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FROM THE EDITOR

When you read through this issue's Portfolio of Pacesetter Plants you'll witness the result of high energy costs and more stringent environmental regulations: the wholesale replacement of steam plants with combined-heat-and-power (CHP) systems at large institutions and manufacturing plants. This change has been a long time coming; the days of steam-only systems where significant electrical loads exist are numbered.

The editors visited seven new CHP plants located adjacent to US Routes 95 and 91 in a virtual straight line from Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ, to the UMass campus in Amherst. You can connect all the dots with a 300-mile drive. Visiting seven facilities within a calendar week illuminates their similarities like a beacon in the night.

Most obvious perhaps is CHP market-sector dominance by two manufacturers—Solar Turbines Inc, San Diego, and Rentech Boiler Systems Inc, Abilene, Tex. Solar installed at least one of its GTs (total of nine units) at every location except Co-op City. Rentech supplied a total of six standby, low-emissions packaged steam generators to the group as well as eight heat-recovery steam generators (HRSGs).

Many readers probably are familiar with Solar, a company known in the 10 MW-and-under GT sector as well as GE is in the aero and large-frame markets. But Rentech is another matter. Jack Rentz (photo) opened for business only 12 years ago "to make a living." He was president of ABCO Industries Inc which Rentz left "because it was just time to go." In 2007, Rentech's total revenues topped \$80 million. And you probably thought the boiler business was dead.



The first D-type packaged boiler was built by Rentech in 1999 for BASF, Freeport, Tex. Rentz designed it. The first HRSG also was shipped in 1999, to the University of California in San Diego. Rentz designed that unit, too.

Today, three Rentech companies occupy a 37-acre site which boasts easy truck access to the Gulf Coast as well as a rail spur for direct access to the Union Pacific. Some of the largest shop-assembled boilers ever built in the US (up to 400,000 lb/hr) have been shipped via these routes to their final destinations, often traveling from the Gulf Coast to the Northeast by barge. Here what each of the companies does:

- Rentech Boiler Systems Inc designs and sells new boilers for three primary markets: power generation, refining, and petrochemicals.
- Rentech Boiler Services Inc does the bulk of the company's assembly work as a subcontractor to Boiler Systems. It also specializes in field repairs and upgrades of "any make of boiler, anywhere, anytime."
- Frontier Welded Products Inc handles most of the company's structural-steel work, ductwork fabrication, insulation installation, and painting.

Total number of employees at last count: 300. Most reside in the Abilene area. Shop space: almost 100,000 ft². Rentz attributes much of the company's success to a dedicated workforce of talented individuals. Key to business success, he says, is about attracting and retaining the best employees and allowing them to do their jobs with minimal interference. Rentz continues, "We recognize that it's healthy to have fun at work and if an employee is not having fun then it could be our fault."

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