

PRESS-RELEASE

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Opel Replaces its Metal Pretreatment System

Significant savings achieved with the change from zinc-phosphating pretreatment to Oxsilan[®] technology

Adam Opel GmbH in Kaiserslautern, Germany, is an important supplier of chassis components. The components manufactured at the Kaiserslautern site include, amongst others, front and rear axles for the Opel Insignia. This is where Chemetall GmbH has successfully converted the pretreatment line to their new Oxsilan[®] technology. Excellent results have been obtained in terms of major increases in productivity, improvements in quality and six digit cost savings.

For decades Adam Opel GmbH in Kaiserslautern has enjoyed an excellent reputation as a component manufacturer. The company based in the Rhineland-Palatinate produces mainly axle parts for the Opel Insignia - the car of the year 2009. The parts are pretreated to give them greater corrosion protection and to optimize paint adhesion, and it is this pretreatment line which has recently been converted to the new Oxsilan technology.

It took two years of development work between Chemetall and Opel Kaiserslautern, together with the close involvement of the Development Center in Rüsselsheim, during which time the process was extensively tested to ensure optimum performance and quality. The Oxsilan process passed all the tests defined in the global specifications. At Opel, these comprised a cyclic corrosion test, a salt spray test, a paint adhesion test and a gravelometer test. In the summer of 2008, the new Oxsilan process was smoothly integrated into the Opel plant in Kaiserslautern, and the new process has been in operation since February 2009.

Aside from other modifications in the production flow, the introduction of the Oxsilan process has resulted in an increase in the speed of the line from 2.4 to 3.1 m/min and thus in a significant improvement in plant productivity. The treatment time before with the phosphate process was 90 seconds however now the plant is operating with Oxsilan it is only 60.

Moreover, with the Oxsilan process it was possible to remove one of the post rinse stages. Therefore in contrast to conventional phosphating, the new process requires significantly less rinse water.

Oxsilan technology is also low in sludge. Only small amounts of ferric hydroxide form due to the substantially reduced pickling attack on steel in the conversion bath. Accordingly, the treatment of the waste water is simplified. At Opel a separate waste water treatment is no longer necessary because the rinse water can be recycled and used again. Also, cost-intensive heating is not required since the Oxsilan bath operates at ambient temperature; approx. 25°C.

Commenting on the new process the Opel plant manager responsible, Michael Schmitt: "Our expectations have been exceeded. The Oxsilan technology enables us to produce better quality components and at the same time at a lower cost. This process is another step in securing the future of the Opel Kaiserslautern site." Since the process conversion, Opel has achieved a 30-percent increase in productivity and six digit cost savings. Schmitt adds: "Based on these positive results, other Opel sites are examining the potential for changing to Oxsilan."

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Oxsilan® is a registered trademark of Chemetall.

Further Information

About Oxsilan®

During the Oxsilan pretreatment, functional silanes are segregated as reaction products on the metal surface. These thin and functional coatings of 30 to 80 nm layer gauges are significantly below those of known zinc phosphate layers. Oxsilan pretreated substrates such as steel, cast steel, galvanized steel, aluminum and magnesium meet all requirements of the subsequent painting processes with regards to corrosion resistance and paint adhesion. It delivers at least comparable quality requirements with market-standard paint systems of zinc phosphating.

About Chemetall GmbH

Chemetall, a division of Rockwood Holdings, Inc. (NYSE: ROC), is a leading global suppliers of special chemicals with a focus on processes for the surface treatment of metals and plastics, as well as selected areas of fine chemicals, including lithium and cesium. Chemetall is headquartered in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, and comprises about 40 companies worldwide. With 3,000 employees, the Group achieved sales of about € 847 million (in 2008).

Photos can be obtained from publicrelations@chemetall.com

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The Oxsilan® project team is delighted with the successful process conversion. Right to left: Plant Manager Michael Schmitt, Rainer Welker, Ernst-Peter Amat-Kreft, Peter Bachert from Opel Kaiserslautern, and Karsten Heimroth, Chemetall Key Account Manager for Opel.

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Introduction of the Oxsilan process significantly improved productivity at the Kaiserslautern plant.

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Prior to their final assembly, chassis components are coated with a cataphoretic paint (E-Coat).

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The Oxsilan process made it possible to reduce the number of stages in the pretreatment line. A spray method provides axle parts with long-term corrosion protection. A separate waste water treatment is no longer necessary as the rinse water can be recycled and used again.

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	<p>Paint finished and pre-assembled axle parts awaiting transport.</p> <p>© Chemetall</p>
	<p>Car of the year 2009: Opel Insignia. Powerful design, top dynamics for maximum safety, perfect ergonomics and an inspired handling experience.</p> <p>© GM Corp.</p>

Table:

The following table details the savings that were achieved at the Opel plant in Kaiserlautern / Germany by switching to the new Oxsilan technology resulting in a six digit reduction in costs:

Savings in energy for heating	-16%
Elimination of phosphate sludge	-3%
Savings in water consumption	-5%
Reduced maintenance expenditures (heating circuit, acid rinse)	-18%
Savings in electrical energy	-8%
Savings in waste water treatment	-50%

Photos in higher resolution can be obtained from publicrelations@chemetall.com