

# Rapid Wraps Erase Records

• *by Huston Keith* ●●●●●●●●●●

“Time is money,” it is often said. No one knows better than food packagers - especially if they have to wrap products that are small and inexpensive, like hard candies. They push machinery producers to ever faster rates. In turn, films have to be designed to keep up, not always an easy task.

## GOT THE SPEED DOWN COLD

For many high-speed applications, packagers often turn to cold seal. Designed with special adhesives that seal only with pressure, these films avoid the delays in heating a conventional sealant to melt enough to fuse the layers to close the package. Just gaining a tiny fraction of a second on each package, cold seals can show speed increases in hundreds of packages per minute.

In fact, cold seal materials can run as fast as any machine can run, asserts Brian Conrad of Milprint, Oshkosh, WI, the leading supplier of cold seal. Packagers can easily save the slight upcharge by not having to buy extra machines and the space and maintenance they require. Also cold seal saves energy and the cost of maintaining heating parts, one of the quickest wear items. And there is no risk of film burn-through.

Originally designed for chocolate candies that can melt at conventional heat seal temperatures, cold seal has seen considerable growth for high speed applications where the heat is not a problem. Typically it is an oriented polypropylene (OPP) with the special adhesive pattern applied to one side. If printing is required, another OPP is reverse-printed and laminated to the cold seal film. ExxonMobil, AET and others supply films to converters to print, laminate and apply cold seals.

## KEEPING THE HEAT ON

While cold seals offer speed advantages, they do not offer as hermetic a seal as many products need.. What of products requiring a hermetic seal? Are they doomed to be laggards in the race? Not anymore, as innovative suppliers have now developed films with low temperature heat sealants that permit sealing up to 2,000 packages per minute!

New coextruded films from Trespaphan, Greensboro, NC, with an ultra-wide sealing range can wrap almost 1500 packages per minute with a two inch cut-off length, declares Jon Knight, Marketing Director. The secret is a proprietary blend of polymers in the sealing layer that provide an industry-leading seal range of 125°F.

Not only can they seal at temperatures as low as 175°F, saving energy and machine wear-and-tear, but also they give operators more flexibility in daily operations. Knight says bakery and confectionery packagers have raced to replace **coated OPP's** with Trespaphan's **coextruded** films.

Packagers also want the tamper evidence of heat seals, says Sarah Laing, Market Development Manager for UCB Films of Smyrna, GA. The proprietary coating on its blown OPP film allows sealing at 145-195°F, enabling customers to run two-inch packs at nearly 2000 per minute.

Its films are especially popular for extending shelf life of bakery products to allow even international distribution. Lotus, a Belgian cookie producer, obtains 6-9 months with UCB's new high barrier PVdC-coated film, running at 450 packs per minute for a five-inch long cookie. Producers of high-fat cakes are especially interested in this film, Laing adds.

Not to be outrun, Multifilm, Elgin, IL also offers its SuperSeal film that has been proven to run at least 2000 two-inch packs per minute, says Olle Mannertorp, president of this division of Constantia, a leading flexible packaging company in Europe. Not only that, it offers a high barrier metallized version with no loss in speed. The secret is a cast coextruded polypropylene laminated to oriented polyester, giving it the stiffness for high speeds.

One layer of the coex film is a special polypropylene with a sealing temperature so low it can be used for sealing chocolates. Kara Chocolates, Orem, UT, selected SuperSeal because its product was deep frozen to hold for seasonal sales, and cold seal was not adequate. The metallization on the cast film highlights the reverse printed graphics on the polyester to provide prestige to Kara's premium products.

## **RACE TO THE FINISH**

Bakery and confection are not the only potential markets for high speed flow wrap. Laing says soap packagers in Europe like its film, where hermetic seals are more popular. Mannertorp sees potential in several markets, including fractional pack coffee, fruit snacks and energy bars. All agree that the market is responding warmly to these films that help products run to market faster.