



Safe and bound

IT WASN'T TOO LONG AGO THAT **LAMINEX**, A SPECIALIST SUPPLIER OF PREMIUM DECORATIVE SURFACES, WAS AT A CROSSROADS TRYING TO SOLVE A LOAD RESTRAINT ISSUE THAT HAD TAKEN A PHYSICAL TOLL ON SOME OF ITS DRIVERS. THANKS TO **EXTE'S** LOAD BINDERS, THE DAYS OF MANUALLY SECURING LOADS ARE NOW A THING OF THE PAST.

For Damien O'Dwyer, Operator and OH&S Representative for Laminex in Melbourne, ensuring that each of the company's deliveries are secured and transported to their destination on time, is a job he takes great pride in. But that pride was put to the test in 2009, when Damien himself suffered a severe shoulder injury caused by excessive use of manual load restraint binders. The injury required Damien to undergo a full shoulder reconstruction, ultimately putting him out of action for almost a year. In a cruel twist of fate, Damien ended up injuring his other shoulder while in rehab. Rather than dwelling on his misfortune, though, he decided to help his company find a solution.

"Our Melbourne Airport depot runs up to 21 rigids that deliver packaged boards around the state daily," he says. "The boards come in various sizes, requiring securely fastened load restraints, which have to be tied down manually multiple times. But after I injured my shoulder, along with other complaints from

drivers, Laminex decided it was best to source an automated option that didn't require us to physically tighten the restraints."

Laminex's National Operations Manager, Frank Fleming, initially thought he had found the solution in the form of an electrically powered

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load binder system, but after trialling it for three months, the system proved insufficient. "That's when we started looking at other brands in the market and came across Forest Centre, the Australian dealer for Sweden's ExTe air-operated automatic load binders." After six months of extensive testing on two rigids, Laminex rolled out the ExTe load binders for installation not just for Melbourne, but on all 120 curtain-sider rigids and trailers

across its Australian fleet, replacing manual hand ratchets and winches.

"The ExTe load binders have provided us with a much safer and less physically demanding environment for our drivers," Frank says. "In the five years since installing them, we haven't

had any injury concerns and Damien has been able to go about his business without any relapse, which is terrific."

The ExTe load binders operate from the truck's air system with no relationship between load tension achieved and driver's physical input. Once activated, the units quickly apply pre-tension, and continue to provide unlimited automatic post-tensioning, even if the load settles or shifts during transport.

"This type of auto tensioning load restraint system is particularly well suited to packs of timber products such as those distributed by Laminex, but also for other difficult load types from used pallets, pre-formed steel products and scaffolding through to power poles, for example," explains Rey Kell of Forest Centre. "Adjusting tension for more fragile load types is as simple as adjusting air pressure with a regulator, either for the entire system or for each individual or group of load binders." According to Damien, the presence of the ExTe load binders has made his job and that of his fellow drivers pain free. "As opposed to the traditional way of having to strain yourself just to tie everything down, now all I do is place the restraints in their correct positions and open the air-valve to apply the tension," he says. "It's certainly much easier to secure the load, and most importantly, it's much safer for the driver."

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