

NetCheck upgrade means more benefits for customers

NETCHECK, Wearcheck's user-friendly system which allows customers to receive sample results by e-mail and manage their oil analysis programme from their own computer, was recently upgraded and now offers customers even more benefits than before.

The most exciting new feature is that NetCheck now permits two-way communication. Customers can use the system to submit information to Wearcheck as well as to receive data.

'This makes submitting sample details and feedback much easier, quicker and more convenient for customers, and means that the information flow back to Wearcheck is integrated into the system immediately, so is more reliable,' says systems analyst Simon Robertson who was the main author of the software.

Aside from greater speed and ease of use, some of the advantages of the many enhanced technical features are:

- ◆ Customers can now generate a single page sample report printed on both sides instead of the three separate pages which used to be printed before - a big saving for companies with many samples.
- ◆ A new speed button bar reduces mouse clicks and enables users to perform tasks faster.



The NetCheck team: (front) technical consultant Gary Blevins with senior systems administrator Lorain de Bruin, and (back) Devi Armugam, who is now responsible for customer software support, and systems analyst Simon Robertson.

'About 40% of Wearcheck sample throughput is currently viewed using NetCheck and the number is increasing all the time,' says Lesley Crawford, Set Point divisional director of Wearcheck. 'We would like to encourage all of our customers to switch to the Netcheck system. It is free of charge and definitely the most efficient and cost-effective way of transmitting reports and feedback.'

Tom Hogarth, sales and technical consultant for the lubricants division of

Chemserve Systems in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, has been using Wearcheck for 12 years and recently switched to NetCheck. He has high praise for the system.

'I think NetCheck is fantastic. It is efficient and 100% on the spot. There is no waiting for mail, and we no longer experience any of the problems associated with faxing. I take the data off the computer and move it straight into my customer files - a big time-saver.'

NetCheck's new customer caretaker

Devi Armugam is Wearcheck's new frontline person for all client software. Her job is to provide support for NetCheck and InfoCheck, helping customers to solve problems and showing them how to gain maximum benefit from the programmes.

'New NetCheck customers will find the system very easy to use,' says Devi. 'I e-mail them the initial software and talk them through the installation process. I then e-mail their data base and go through the programme step by step, explaining how to use the different features. From then on, I am on hand to help with any queries as they arise.'

'I spend a lot of time on the phone and enjoy the contact with customers, especially the satisfaction of helping them in their work by enabling them to use our software more effectively.'

Before being promoted to customer software support towards the end of last year, Devi worked as a senior admin clerk responsible mainly for data capture. She joined Wearcheck 15 years ago after completing one-and-a-half years of a B Paed. Commerce degree at the University of Durban-Westville, and then deciding that teaching was not for her. Married with two children, Devi has also completed a number of computer courses over the years.

Regular NetCheck training courses for customers will be run by Gary Blevins in Johannesburg for people with Windows experience. The dates are published in the schedule on the back page. ✓

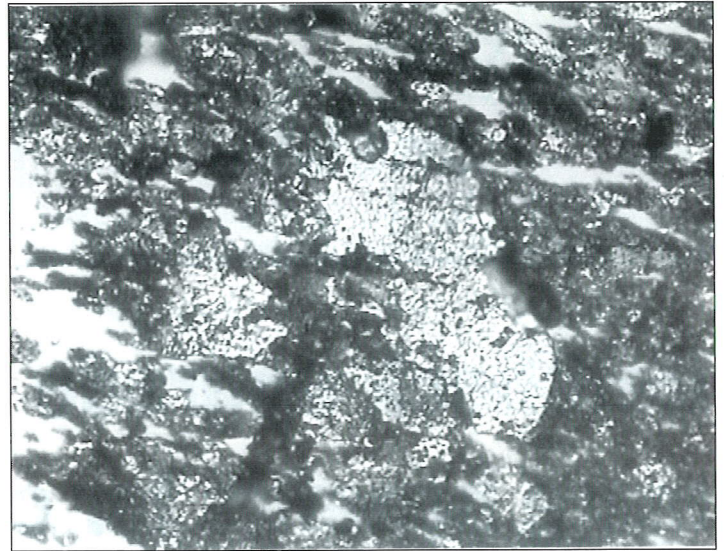
RPD ferrography is a valuable maintenance tool

WEARCHECK views RPD (rotary particle deposition) ferrography as an increasingly important element of its oil analysis programme, offering major benefits for companies in both the industrial and mobile sectors.

'It is a valuable extra tool in the maintenance engineer's toolbox which can be integrated into a maintenance programme to achieve substantial financial benefits at relatively low cost,' says Set Point divisional director of Wearcheck, Gary Brown. 'It is the only way we can ascertain the form (morphology) of the wear particles which, in some cases, is of immense help to our diagnosticians.'

'It is a one-off, in-depth additional test which we carry out by request when the diagnostician feels it is needed, for example when the spectrometric analysis for a component is abnormal, yet there is no apparent cause of the wear such as dirt or water. This is particularly important in a situation where dismantling may be an option. The ferrographic analysis could reveal that an overhaul may be premature - perhaps the machine was wearing 'more' as opposed to 'abnormally' - it may have been working in muddy conditions at full load, but essentially nothing was wrong.'

