

New Zealand Insulators 2020 (the year in review)

JANUARY

Our Temuka factory returns to normal full production on the 6th January, as per usual we have a few staff starting a few days prior, making sure the factory is prepared for the start-up. Things work to plan after some productive shutdown maintenance – well done Team.

We lock in plans to start extending the factory working hours to cover 10-hour days and 6-day operation as we forecast a busy future.

Our waste and recycling program gets a boost as we say farewell to the rubbish skip/bin and now focus on recycling and every department across the factory receives a selection of coloured recycling bins. Good work everyone our grandchildren will learn to appreciate what we do now!

We learn a little about an overseas issue called Coronavirus and have a laugh at all the jokes, although at NZI we get our first lessons on how to wash our hands and stay healthy (little did we understand the impact this would have on us all).

FEBRUARY

We think about the full “Palindrome date” which was at 2am on 2nd Feb being 02:02:20 on 02/02/2020 interesting that the last occurring palindrome date was 11/11/1111 (only 909 years ago) and this won’t happen again this century, our grandchildren can’t blame us for that. But a little closer to NZI we have our 6 monthly fire evacuation practice exercise and Valentines Day comes and goes. Unfortunately not a lot of flowers turn up on our doorstep! We hear of the Coronavirus in China which seems to have the World Health Organisation a little worried. The Temuka factory starts ramping up with more staff and extra hours.

MARCH

Boom! Three cases of COVID-19 reported in NZ. Who would have thought then that we were all in for quite a ride thanks to this virus. Life continues on at NZI and we start getting ready for everyone’s “winter clothing” issue. It’s always nice to get some new company clothing supplied. We undertake some serious maintenance on some of our 8 kilns (each a bit bigger than a 20ft shipping container) along with redesign and builds for our horizontal CNC lathes and the installation of our first vertical CNC lathe, now referred to as “Big Red”.

We launch into full COVID-19 lockdown, although as expected NZI is an essential service provider and our focus turns to helping our customers keep the lights on for everyone sitting at home in full lockdown.

APRIL

Our business continues as an essential service provider to help support all network operators and their contractors. Our EAP service providers remind us all to stay positive, communicate with friends and family and enjoy some of that enforced weekend time at home. We all start to focus on the 23rd of April as the date we clear Lockdown. We all look forward to a long Easter break and everyone at NZI gets their annual medicals completed and the offer of flu vaccines (unfortunately no added protection from COVID-19).

MAY

We start to get a little used to managing the different COVID-19 lockdown levels across NZ but its nice to all drop into level 2.

Our weekly improvement form recipients continue to take a good haul of chocolate home each week as prizes for their great improvement ideas, plus the monthly draw for cash vouchers. Having a good idea has never been so easy!

JUNE

Time for a break as we all get to select our own individual pizza of choice for lunch (because we can and sharing is over rated anyway...) The EEA (Electrical Engineers Association) Conference is, like so many other events, cancelled for the year.

JULY

Our Company Directors visit to inspect all R&D development and factory improvement completed over the last few months, always an enjoyable day to have the whole team onsite.

We change a few things on how we stamp our products (just more improvements) that’s how we roll – continual improvement!

A new agency Poina Insulators (Spain) gets added to the NZI range to support NZ & Australian customers.

We continue to focus on Safety initiatives and using our inhouse “Safety Hub” IT system to manage our factory SOP’s and H&S system.

AUGUST

At NZI we encourage customers to inspect our factory, everyone is amazed at the effort/skill required to manufacture NZI quality products. Only then, can they understanding how and why we put a true 25-year warranty on our NZI product. We have a visit from a former General Manager John Barr (1990 - 1994). John is amazed at how the business has transformed over the years.

SEPTEMBER

Our website www.nzinsulators.co.nz gets a little work with updated photos of staff and some of our pets.

Our QA system gets a review and shake down ready for next year’s full external audit. Daylight savings kicks in and we all start to enjoy more daylight in the evenings. As expected, the Linesman competition (due to be held in Invercargill) gets cancelled, thanks to COVID-19.

OCTOBER

We start creating our preventative maintenance plan for work over the Christmas New Year period.

Our external H&S audit is completed and we pass with flying colours, the next biggie is the QA audit next year.

NOVEMBER

It’s party time as we prepare for our Christmas function. Always a good event to get all our staff from across NZ with their partners all in one location to celebrate another fantastic year in the history of NZI.

Check the NZI website for updated photos.

DECEMBER

We shuffle a few last-minute changes to our revised 2021 NZI product catalogue (these will be out any day soon). We have some staff working through the Christmas period to complete some urgent customer orders and also get on top of some factory/plant maintenance. Our plans are in place for the start-up and locking in our production schedules for Jan/Feb/ March/April 2021.

But maybe at last, there’s a little slow down and a chance to look back on the year past and our successes.

Some things most of us didn’t think had much relevance until a little earlier this year. My list of new and pre-existing terms to explain 2020:

Coronavirus, lockdown, social distancing, cluster, contact tracing, community spread, physical distancing, managed isolation, COVIDiot, quarantine, quarantini, virtual happy hour, new normal, super spreader, flattening of the curve, maskne, rona, COVID party, COVID bubble, pandemic, epidemic, essential business, self-isolation, incubation period and the list goes on and on and I’m sure there is more to come.

What a year 2020 has been, full of highs and the occasional plateau...

Over the year we celebrated these staff milestones, all celebrating their place in the NZI 25 years plus club:
Debbie S – 26 years, Peter Q - 28 years, Ian C – 29 years, Peter C – 29 years, Gary A – 29 years, Debbie C – 30 years, Heather G – 33 years, Warren C – 40 years, Rayleine P – 41 years.

We all believe it’s been another successful year – well done team.

Thank you all for the continued support during 2020 and we all hope 2021 is another year to remember for all the right reasons.

Chris van der Werff | General Manager

The photographs on the front of our 2020 Christmas card provide a little insight to our manufacturing and production processes which we complete onsite in our Temuka factory. We have of course manufactured insulators on this site in Temuka for over 97 years.

Our process starts from raw materials “won” from our own mine in Kakahu and finish with a completely New Zealand made insulator which of course are 100% individually electrically or mechanically tested and delivered to our customers with a NZI 25 year warranty.

These photos are a summary and of course there are many more processes involved, at NZI we always welcome visitors on site where we can explain in more detail the intricacy and high specification we manufacture our NZI products to.

1. Kakahu clay and sand prepared for clay production.
2. Filter pressing the prepared clay (drains the water from the clay “slip” under pressure).
3. Clay blanks being loaded on to a stillage after undergoing the pugging process.
4. Turning (forming an insulator using a lathe) an 11kV Pin Insulator.
5. Stamping the NZI logo on to a post insulator before glaze is applied.
6. Glazing a post insulator (glazing forms a barrier to water ingress and gives strength to the insulator).
7. Glazing a 510 low voltage insulator.
8. Fired 11kV insulators on a kiln truck.
9. Cementing metalwork to a 33kV Insulator.
10. Sulphur Cementing an 11kV Post Insulator.
11. Flashover testing of a 33kV Insulator.
12. Electrical test of an ALP 22/450 Insulator.
13. Despatch of a pallet of Insulators