

Dr. Shrink

Michigan-based Dr. Shrink has been serving the wind energy industry by providing high-quality protection for valuable turbine components for nearly a decade.

By Stephen Sisk

One of the core values of the wind energy industry has always been environmental protection—reducing both harmful emissions caused by traditional energy sources and reliance on precious natural resources.

For Dr. Shrink, a 22-year-old business specializing in shrink-wrap for applications ranging from marine to construction to heavy industry, wind energy is a natural fit. Environmental protection is what Dr. Shrink does. Only in this case, the company's entire business is focused on helping its customers protect their valuable assets from the environment.

In 1992, following several years of experience with shrink wrapping application, Michael Stenberg started Dr. Shrink as a training and distribution operation out of his single-car garage in Traverse City, Michigan.

Stenberg founded the company with the intention of being a single-source to whom customers could turn for any shrink wrapping need, whether it be the shrink wrap material itself, installation products such as tools and accessories, or intangibles like expert advice, information, and training.

"We started out in the marine industry and moved outward into areas such as industrial applications, and disaster relief, among

other areas," Stenberg said. "Shrink wrap works in almost any industry."

After establishing a presence in industrial markets, the company expanded its reach into other markets, one of which was the wind energy industry. Eight years ago, Dr. Shrink attended the American Wind Energy Association's WINDPOWER Conference & Exhibition, and began to gain the attention—and business—of wind energy clients.

"We eventually started working with and providing materials for GE, Mitsubishi, Vestas, Suzlon—all of the big manufacturers," Stenberg said. The company's involvement in the wind energy industry has evolved and grown in the years since. "As the wind industry has gone up and down, we've kept customers, and now we have a fair amount of European business through our distributors in Germany, Norway, and the UK."

For the most part, wind energy applications consist of covering vital wind turbine components with shrink wrap to protect against harmful elements those components could face either in transit, in warehouse storage, or at the turbine lay-down site prior to erection and installation.

"When wind turbines are completely assembled, they're totally weather proof," Stenberg said.

"What we do is offer the products for covering blades, tower ends, nacelles—all the different pieces—while they're being transported and stored. Even if a turbine is put into a lay-down field and is left there for two years, our products would still protect it. We'll warranty them for two years in any climate."

The materials used in the premium shrink wrap offered by Dr. Shrink allow the product to be useful in a wide temperature range from 40 degrees Celsius down to negative 40 degrees Celsius. Additional features and enhancements such as dessicants and anticorrosives allow for additional specialized protection.

The goal, according to Stenberg, is to make sure that a customer's valuable assets are completely protected from damage caused by environmental factors in any climate that they may face.

The shrink wrap process involves unrolling the raw shrink wrap material—which is delivered on long spools, and ranges in width from 12 feet to 60 feet, and lengths up to 229 feet—to the required dimensions; draping the material over the component; trimming to size and creating a seam; and then using a propane fired heat tool to shrink the material to the component.

Looking forward, Stenberg said Dr. Shrink will stay attuned to the



needs of the wind energy industry as needs vary.

“We’re always coming up with new products that may work for different industries. Even as the wind industry evolves, they may need different items for longer-term protection. There may be different applications as new materials are being used.

We’ll evolve along with them and make new products to meet those needs.”

Dr. Shrink operates out of a 73,000-square-foot facility in Manistee, Michigan, which houses a minimum of one million pounds of product in stock at all times. Additionally, the company carries installation tools, access

doors, specialized tape, and full range of all the other accessories associated with shrink wrap applications.

“Whatever is needed to do any job, we have it sitting in stock for immediate shipment,” Stenberg said. “We can ship, generally speaking, about 98 percent of all orders same day.”