Counterfeits can kill

There's more evidence than ever before that fake valve products and parts are detrimental to those who purchase them. Don't risk lives, reliability and profits just to save a buck.

KHIMJI FLOW EQUIPMENTS PVT. LTD.

We who live and work in societies with long, strong histories of industrial responsibility and regulatory compliance are accustomed to choosing freely among a variety of sources for components and replacement parts.

"Original" or "factory" parts come from the company that built the machine and are understood to be the same as those used on the production line. Original equipment manufacturer (OEM) components are expected to be made by the company that supplies the factory, and therefore equivalent to factory parts in every way but the name. Aftermarket parts come from a variety of sources and are trusted according to the brands under which they are built or sold.

We've chosen our parts based on real or perceived quality, value, supplier reputation or support, and suitability for intended purposes. Some prove better than others, but we've rarely been surprised by nonfunctioning or dangerous parts. Maybe this is because it traditionally has taken a significant investment in manufacturing equipment and the supply chain to establish a brand, make the parts and bring them to market.

But not anymore.

A growing pain

Moving beyond Rolex watches, low-quality valves and brand-name companies without requisite testing facilities, counterfeiters are producing fake industrial valves and components complete with bogus marks, packaging, documentation and certifications. Also creeping into the supply chain are

imitations or knock-offs that wear their own brands (or none) but deliberately mimic the appearance of famous-maker products.

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC,www.iccwbo.org) estimates that trademark counterfeiting accounts for about 6% of world trade. It's worth an estimated $350 billion annually.

"The International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition (IACC,www.iacc.org) reports the majority of counterfeit valves come from Asia, primarily China, and that Eastern Europe also has become a significant source. The manufacture and distribution of counterfeit valves and industrial products has been linked to organized crime. Counterfeit approval marks have been found on products built with substandard materials - which pose potential shock and fire hazards to plants and maintenance employees.

It would be one thing if counterfeiting only compromised patents, copyrights and sales revenues. But in the case of industrial valves, it's also a matter of functionality. They put on fake nameplates, logos and certifications and the valves don't work. A counterfeit valve subjected to a critical service environment would be expected to handle stresses however it just blows up. And this is not limited to just KFEL – our competitors are seeing the same thing with their products. Users may not realize this until years later, when those fake valves are called on to work and fail instead.

Wild Wild Web

One contributor is Internet-based businesses that routinely sell millions of dollars worth of industrial equipment and valves that enable the smallest shop to market and deliver items worldwide. These speedy, global transactions can be helpful, but participants reportedly don't conduct as much verification and certification as traditional manufacturer-to-distributor channels.

Some purchasers accept counterfeiting and knowingly buy replicated valves. Some people actually choose to purchase counterfeit products, assuming they're paying less for products that are equal in

value to the legitimate products they mimic, People who deliberately choose to buy counterfeit products aren't victims. Instead, they support the criminally deceptive practices of counterfeiters by creating a built-in market for their goods. If consumers stopped using counterfeit products, counterfeiting wouldn't disappear. However, in many cases, counterfeiting would be less profitable and more risky without these easy sales.

It would be one thing if counterfeiting only compromised patents, copyrights and sales revenues. But in the case of industrial components, it's also a matter of safety.

We expect parts to fit, function and endure. But counterfeits generally use cheaper and less safe materials, such as flammable plastics, less durable alloys, loose tolerances and inadequate electroplating. Copiers cut production costs by not respecting quality and safety standards, imitating external appearances with no knowledge or understanding of the technologies needed to produce functional, durable parts.

Some fake valves are obvious on inspection. Visible clues can include packaging differences, alternate countries of origin or oddball serial number formats or differences in the look of subcomponents. Names and logos might be misspelled. Increasingly however, the more sophisticated fakes are essentially identical under routine inspection or testing. The hidden differences, determinable only by experts, may have serious consequences.

Know your suppliers

Perhaps the best way to avoid counterfeit devices is to buy from manufacturers and distributors that are well known to your own company and its engineers. However, it's also vital to maintain frequent personal contact with authorized suppliers because counterfeiters can set up false representatives and corporations to support their fake products and documentation.

When you're in a rush, you might not check some certifications as close as possible, So, besides checking that documents aren't bitmapped images and telephoning to confirm suppliers claims and identities, buyers also must be responsible for their valves audit trails, and make sure where, when and who makes these products.

At the end of it "Being Penny wise and Pound Foolish" is not really a myth !!