



Let's make welding cool, clever and clean

After 100 days as managing director (MD) of KEMPER, a technological leader in the filtration of ultrafine dust particles produced by welding fumes, Frederic Lanz, who has welding experience from both the technology and occupational safety perspectives,

reflects on what he has achieved so far and describes his future vision for welded fabrications.

Following several years as a welding equipment innovator for the Finnish welding equipment manufacturer, Kemppi, Frederic Lanz took up the MD position for KEMPER in Germany at the beginning of 2019.

What has changed? "It feels the same

but different at the same time. In principle, I talk to the same people on the customer side but I have a different perspective on the welding issue as a whole. My focus is now clearly on the health of our employees. Occupational safety is a very big and exciting topic. I feel like I'm on a mission. As a pioneer in welding fume extraction, this attitude is a daily reality at KEMPER," he begins.

Occupational safety is constantly increasing in relevance, he continues. Employers see the productivity of healthy welders as an argument for investing in effective extraction technology. "Specialist welding dealers, who usually define themselves by their chosen brand of welding technology, are experiencing growing interest due to attractive sales in OH&S equipment. The fact that KEMPER has doubled its turnover in the past eight years speaks for this," he says.

Where is this change coming from? "Awareness of the need for occupational safety is growing on all sides. Clean air is much more an issue in companies than it used to be. While rumours such as milk helping to mitigate against welding fumes date back a very long time, virtually everyone in the industry knows nowadays that welding fumes are harmful. Today's welders are much more informed via social media or blogs such as safe-welding.com so no one is willing to inhale welding fumes unnecessarily.

"We are also seeing a change in awareness among employers. Better air makes people less ill, bringing long term health to employees and better workplace productivity. In the short term, occupational safety ensures a high level of employee satisfaction and, at the end of the day, legal standards are



Thanks to the simple connection to the KEMPER Connect portal, energy- and process-efficient operation are realised in just a few moments via a mobile wireless connection. This portal is also able to control KEMPER extraction systems automatically.

also becoming ever more stringent. This is not only the case here in Germany. Recently, for example, the occupational safety requirements in Great Britain have been tightened and France also has strict guidelines on how to carry out extraction 'properly,'" he reveals.

Globally, however, Lanz says enormous gaps remain. "We are trying to take care of this. We have just strategically repositioned ourselves at KEMPER to increase sales a further 50% by 2025. We aim to achieve this goal through targeted internationalisation and we have recorded growth rates in the worldwide occupational safety market for years to validate this potential."

The challenges for sustainable occupational health and safety? "Extraction technology is still perceived as peripheral. In the future, however, occupational health and safety will have to be adopted as a core component of welding operations. Just as welders no longer work without welding helmets, welding fume extraction will also become part of the daily equipment used at work," Lanz responds.

"We need to give occupational safety a certain amount of coolness, though,"

he continues. "There was a time when skiers would never wear helmets. Today, it is quite simply one of the many cool accessories that nobody goes without on the slopes. Examples where health plays a role can often be found in many other areas and we are working to make safety cool in the metalworking field of today. Switching on the extraction system should be as instinctive as putting on a car seat belt," he argues.

Attractive industrial design, coupled with superior functionality and connectivity are KEMPER's current focuses. "Extraction systems are not just heavy square boxes. Our devices are fun and designed so that welders will want to use them," he assures.

But chic design alone cannot mitigate against serious employee health issues. Welders are attracted to cool and personalised product images, as we see in the decorations of welding helmets. But the issue of occupational health and safety has much wider implications.

"A former head of the International Institute of Welding (IIW) once said that welding is a '3D technology: dirty, dull and dangerous'. I've been preaching for years that we should make welding



Above: KEMPER's ProfiMaster is a robust fume extraction filter unit for occasional to frequent use and low to medium extraction requirements. Features include: a high capacity disposable filter; easy filter replacement; and a 360° rotating and swivelling exhaust hood for optimum adjustment during welding.

Right: KEMPER combines spot extraction units with shop/room ventilation systems for the overall benefit of all of the customer's employees.



a 3C business: cool, clever and clean," says Lanz.

While 'cool' implies comfort, it is also about an extraction technology that welders will absolutely want to use; 'clever' because the equipment and systems operate completely automatically, reducing the effort on the welder and increasing efficiency; and 'clean' so that welders can work in a clean production environment and stay healthy.

"When it comes to occupational safety, air sampling in the production environment considers not just the individual welder but also the air quality for all other employees. We at KEMPER combine spot extraction units with shop/room ventilation systems – the spot extraction units for optimal extraction at source and the shop systems for the overall benefit of everyone in the area. In the future, it will no longer be possible to comply with legal limits in any other way," Lanz suggests.

But digitalisation offers broader opportunities: "Production of the future involves a combination of purposeful connectivity, where machines communicate with each other; when the welding torch and the extraction system send

data about when and how much extraction has to be applied, for example.

"Predictive maintenance becomes smart maintenance. A system no longer only indicates when its own filter is saturated, networked production thinks ahead and has analytics systems to optimise service calls and guarantee maximum service life of the system for the customer," he predicts.

"At KEMPER, we are currently thinking digitally about all our products. The right infrastructure is now in place and it is up to manufacturing companies to fully exploit this potential.

"We are not resting on our laurels, though. We are continuing to develop new extraction technology to meet our future metalworking needs," Lanz concludes. ■



KEMPER's CleanAirTower SF 9000 room ventilation system is capable of cleaning 9 000 m³ of air per hour. Thanks to its comparatively low height, it can also be installed in plants with low ceiling heights.