in which we work. That's why introducing wireless remote control was the obvious choice for various production phases, which could thus become easier, faster, safer, and better from an ergonomics perspective."

The lamination group builds the hull, i.e., the boat's skeleton. First, gelcoat is sprayed into the boat's mold. After drying, various fiberglass mats are hand laid into the hull. Then the hull goes to the trimming unit. Here, for example, hull windows/ports are cut out and a propeller hole is made. This is also where heavy parts, such as the deck and motor, are hoisted using an overhead crane that's operated with Åkerströms' wireless remote-control system. Wireless control particularly simplifies laying the deck, which is then sealed to the hull.



Wireless remote-control facilitates fast work

Before, overhead cranes were run via a maneuvering unit with a cable that builders had to pull along with them when they wanted to hoist and move boat parts. The cable made it impossible to walk around the boat to work on it. Now builders have radio transmitters in their hands or pockets, so they can simply hoist the heavy deck from the floor and lower it with millimeter precision onto the hull – regardless of where they're standing. No cables interrupt work.

In 1999, Nimbus Produktion i Visby installed its first wireless remote-control system for overhead cranes. Today, the cranes are controlled remotely at three points in the production line. The builders use Åkerströms' Remotus 8000, a total system with transmitters and receivers for most types of overhead cranes.

After the hull and deck are made, the boat is rolled into the assembly hall. Here, experienced fitters mount the pantry, shower, woodwork, and equipment. The deck is hoisted and sealed with the hull. Then the boat is finished off and goes through a final check, where the lamination and carpentry is inspected with more critical eyes than those of new boat owners. Each boat gets a shower in the test basin to determine if there are any leaks. The motor and other equipment are also tested. The goal? To avoid problems after delivery.

Rigorous quality control

Quality control constitutes a cornerstone of Nimbus boat manufacturing. The company holds EU certification for leisure craft, so Det Norska Veritas (a quality auditor) may come at any time to check that everything is done correctly.

Using remote controlled overhead cranes, the boat is lifted out of the basin for one final cleaning. After that, the shiny masterpiece is packaged in protective material. The multiple ton boat is then hoisted and positioned outside the factory until it's delivered to the customer who ordered it. All boats are ordered; not one is stored in a warehouse.

"Wireless remote control is a great aid when we have to hoist the heavy, bulky, finished boats," says Grundström. "We have total control over the boat, and we can go around it as we lift it."

Nimbus Boats AB is one of Europe's leading leisure craft manufacturers. The Viamare Boats AB Group includes brands such as Nimbus, Storebro, Ryds, and Maxi. Nimbus Boats employs about 500, of which 50% work in the Visby factory, where 300 boats are built annually. Demand for leisure craft boats means that Nimbus Boats AB must increase production by at least 20%. That's why the company is buying yet another shipyard on the island of Gotland, Sweden and is hiring about 50 new employees.

