

PANEL DISCUSSION

STRATEGIES TO EXTEND THE LIFE OF AGING POWER DISTRIBUTION EQUIPMENT

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Abstract – Power distribution equipment installed in existing paper mills continue to serve as critical components in driving mill operational reliability and safety. As these assemblies age, diminishing availability of renewal parts and emerging new power distribution offerings suggest support of a compelling case for replacement. However, given management reluctance to approve capital funding and commit to extended mill outages for replacement often drives decisions to find creative ways extend the life of existing equipment rather than replacing it with new. In this panel session, facility and corporate engineers with 100+ combined years of experience explore proven strategies to keep aging power distribution equipment operating reliably and cost-effective. Strategies outlining life-cycle extension retrofits, condition monitoring, modernization, and predictive tools are shared to help mills reduce downtime and optimize budgets in a capital constrained environment.

PANELIST INFORMATION

Todd Legette, P.E. received a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville in 1987. He began his career with International Paper at the Texarkana Mill serving in a Plant Engineering role. In 1990, Todd transferred to IP's Corporate Engineering Division in Mobile, Alabama and worked on various large capital projects at facilities across the company. In 2001 Todd joined Ips Corporate Technology Group. In 2017, he was promoted to Group Leader for the Instrument/Electrical Precision Maintenance team. In 2020, he was also named Group Leader for the EPD and Motors teams. Today he serves in this same capacity, IP Containerboard Reliability. Todd is a Senior Member of the IEEE, past chair of the IEEE IAS Pulp & Paper Industry Committee (PPIC), recipient of the 2022 IEEE IAS PPIC Meritorious Service award and incoming Co-Chair of the 2027 IEEE IAS Pulp & Paper Industry Technical Conference scheduled in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Greg Drewiske, P.E., received a BSEE from the Milwaukee School of Engineering in 1991. He presently serves as Manager, Engineering & Capital for Billerud Americas Corporation. He has over 30 years of experience in the pulp and paper industry serving in various Corporate and Mill Electrical Engineering and Management roles for Consolidated Papers, StoraEnso, NewPage Corporation, Verso Corporation and Billerud Americas Corporation. Development and execution of various sized capital projects has been a large part of his role throughout the years. He is a past Chairman of the TAPPI Process Control Electrical & Information PLC Subcommittee, past Chairman of the IEEE PPIC Drives and Control Systems Subcommittee and past Chairman of the IEEE PPIC National Committee. He has authored and presented technical papers at TAPPI, IEEE Pulp and Paper, and the IEEE Electrical Safety Workshop. He is a registered Professional Engineer in the state of Wisconsin.

Walter Simpson, graduated from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Georgia in 1978 with an Associate of Science in Agricultural Engineering. In 1980, he graduated from the University of Georgia with a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Engineering. Walter began his career with Union Carbide Agricultural Products Corporation as a Production Engineer in 1980. The company was acquired by Rhone-Poulenc in 1986, followed by Aventis in 1999, and finally Bayer in 2002. He was promoted to the position of Maintenance Leader in 2006 and then Technology Leader in 2010, responsible for Engineering and Maintenance, leading numerous automation upgrade and electrical reliability projects. In 2011, Walter joined Rayonier's Pulp Mill (now RYAM) in Fernandina Beach, Florida where he served as Senior Plant Electrical Engineer. Retiring from industry in 2025, Walter has started a consulting business Engineering Group of the SE, where he remains active in supporting local mills and other industrial facilities in the process industries.