'It is not part of our standard range of tests because it



Wear debris magnified 500 times.

is labour-intensive and time-consuming and is only needed on isolated occasions. It backs up and complements regular oil analysis.'

Any component can have ferrographic analysis performed on it but it is especially suited to gear and/or roller bearing systems for components like differentials, final drive hubs and gearboxes (automotive and industrial).

How it works

Customers send an oil sample to the laboratory or fax a copy of a pre-paid upgrade card for a sample already at the lab. An RPD slide is prepared and examined under a compound microscope with up to 1000 x magnification. A photograph of the magnified debris showing any abnormalities is attached to the detailed analysis report.

Case study

A construction company involved in building a new national road in KwaZulu-Natal was operating a vibratory compactor which was old and nearing a major overhaul. Spectrometric oil analysis on the torque hub of the unit showed a very high concentration of iron, and the patch test had a heavy concentration of magnetic particles which was

visible to the naked eye, indicating a very severe wear situation.

The owner needed to know if this was gear or bearing wear because, if the bearings needed to be replaced, it would be a fairly quick and simple repair that could be carried out on site. On the other hand, if the gears were badly worn then this would entail a major repair that would have to be carried out at the central workshops. Further in-depth testing was required so an RPD ferrogram was carried out and critical gear wear was identified.

Although the RPD ferrogram did not save the construction company money on repair costs as a full overhaul was already planned, it did allow them to get a replacement unit from another site and prevent the problem unit from breaking down and delaying the completion of the project.

In other cases the decision to conduct an RPD ferrogram to obtain more in-depth information than standard oil analysis provides, has saved numerous companies hundreds of thousands of rands in repair costs and the prevention of unplanned downtime. Some maintenance engineers like to perform a ferrogram at regular intervals, eg. at a major service purely for peace of mind. ✓



Technical consultant Michelle Allis examines an RPD slide under Wearcheck's powerful compound microscope.

NEW TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT POSITION

ALISTAIR Geach, Wearcheck's laboratory manager for eight years, has assumed the newly created position of technical manager, responsible for both the laboratory and diagnostic functions.

'What we have done is rationalise the technical function, creating a more efficient personnel structure,' said Alistair. 'Although mine is basically a management position, it will involve me more on the diagnostics side which will be an interesting experience for me.'

Since joining Wearcheck in 1992, Alistair has managed numerous developments in the laboratory. In this time, sample throughput has grown from 700 samples to 1200 per day and automation has increased dramatically.

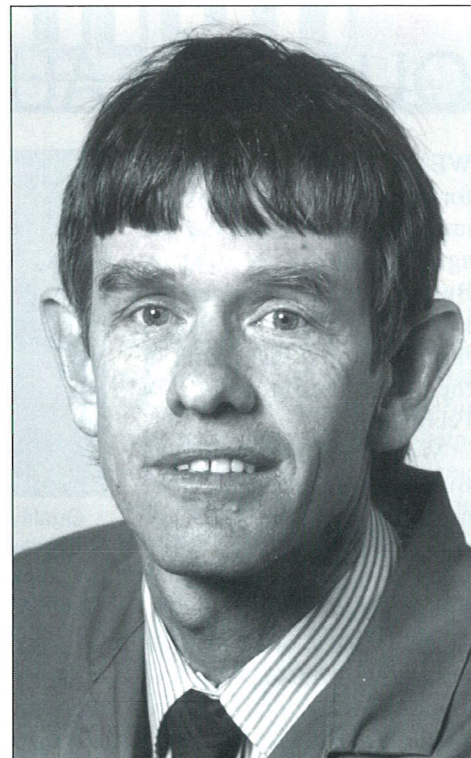
He has been an integral part of several computer hardware and software enhancements aimed at improving service and efficiencies. These include the upgrading of the autosampling systems for the ICP and FTIR spectrometers, as well as the design of Wearcheck's environmentally friendly injection-moulded oil sample kits in 1996.

His most recent major project has been setting up the Johannesburg Barlows laboratory, handling the purchase of all equipment and the training of staff.

He has enjoyed frequent overseas trips to investigate and monitor new equipment, utilising his specialised knowledge of oil analysis equipment to ensure that Wearcheck remains at the forefront of international technology.

Alistair began his working career as a science teacher in the farming community of Marandellas, near Harare after obtaining a BSc in chemistry and applied chemistry from the University of Natal and a teaching diploma from the University of Rhodesia. Two years later he switched to industry and joined Harare vegetable oil processing company, Olivine Industries, as a laboratory chemist. Before long, he was promoted to manager of their Willowvale laboratory which monitored the products through various stages of the oil extraction and refining processes.

Never one to turn down a challenge,



Alistair Geach

Alistair is looking forward to getting to grips with his added responsibilities.

