

The art of sending the perfect package

# The letter of the law

Corinna Hardt tells *Logistics Business* why an increasing number of companies in the field of postal services and logistics maximise their profits with the help of automated weighing systems.

Not only is the use of verified scales a legal requirement, it also increases the weighing precision substantially and therefore prevents incorrect billing of postage. Hence, companies using this technology save money on a daily basis.

Exemplary calculation of the potential profit gain of a verified system is crucial. Due to an imprecise determination of the weights a typical postal operator bills about 3% of all letters incorrectly. With a daily throughput of about 150,000 standard letters this amounts to a total of 4,500 letters per day which, if the weight had been determined more precisely, should have been billed according to the next higher category.

A standard letter mailed via Deutsche Post costs 0.55€, the next category up costs 0.90€. The difference of 0.35€ per incorrectly weighed letter amounts to a potential additional revenue of  $4500 \times 0.35€ = 1575€$  per day, which could be achieved by the use of a more precise weighing system. The verification ensures that the scales maintain this higher precision over a certain time, the validity period of the verification.

## Ready for use

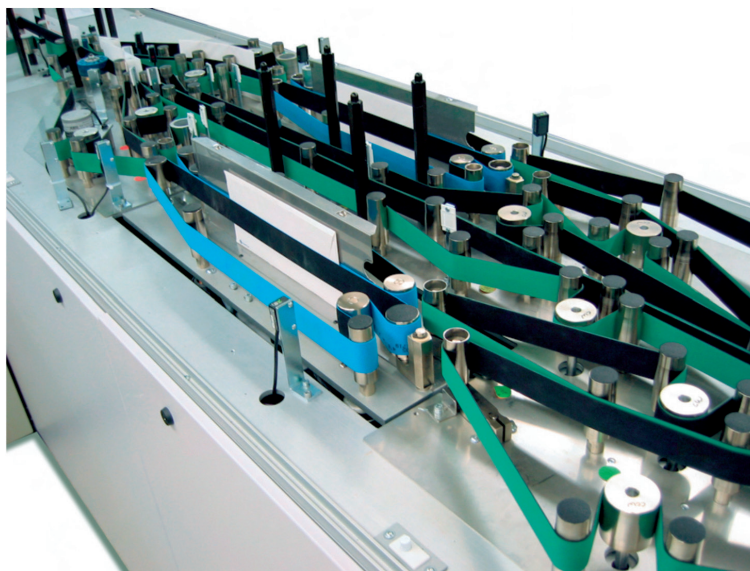
In the field of parcel logistics improved revenues of more than 2000€ per day are common. In addition to this profit gain the

use of precise and verified scales protects the postal operator from possible fines in the event of an inspection.

In the near future these fines could amount to considerable sums. In this context it should be taken into account that even scales which are only kept ready for use are required to be verified, even if they are currently not active.

A typical example for the application of automated scales for the postage determination is their integration into letter sorting systems.

In spring 2008 OCS Checkweighers GmbH,



in cooperation with Böwe Bell + Howell, had the first letter transport scale with a speed of 3.4 m/s at PIN Mail Sachsen GmbH in Leipzig, verified with a calibration value of just 1 gram by the Saxon state authority for metrology and verification.

## Legally required verification

This system is based on the established HC series and is implemented as a 2-track system with two parallel, independent tracks working with a shared alibi memory.

The weighcells are based on monoblocks and work according to the principle of Electro Magnetic Force Restoration (EMFR), which allows for highly precise weighing results and high transport speeds.

This facilitates the integration of the scales into the flow of the sorting system. Due to the compact design the transport system can be mounted on the weighcell as one complete unit.

OCS Checkweighers GmbH, a subsidiary company of Wipotec GmbH, is the only manufacturer in the whole of Europe to have an EC type examination certificate valid for letter transport scales with speeds up to 4 m/s and a calibration value of 0.5 grams.

Additionally, in 2008 OCS and Wipotec obtained the certificate for the approval of their quality management systems according to the measurement devices directive, which entitles the companies to perform conformity inspections according to module D (manufacturer calibration and verification) of the directive.

There are still a lot of uncertainties and interpretation problems concerning the question of whether a verification is mandatory

for scales which are used to determine the postage of letters or parcels.

The verification is a legally required inspection of measuring instruments to test whether they comply with the verification regulations, especially concerning their margins of error. It aids consumer protection and is a requirement to make measuring instruments legal for trade.

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