



Hargreaves proves its fitness for nuclear

Ducting specialist Hargreaves gained a valuable benchmark of its position in the nuclear industry through the Fit For Nuclear assessment.

Bury-based Hargreaves has supplied ductwork and ventilation products to the UK nuclear industry since the 1950s, and is a leading supplier to the decommissioning and operations markets. But with the UK new build programme gearing up, the ambitious company wanted to make sure it was ready for the opportunities.

"We saw Fit For Nuclear as a mechanism to test our readiness for this market, and to engage with the key stakeholders in the industry," says managing director Tim Hopkinson. **"It's given us a benchmark of where we sit in the industry as a business that is able to support the nuclear sector, and supported the reasoning behind the initiatives we're taking."**

With a history going back to the 1870s, Hargreaves is now part of the international M+W Group. It has grown its business by focusing on specialised high-integrity ventilation solutions for the most demanding markets, offering a service from design, through fabrication and installation, to testing.

"We provide a complete turnkey ventilation solution, predominantly for the nuclear market," Hopkinson explains.

"Our products are focused on ventilation for safety and extraction of radioactive particles and contaminated air,

rather than ventilation for comfort. These are often standard galvanised ductwork, and also stainless steel."

Mark Simpson, quality manager at Hargreaves, completed the online F4N questionnaire, a unique diagnostic tool to help manufacturing companies measure their capabilities against the standards demanded by the nuclear top tier.

"The online assessment was relatively straightforward," he says. **"We fill out a lot of prequalification documents for customer, and this was a similar process."**

The initial automated assessment rated Hargreaves at the highest level. The next step was a site visit from the Fit For Nuclear assessors, led by supply chain consultant Martin Ride.

"We had a really good feeling about Hargreaves from the moment we entered their premises," Ride says. **"We had a very clear understanding of the business and its strong safety culture before we had even left the reception area, an emphasis which they maintained throughout our visit."**

Ride then worked with the Hargreaves team to produce a more detailed report and action plan.





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“Our background in the nuclear industry meant that we were familiar with this kind of process,” says Simpson.

“The one real surprise to me was the focus on the strategic end of the process. Most audits tend to focus on doing rather than thinking, but it was clear to us why that was needed.”

Hargreaves worked through the strategic recommendations in parallel with other initiatives including significant investment in IT, integrating building information modelling (BIM) techniques through the business, and ongoing work with local schools to attract young talent into the industry.

“Fit For Nuclear told us that we are going in the right direction,” says Simpson.

The F4N assessment gave Hargreaves a pragmatic and independent view of its operations, notes Ride.

“The management team have made great use of what is clearly a well-managed continuous improvement and action plan, as part of their normal business way of working. They’re a really good example for others to follow and learn from,” he says.

The Hargreaves team also visited the Nuclear AMRC’s research factory in South Yorkshire to better understand what other support they could get, and are looking at ways to further improve the quality of the company’s fabrication with the centre’s welding team.

“We can try to continue to develop our quality and consistently improve our business, because ultimately that’s what nuclear is about,” Hopkinson says. “It’s an industry that’s primarily focused on quality.”

www.mw-hargreaves.net

Fit For Nuclear (F4N) helps UK manufacturers get ready to bid for work in the civil nuclear supply chain.



F4N was developed by the Nuclear AMRC with leading industrial partners, and is delivered in partnership with the Manufacturing Advisory Service, part of the government-backed Business Growth Service.

F4N also offers grants to companies based in England for business improvement or R&D projects.

Begin your F4N journey: namrc.co.uk/services/f4n



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