He is married with two young children and enjoys sailing and squash in his leisure time. ✓

CHANGES IN THE LAB

AFTER two years as chemist in the Wearcheck lab, Neil Robinson has taken up the reins as laboratory manager.

'I relish the added responsibility and accountability and am enjoying being part of the decision-making process of the company,' he said.

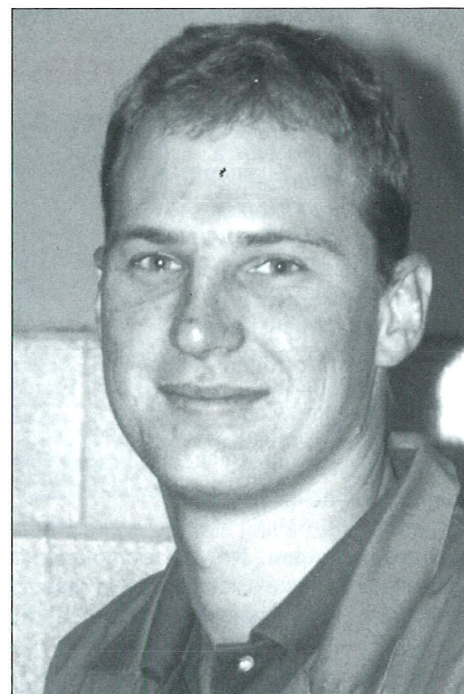
'My overall aim this year is to continue increasing productivity and cost-effectiveness in the lab, without reducing quality, through ongoing upgrading of instrumentation and an effective recycling strategy.

'There are two particular projects which will also take up a lot of my time - the seamless replacement of our existing lab management software with an advanced unified system, and preparing for the replacement of the current version of the ISO 9002 quality system

with the new more stringent code which is due to be introduced later this year.'

Although a South African by birth, Neil was educated in the United Kingdom, completing his BSc Honours in applied chemistry from DeMontfort University in Leicester. He spent four years studying for his PhD in chemistry at the University of Huddersfield - he is currently writing his doctoral thesis - and is a graduate of the Royal Society of Chemists. He worked at the Esso Research Centre in Abingdon for a year before joining Wearcheck in 1997 as chemist.

Once an active participant in the game of rugby, Neil is now an enthusiastic armchair supporter but still finds time for running and indulging in his own home-brewed fruit and vegetable wine. ✓



Neil Robinson

WEARCHECK SAILS THROUGH QUALITY AUDITS

WEARCHECK's reputation for superior quality management has been endorsed yet again following an audit by Bureau Veritas in November last year and the company's first SABS ISO 9002 audit of the new millennium in February.

Wearcheck first achieved Bureau Veritas registration for marine testing three years ago and is audited every three years to retain this status. A Paris-based organisation, Bureau Veritas often requires oil analysis during hull and machinery testing on board ships in Durban harbour.

Quality manager Jill Durant was thrilled to learn that there were no findings whatsoever in the February ISO 9002 audit.

'We are told that this happens infrequently and are delighted that our system has stood the test of stringent examination by the SABS once again,' she said.



Quality manager Jill Durant displays registration certificates for Bureau Veritas marine testing and ISO 9002 status.

'A successful quality system depends on the commitment and support of everyone in the company and I must pay tribute to all of our employees who have constantly thrown their weight behind our quality drive. Of course, the people who benefit most from a developing, yet stable quality system are our customers, which is why quality will continue to be one of our highest priorities.' ✓

Rewarding 25 years of service

Driver Zeph Ndlovu is all smiles as he receives a gold watch from Set Point divisional director of Wearcheck Lesley Crawford, for 25 years of loyal service. The company's longest serving employee, Zeph joined the company when it was known as McCraw Laboratories in 1974 to assist with the grinding of rocks for lime analysis, having already worked for the Crawford family for a number of years. He was promoted to driver shortly after he obtained his driver's licence and is responsible for all Wearcheck deliveries in the Pinetown and Durban area.



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Wearcheck Technical Training Courses APRIL - JUNE 2000

OIL ANALYSIS

Date	Course	Venue
10 April	2	Johannesburg
11 April	3	Johannesburg
13/14 April	4	Johannesburg
17 May	2	Pinetown
18/19 May	4	Pinetown
5 June	2	Johannesburg
6 June	3	Johannesburg
8/9 June	4	Johannesburg

Course 1 : A practical introduction to oil analysis

By arrangement. Cost: R2954,90 per day for the course held on site.

Course 2 : The application of analysis and an introduction to troubleshooting

(08h30 - 16h30). Cost: R517,10 (Wearcheck customers), R718 (others).

Course 3 : Troubleshooting series

(08h30 - 16h30). Cost: R517,10 (Wearcheck customers), R718 (others).

Course 4 : The technical management of oil analysis and lubrication

Day 1: 08h30 - 16h30, Day 2: 08h30 - 12h30.
Cost: R985 (Wearcheck customers), R1292,80 (others).

NETCHECK

29/30 May	Johannesburg
26/27 June	Johannesburg

Cost: R1140 including refreshments

All prices include VAT

For bookings phone Melanie Hynd on (031) 700-5460

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