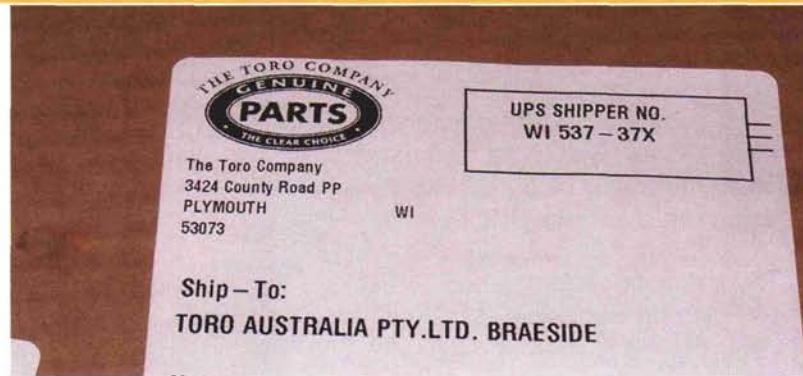


TECHNICALLY  
SPEAKING WITH 

Steve Spuhler, *Merril Hills Country Club*



# Toro Parts Distribution

*For most of us, after we get a new piece of equipment we have two main concerns: parts and service. At Toro, parts are considered inseparable from service, and they grade themselves on this. I had the opportunity to tour Toro's Worldwide Parts Distribution Center, just minutes away from the historic Road America racing circuit, in Plymouth, Wisconsin. My host for the day was Jon Scott, Operations Manager for Worldwide Parts Distribution.*

From the outside the facility looks plain; it's all white with a red band around the top. It doesn't suggest all the activity going on inside. It's also huge, covering 400,000 square feet. This is the ultimate parts room, with four miles of racks.

The Center currently houses 81,000 different parts for Lawn Boy, WheelHorse, and all of Toro's Divisions, including golf, irrigation, consumer, and landscape/grounds. Parts for Hayter aren't stocked here as that equipment is only sold in Europe.

The oldest piece of equipment they stock parts for is a 1964 Parkmaster. Before new equipment is introduced to the public, all parts are fully stocked at the distribution center. Parts are usually kept in stock for at least twelve to fifteen years, longer if needed. Need an engine? They have 65 different models in stock — gas and diesel. Believe me, there's more than one of each on the shelf.

Those people who have a "well organized" parts room would shake their heads in disbelief if they saw the rack setup. Parts on the shelves have nothing in common with the ones next to them. You might find a caster wheel next to a bedknife next to a throttle cable, etc. You won't find all the bedknives, caster wheels, rotary blades, control levers, etc., grouped in the same place. Each has its own spot on different shelves in differ-

ent areas. There's a reason and method to this "madness." It's a lot harder to pick the wrong part when everything on the shelf is dissimilar. The right part is picked 99.85% of the time. Some of that remaining 0.15% error comes from the part being mislabeled before it arrives at the center. The one category that is

grouped together is the paper products. Operators and parts manuals, service manuals, brochures, etc., are all found in the same aisle. The goal for filling orders is 98%.

Of the 81,000 parts in stock, approximately 70,000 are found in the "small" parts room. Nuts, bolts, screws and anything else that can comfortably fit in the palm of your hand are found there. The room is 40,000 square feet, with aisle upon aisle of fixed and round revolving bins.

Seventy-six full-time employees work overlapping shifts. This ensures that any

heavy influx of orders can be accommodated. First shift is from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. They start the day stocking orders and loading racks with parts that have arrived. Receiving gets 50% of its parts from Toro and the remainder from individual parts vendors. The dies for older Toro parts are also stored here. If there is a large enough demand for a part, the die is shipped to Toro headquarters where it is routed to a parts vendor. The new parts and the die are then sent back here. Mid-shift is from



*Yes, that's a door at the end of the aisle.*

10:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. They handle a lot of the processing of the direct-ship orders. Second shift is from 3:30 p.m. until midnight. They handle the last two outbound shipments as well as Receiving.

Every day there are 1500 to 3000 orders. Between 8000 and 16,000 different parts are picked each day. The busiest time of the year is late May to early June, which coincides with the opening of many of the golf courses in the U.S. The turnaround time for an order is same day for direct-ship and three-to-four days for stock orders to a distributor.

Toro works with UPS to take care of their shipping needs. UPS picks up three shipments daily: 2:30 p.m., 7:30 p.m., and 9:00 p.m. Direct-ship orders received by 5:00 p.m. CST leave by 9:00 p.m. In the Continental U.S., direct-ship orders are sent by ground and air. If you put a pin in a map where the facility is located and make a circle around it that encompasses two-day ground transit with UPS, it reaches as far south as Atlanta. Everything outside that circle is shipped Second Day Air, and billed Ground pricing. The labeler in the shipping department is loaded with all the zip codes in the country. If it detects a zip code outside the circle, the package is automatically labeled Second Day Air. For Next Day delivery, Toro now has the

ASAP program. If the dealer has it, you get it Next Day at Ground pricing. If it needs to come direct from Toro (ASAP+), you get it Next Day at Ground pricing plus \$20, an average savings of \$16 from regular Next Day Air pricing. Orders over 70 lbs. are charged retail UPS shipping rates. Plans are currently in the works to develop a direct-ship program to Europe.

International shipping is done via sea and air. In Europe, you actually get your parts from the regional warehouse in Stuttgart, Germany. If a part is ordered three separate times in one year, it's automatically kept in stock in Stuttgart. General stock orders to Stuttgart are sent by ocean container, which takes about 21 days to arrive. Air shipments are also made to Stuttgart as well as the other European distributors. The goal for air freight delivery to Europe is 48 hours. Ocean containers are sent to Australia and Japan and supplemented with air deliveries as well. The vast majority of shipping is done via air freight. **-OC**



*the "small" parts room*



*ready to be shipped*



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