

Millwrights finish state-of-the-art chemical production facility



Part of the crew building the new chemical plant at the Port of Redwood City, from left Local 102 members Chris Boyce, Felipe Alvarez, Joel Escutia, Clifton Stewart, Kevin Roeh, Danny Bravo, Sixto Gutierrez (Laborers) and superintendent Joe Lawrence, also Local 102.

‘The process is completely new, so it’s not your usual millwright work. It’s very challenging.’

Ahead of schedule, members of Millwrights Local 102 completed their work on a demonstration facility at the Port of Redwood City, which will incorporate a new technology for the production of industrial chemicals with significant environmental benefits. On September 18, they finished the final welds on the new plant.

“It feels good to be doing the right thing, working on something that’s environmentally friendly, and bringing work back to the U.S.,” says 30-year Local 102 member Joe Lawrence, field superintendent for Lloyd W. Aubry Company, general contractor for the project. “And it feels really good to be doing it with the best-trained millwright workforce.”

All the piping, alignment, welding, installation and construction work was performed by Local 102 millwrights, says Lawrence. “We built the steel structure, the overhead crane system, the electrical room, the control lab and the hammer mill.”

According to millwright foreman Chris Boyce,

“There’s a lot of new work here. The process is completely new, so it’s not your usual millwright work. It’s very challenging.”

All of the state-of-the-art processes, says welding foreman Joe “J-welder” Escutia, call for creativity. “Sometimes on some of these really hard welds, you just have to walk away, catch your breath and come back and try again. But we always get it.”

On occasion, the team even had to design some elements during the process. “It’s all new, so we were sometimes designing it as we went along,” says Lawrence. “We always say that millwrights are the people that make engineers look good, but that was really true this time. But we had a good team here, and we made it work. Our trade doesn’t get any better than this.”

Pete Johnson, president of the company that owns and operates the plant, said, “The crew did a great job. It’s a relatively new process, so on a project like this there are always new things to figure out. But we got it done!”