



Plasma cutting and gouging process approved for use on Ruby pipeline

HANOVER, N.H.—For the first time ever, Hypertherm Powermax plasma systems are helping to create better weld repairs and tie-in points on a natural gas pipeline. The plasma process was successfully used on the Ruby Pipeline, a 675 mile, 42 inch wide pipeline under construction in the western United States.

"The Hypertherm plasma technology makes the industry much more efficient and works to eliminate hazards associated with the use of the old hand grinders," said Sonny Weems, Superintendent of Associated Pipe Line Contractors.

Associated Pipe Line is using Hypertherm plasma in two different ways: to gouge out excess metal, and to make cuts on individual sections of pipe during the tie-in process. In the past, pipe line builders needing to gouge out excess metal had to rely on hand grinding. The process was lengthy—typically taking at least 45 minutes for each small area—and dangerous with flying debris causing an average of one serious eye injury per day.

With plasma, the work takes less than 15 minutes, and eye injuries are eliminated since there is no flying debris. "Making the switch to Hypertherm and using plasma for gouging has reduced grinding from a major part of the weld repair process to a minor clean-up role," said Kenny Glaze, a welder and Local 798 union member.

In addition to speed and safety, plasma torches weigh less than hand grinders, so they are easier to handle and offer better visibility to the work area. This ease of use and visibility are critical since even the smallest mistake can result in having to remove and replace a complete section of pipe.

Hypertherm plasma is also used to smooth out the ends of each individual piece of pipe, before the pipe is tied in to the line. In the past, Associated, like other pipeline companies, used oxyfuel. But because the resulting cut wasn't as smooth or precise as plasma, secondary work was always needed. Now, thanks to plasma, the crew can immediately weld the pipe to the line.

Hypertherm designs and manufactures advanced metal cutting systems for use in a variety of industries such as shipbuilding, manufacturing, and automotive repair. Its product line includes handheld and mechanized plasma and laser systems, consumables, as well as CNC motion and height controls and cutting software. Hypertherm systems are trusted for performance and reliability that results in increased productivity and profitability for tens of thousands of businesses. The New Hampshire based company's reputation for metal cutting innovation dates back more than 40 years, to 1968, with Hypertherm's invention of water injection plasma cutting. The company, consistently named one of the best places to work in America, has more than 1,000 associates along with operations and partner representation worldwide.

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Contact: Michelle Avila at 603-643-3441 or pr@hypertherm.com

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