

Canadian Company Successfully Sniffs Out Foreign Markets

From gas detectors to body sniffers, a small Nepean (near Ottawa) company is banking on its unique CD-2 Human Occupancy Detector (HOD) to reach new export markets.

Armstrong Monitoring Corp. (AMC) has been selling gas detection equipment across Canada and in the United States for 16 years, but its latest claim to fame comes with the HOD.

A unique product

It was five years ago that the Department of Immigration in Ottawa — based on a referral from the National Research Council — approached AMC to develop a product that could detect people hiding in containers.

“Hailed as the most accurate and dependable instrument to detect human presence in a minimum of time,” says AMC Vice-President, Technology and Resources, Don Segall, “our HOD has already achieved stunning results.”

In 1994, the first year HOD was employed in foreign ports with Canadian-bound shipments, the number of ship-board stowaways arriving in Canadian ports was cut almost in half, decreasing from 422 to 226.

“Shipping containers are the means used by most illegal immigrants arriving in Canada,” Segall explains, “so we wanted to protect the lives at risk by offering a reliable yet handy detection tool.”

Here’s how it works. When a person is breathing, vast amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂) are produced. By monitoring CO₂ levels relative to “clean air,” the device can indicate the likely presence of humans.

The highly portable battery-operated CD-2 HOD comes complete with accessories — a rigid-tipped sampling wand, or needles for insertion through minute openings — to allow sampling in spaces not easily accessible.

From Canadian success to export success

It didn’t take long for the international immigration community to get wind of this safety device, which allows for the early detection and rescue of people in enclosed areas.

“The HOD has been selected to provide additional

safety along German borders,” says Segall, “with a first order of 40 instruments being brought into service just last December.”

And that’s just a start. The company already has contacts in other parts of the world, including the United States, Hong Kong, Poland, Estonia and the Czech Republic.

Perseverance pays off

“We had to surmount many obstacles in Germany,” admits Segall, “such as language, different electrical and contractual standards, human engineering issues and ergonomics.”

Most of these obstacles the company overcame on its own.

“While we did most of the work on our own through sheer perseverance,” says Segall, “trade commissioners at the Canadian Embassy in Bonn gave us official backing by accompanying us during our initial meeting with German end-users.”

Since language can be a huge barrier, Segall recommends that exporters get a solid agent or interpreter who can act on their behalf.

“In addition to perseverance,” says Segall, “exporters should never underestimate the importance of customer service when trying to establish themselves in new markets.”

He also attributes his company’s success in Germany to that country’s unique geographical location, surrounded by the North and Baltic seas to the northwest and by former communist countries to the northeast and southeast.

For more information on AMC — manufacturer of a complete line of gas analysis and gas, liquid and leak detection instruments used in commercial and industrial applications — contact company Vice-President, Technology and Resources, Don Segall, Tel.: (613) 225-9531, Fax: (613) 225-6965, e-mail: info@armstrongmonitoring.com, Internet: <http://www.armstrongmonitoring.com>