

# Automatic labelling of gas pressure regulators

## Closed data chain from order input to shipment

At the start of the year Elster-Instromet took another significant step towards improving the quality of its products. Almost all gas pressure regulators up to and including those with a nominal size of DN 40 are now made ready for shipment in an automatic system that completes several steps.

The system is designed in the form of a turntable with six stations including a feed station. The following steps are split between the stations:

- Screw on the sealing cap
- Affix the sealing label
- Print and apply the type label

The final station of the system also incorporates its main area of potential: The type label is printed and applied automatically. The actual novelty of this is in the background, however.

The tested regulators are identified with a unique barcode on the test rig. When it reaches the labelling position of this system, the system then automatically scans the barcode which is on the spring dome.



Fig. 3: System with scanner and monitor for activating and deactivating the orders



Fig. 1: The type label is applied automatically

This is then transferred online to the new SAP database. This already contains all the information about the specific code:

- the test data for the regulator
- the relevant order data, such as customer and order number
- the product numbers of the regulators for this order

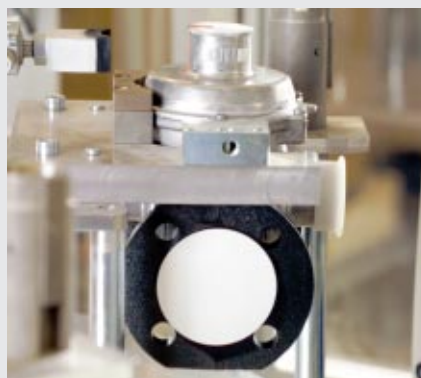


Fig. 2: M2R MF with barcode identification

SAP now links the barcode it has scanned to a product number from the order and sends a complete data record for the label to the printer. Only then is the type label printed and applied to the unit automatically. This results in a complete data chain from inputting the order to labelling the finished unit. We have thus taken a step forwards on the path of continuous

process improvements whose benefits we can summarise as follows:

- The product numbers are managed automatically by the SAP system.
- After application, the barcode is scanned with the encrypted product number and checked to ensure that the number is legible and plausible.
- The product number can also be used to call up the test data records for regulators from up to ten years ago from the SAP database. That means perfect traceability of all medium pressure regulators for the customer.

We will start to implement this system for medium pressure regulators in May 2007. This automation process and the fact that the information can be retrieved at any time means a further step towards data transparency.