

Houston Delivers Value With WATCONNECT®



The value proposition of Watlow's standard product line is proving to be a competitive advantage. The speed and quality built into the manufacturing process of the WATCONNECT® control panels manufactured in Houston was key in winning business.

In the power generation industry, reducing turbine startup time can mean millions of dollars for power companies. Getting turbines up to speed faster allows end users to better respond to power market needs and meet spikes in demand. If a plant takes too long to come online, competitors have the chance to profit from market opportunities. Minutes matter.

A leading company in the industry is working to reduce startup time for their turbines by about 30 minutes. The challenge in bringing up the power turbines faster creates mechanical stress on the equipment. Engineers have found that the top of the turbine casing heats up faster than the bottom during the more rapid startup. The temperature differential can make operating the turbine unsafe and can potentially reduce its lifespan.

To make the temperature more uniform, the company is working with A&E Engineering to install heating blankets to evenly warm the turbine casing. Sensors located around the equipment send information to WATCONNECT C4 control panels that monitor the temperature of the casing. Before becoming standard equipment on new projects and retrofits on existing plants, the heating blankets will be verified at the company's testing facility that has a large-scale turbine system.

WATCONNECT has already earned UL and cUL compliance certification for the U.S. and Canada. Watlow is seeking European certification — a vital piece of the puzzle for the company moving forward.

Rich Vlah, outside sales engineer, said it was important to get involved in the design process before the company determined the engineering specifications of the project. After demonstrating the value of Watlow standard products to the company during that process, the engineering requirements were written to match the capabilities of the WATCONNECT C4. A&E Engineering included the panel for the company.

“The benefits of a standard panel start with supply chain optimization and enhanced manufacturability. That leads to advantages with delivery and cost. We can manufacture our product in volume, very quickly in just 10 days. And along with that speed comes high quality — which typically do not go hand in hand,” Rich said. “A lot of companies can build a panel, but they don’t have the thermal system expertise combined with the cost, speed, quality and features that Watlow offers.

“The key to the sale was the value proposition made possible through Watlow in Houston. The capability they’ve built combining speed with quality is a rare combination.”