

DIRECT RELIEF

Direct Relief turned to Newcastle Systems for mobile powered workstations that speed the handling of crucial medicines and health care supplies.

CUSTOMER

Direct Relief has been helping the needy of the world for nearly 70 years. Two successful businessmen who fled the Nazis during World War II founded Direct Relief, originally to help friends they left behind in Europe rebuild their lives after the war. It has since grown into an effective relief network that provides medicines and health supplies to refugees and the disadvantaged within 80 countries and also within all 50 U.S. states.

WORKPLACE

Direct Relief operates a single 112,000 square foot distribution facility in Santa Barbara, CA.

PRODUCTS IN USE

(12) NB and PC Series mobile powered workstations powered by the PowerSwap Nucleus Lithium Power System.



Operator packs orders on the fly with a PC Series heavy-duty mobile powered workstation.

CHALLENGE

Pharmaceutical companies and medical manufacturers donate most of the medicines and supplies that the facility distributes. Storage space is limited, so the ability to receive and then ship products fast is crucial. Adding to the need for efficiency is a desire to get these products to the people who need them as quickly as possible.

Besides gaining efficiencies, there is the critical requirement of reaching 100% accuracy when distributing medicines. Since Direct Relief's inventory is comprised of donated items, SKUs are constantly changing, which also adds to the complexity.

"For us, every efficiency that we can squeeze really does get to the point of helping more people. That's our bottom-line equivalent." says Thomas Tighe, president and CEO.

SOLUTION

In order to improve speed while still maintaining accuracy, the facility recently moved to paperless processing and introduced Newcastle carts with integrated lithium power that have improved operations tremendously. The 12 carts are currently used for inbound receiving, double-checking picked orders, and as mobile pack stations. Their mobility allows them to move to wherever work requires them.

The carts can run just about any peripheral Direct Relief could want on a cart. The receiving carts, for instance, carry a laptop, monitor, scanner, printer, an electronic scale, supplies and a wastebasket. Both the carts and medicines are wheeled to storage locations or forward picking bins for direct putaway. This saves additional handoffs and assures that the products are placed in correct locations.

“We are not tied to a wall plug with the battery system, so it allows us to be mobile now,” explains Sean Copeland, operations manager.

Similarly, the carts used in the packing area also contain computers and other

peripherals, including printers, to create shipping labels and packing lists. The cart’s batteries provide more than enough power to operate for the entire shift, but they are also hot swappable should the need arise for more power.

RESULTS

The combination of paperless processing along with the carts has led to some impressive results. **“In the first month that it went live, we had an increase of 40% of the number of batches that we received. We did them more accurately and in 20% less time,”** says Tighe.



Direct Relief’s mobile powered receiving cart consisting of an NB Series workstation with PowerSwap Nucleus Lithium Power System.



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*Thomas Tighe, President and CEO
Direct Relief*

ABOUT NEWCASTLE SYSTEMS

Newcastle Systems is committed to providing innovative solutions that help make Auto-ID technology and other hardware truly mobile and information more readily available across an entire enterprise.