

"The solutions provided by MMEC saved us a ton of money. This allowed Alamon to be significantly more competitive in our pricing, which led to not only growth in sales, but the need to hire new employees. The service Bill provided was vital to the success in this area of our business." Brad Cronk, President

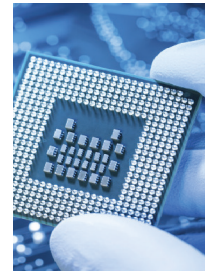
COST REDUCTION AND PRODUCT IMPROVEMENT GENERATES SALES, CREATES JOBS

ABOUT. Founded in 1975 in Kalispell Montana, Alamon Telco built its foundation by providing Central Office contract labor to the telecommunications industry. Forty years later, Alamon has grown to operate five separate divisions, covering a wide range of expertise to telecommunications companies, communications equipment manufacturers, as well as power utility companies throughout the U.S. With approximately 150 employees, Alamon takes pride in being a very community-minded company, active in supporting youth and non-profit activities.

Cost Reduction and Product Improvement Generates Sales, Creates Jobs

THE CHALLENGE. Traditionally, the internal condition of utility poles has been inspected by drilling large-bore holes into the wood and then visually investigating for signs of rot and decay. This is a very subjective method that can be destructive to the integrity of the pole. Alamon developed a new and better inspection method by using a technologically advanced instrument called the Resistograph. The Resistograph's on-board 1/8" micro-needle bores through the pole, and as it penetrates the wood, it registers the amount of resistance to the drilling needle. Good, solid wood creates more resistance while decay within the pole gives less resistance. That drilling data is captured by the Resistograph, analyzed, and then displayed in graph format for the inspector and customer, providing verifiable evidence of a pole's condition. In addition to the advanced data readings, the size of the drilling needle is a fraction the size of traditional bore holes, and is virtually non-destructive to the pole. The OME drilling needles used for the Resistograph were very expensive, and consisted of materials that at times gave inconsistent results, thus contributing to re-work scenarios. Alamon approached the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC), a NIST MEP affiliate, for assistance with cost reduction and product improvement.

MEP'S ROLE. The MMEC helped Alamon research and identify a new source for the drilling needles at a much lower cost. The needle cost savings enabled higher field production and greatly lowered a key operating expense. MMEC also helped Alamon achieve even higher performance of its product through incorporation of harder materials in the drilling needle, increasing the effectiveness and accuracy of the Resistograph, and greatly reducing rework scenarios. This competitive edge has largely contributed to increasing Alamon's client base, leading to employee growth. Due to lower material costs and



RESULTS



Created **25** new jobs



\$5,900,000 in new and retained sales



\$530,000 in cost savings



\$4,925,072 investment

NEXT STEPS



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more consistent and accurate readings from the Resistograph instrument, this technology is starting to transform the industry. The Resistograph non-destructively allows two to three times more poles to be tested in a day over the traditional inspection methods, with verifiably higher accuracy of the inspection results.