

Rapid availability and tailored designs provide industrial enclosure customers with what they need

While the general concept of the industrial enclosure hasn't significantly changed since Spelsberg was founded nearly 120 years ago, innovations in design and materials - combined with customisation services - have enabled Spelsberg to continually provide UK customers with enclosure solutions that protect any application in any environment. With customers facing continued pressure to quickly deliver, enclosure manufacturers such as Spelsberg have increased availability and the speed of fulfilment.

From one perspective, an industrial enclosure is a relatively simple concept. It demands durable construction that can protect its contents, which typically includes sensitive electrical components, from challenging conditions over the long term. Of course, the boxes also have to be fast and straightforward for installers to fit. But enclosure designs don't always stay simple for long.

"Frequently, there's a need to customise a box to achieve the optimal enclosure requirements specified by the customer," says Chris Lloyd, Managing Director of Spelsberg UK. "An enclosure might need adaption to house whatever it's protecting, from security cameras to electrical junction boxes at a railway, meaning that CNC machining is required to securely retain the equipment, as well as providing cable entry points in the most appropriate positions."

Spelsberg's UK operation was established in 1997, and its CNC capability followed soon afterwards. Today, the Shropshire based operation comprises a complete machine shop with qualified engineers who can quickly turnaround virtually any customisation requirement. Spelsberg typically provides a customised prototype in-house within a day for the customer to take away, trial and approve, before confirming a full scale production run. While in-house CNC machining means fast availability, it also achieves a more cost effective outcome.

"The reason behind our onsite CNC machining is because it removes the need to involve a third-party," Chris explains. "We retain the responsibility for customisation, which not only makes the project faster and simpler for the customer, with accountability kept to one party, but it also provides a more cost-competitive outcome. It removes the mark-up of an additional service provider and simplifies the procurement process."

Customisation also requires a design capability, and Spelsberg's engineering team is able to create a wide variety of enclosure styles. Even for designs that require a completely bespoke enclosure not based on any existing model, the UK team works closely with Spelsberg's headquarters to provide tailored boxes and systems. This might even call for special materials and finishes, such as military-grade non-reflective coatings, plus varied colours and labelling.

For customisation to be effective, the basis of design at outset and the materials used must meet high standards. Spelsberg's enclosures are mainly constructed from polycarbonate, selected for its toughness combined with light weight, making the enclosures fast and simple to adapt and instal. The origins of polycarbonate began with Spelsberg's developments with Bakelite enclosures in the 1930s, progressing to thermoplastic boxes by the '50s. Today, over 400 raw material types are used across Spelsberg's range, 95% of which are developed according to the company's own recipe. The most resilient enclosures bear the iQ mark for industrial quality.

While achieving the highest ingress protection and impact ratings are a given among the leading enclosure manufactures, along with UL certification and conformance with the German VDE standard, specialisation has enabled Spelsberg to develop industrial housings dedicated to specific conditions and applications. This has given rise to developments such as the fire-proof WKE range, launched in 2000, through to the AK Air that prevents the challenge of condensation with its special internal airflow design. Of course, the range also covers more conventional, fast fit junction boxes, and in total Spelsberg offers over 5,000 enclosure products, albeit with over 80 specialised design patents.

Founded in 1904 in Schalksmühle, in Germany's western North Rhine-Westphalia region, by Ernst Spelsberg and Walther Kaiser, a characteristic not uncommon to German industrial manufacturers is that the company is still based in the same town today, and still remains family run. While demonstrating the importance the company places on its heritage and culture, it's not just symbolic; these factors underpin both the stability and flexibility required to rapidly create new innovations and meet changing market demands.

A recent example is Spelsberg's entry to the e-mobility market. The BCS bike charging station, which can also power e-scooters, is a complete unit including Bosch, Shimano and Shucko connectors, plus of course the enclosure itself, ready for installation.

"The BCS is a perfect example of how Spelsberg can innovate new products as well as provide the additional services the customer needs," says Chris. "Designing and assembling the unit with full electrical connections, the charging station is ready for installation by local municipalities and private businesses."

Spelsberg also provides an assembly service, including wiring and fitting components, to UK-based OEMs when required.

"Just like with our customisation service, the assembly service takes the onus away from the customer and their internal resources, and also removes the need for them to investigate and engage with a third-party," comments Chris. "Our inhouse capabilities mean that we can take on the assembly and fulfilment, including packaging, for a very wide range of requirements the OEM may have."

While inhouse services reduce waiting times for the customer, it's vital that stock is available at the outset. Unlike many enclosure manufacturers supplying the UK market, Spelsberg carries a wide range of stock at its largescale Telford warehouse, instead of fulfilling orders from a European hub. This speeds up the entire process for the customer and means that Spelsberg can provide same-day shipping on request, with most orders fulfilled in two to three days.

"We're well supported from the Germany headquarters, with regular stock replenishment, but the importance Spelsberg places on the UK market and its customers means that there's always significant stock quantity on hand here in Telford," says Chris.

With changing market demands, how is Spelsberg looking to support UK customers into the future?

"More than ever, customers want enclosures quickly, because of the demands their customers place on them," says Chris. "We're further strengthening stock to provide customers with even faster availability, and with Spelsberg's design innovations, combined with our own inhouse customisation capability, we have a strong foundation to answer the customers' needs of tomorrow."

About Spelsberg

Spelsberg is one of the largest manufacturers of electrical enclosures in the world. With over 4,000 enclosures available as standard and further customisation possible, it offers solutions for almost any application.

With the largest supply of non-metallic enclosures, ex-stock in the UK, its products are often available for delivery within 24 hours; customisation is possible on any product, including bespoke entries, engraved corporate logos or fitted terminals, within 48 hours. Products can be ordered direct from Spelsberg or from most leading supply specialists including RS, Rapid, Farnell and CPC.

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