

Deere reorganizes Lawn & Garden

RALEIGH, N.C. — Streamlined product development, focused dealer service and enhanced customer satisfaction are behind a new market-based structure recently implemented by the John Deere Lawn & Grounds Care Division based here.

The division is structured into product groups to serve key markets: commercial, golf & turf (golf, commercial and sports field); lawn & garden products (rear-engine riding mowers through tractors); and power products (hand-held and walk-behinds).

Each group has responsibility to develop new products, support the retailer organization and fill orders, advertise products and support end users. All product groups share support services such as public relations and overall business development.

"This is not a major upheaval of jobs and people, but more a realignment to position John Deere for an aggressive effort in what we have identified as our key markets," said Bob Tracinski, manager of public relations for the new division.

EPA APPROVES PRIMO'S WETTABLE POWDER

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The federal Environmental Protection Agency has approved registration of Primo WSB, a new wettable powder formulation packaged in water-soluble bags. Primo WSB, a product of Greensboro, N.C.-based Ciba, may be used to regulate turf growth on golf courses. The new Primo product is also labeled for putting surfaces.

Field testing

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withstand the constant buffeting with cut grass, water and dirt.

Then, the company heard about the SoMat Model 2100 FCS, the first commercially-available device capable of multiple-channel data collection in field-testing applications. The Model 2100 FCS consists of a series of stackable modules which are mated together in a bus-like architecture and packaged in an aluminum case for rugged field testing applications. When the test request for the 3810 came in

from the engineering department, Jacobsen had already purchased a four-channel 2100 FCS and had gained some experience with the unit.

The prototype was set up with the 2100 FCS and appropriate inputs for strain gauge pressure transducers. A laptop computer was used to program the 2100 FCS. Then, it was taken out to a local golf course for a number of endurance runs which focused on cross-cutting cycles which involve stopping and starting drive motors every 15 to 20 seconds.

Back in the lab, the device was downloaded into a laptop computer running SoMat Test Control Software (TCS) which downloads the data and displays it on the screen as desired. It was immediately apparent that start-up spikes in the hydraulic reel motors in the prototype design were of concern.

Collecting three channels of data at one time, it was relatively easy to trace the spike from the drain line to the valve to the motor and determine the cause of the problem was an electrical solenoid valve used in the prototype. The response time of the valve was so short that it produced a pulse that could be tracked throughout the hydraulic system by graphing the three channels of data simultaneously on the screen.

The solution was replacing the valve with a special soft start-up model that ramped up to the desired speed. Collecting only a single channel at a time would have made it very difficult to sort out the relative effects of each of the components in the hydraulic line. Other important aspects of the testing program included strain gauge work on critical frame areas which insure that structural limits would not be exceeded when the four-wheel drive option was added to the mower. Temperature testing for various hydraulic components was also conducted.

With the one-channel device it was necessary to download data into the desktop computer after each run which took about a half-hour per run.

A laptop computer can be connected to the SoMat model 2100 FCS to view data immediately after the test is completed — or even in real time, while the test is running. This time-saving feature makes it possible to immediately determine whether appropriate data is being generated so that a test can be re-run immediately if necessary.

Generally, the model 2100 FCS is bolted to the fender of the equipment, although the latest models have gloveboxes into which the units can be tucked. The unit can be self-powered with three 9-volt batteries thus eliminating the need to provide power from the vehicle for short duration tests. The entire unit, including laptop computer, fits into one oversized briefcase which can be packed as carry-on luggage.

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