

# MINDS' DrumTronic and BurnerControl improve mix accuracy, burner reliability at Colorado plant

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## PRODUCT

MINDS' DrumTronic plant control system and BurnerControl software

## APPLICATION

Brannan Sand and Gravel's Lipan asphalt plant in Denver, CO.

## CHALLENGE

Brannan needed to upgrade its plant control system to a non-proprietary software that also allowed for a high degree of specification for its ongoing work with the U.S. Department of Transportation.

## SOLUTION

MINDS installed its DrumTronic plant automation software at Lipan in April 2020, which has given Brannan more flexibility and its IT team the ability to deal with small issues on its own rather than being beholden to a manufacturer. It also provides fine-grain detail on key plant metrics, and a level of plant automation its operators hadn't previously experienced.

## RESULTS

Lipan plant operators appreciated the plant software's ease of use and MINDS' availability to address any questions. Brannan has seen an improvement in the overall accuracy of its mix and burners and is planning to install DrumTronic, BurnerControl, and MINDS' PlantManager dashboard at its two other plants, believing that the software sets the company up for future success and the ability to deal with any future upgrades.

When Brannan Sand and Gravel Co., a Denver-based asphalt producer, upgraded its plant control software to MINDS Inc's DrumTronic, it didn't start with a smaller plant to test out its chosen solution. Instead, it went with its biggest and main hub plant, Lipan — a 500 tons per hour Gencor plant with six silos, two scales, and an annual output of 700,000 tons. "We went big out of the gate," said Jon Joesten, Brannan's production manager.

Lipan's previous plant control system was no longer supported by its manufacturer, and the asphalt producer wanted a new non-proprietary system that would give the company more flexibility, and the ability for its IT team to deal with small issues such as fixing a computer or replacing a broken part, which wasn't previously possible. The company installed DrumTronic in April 2020.



**After Brannan installed MINDS' DrumTronic at its Lipan plant and calibrated at 1 a.m., it was able to start producing asphalt at 7 a.m. the next morning.**

After a roughly six-week upgrade process, the DrumTronic software immediately proved its mettle. "We calibrated the plant at 1 a.m. and we were producing asphalt the following day at 7 a.m.," Joesten said. "That's expecting a lot out of the gate, but we were able to do it and it performed well."

**DrumTronic's total plant control gives Brannan's plant operators a level of plant automation they'd never had before, an easy-to-understand graphic view of key plant metrics such as production tons per hour, fuel usage, and mix content, and quickly alerts them to any issues in the plant.**

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For Brannan, which works regularly with the U.S. Department of Transportation where a high degree of specification is important, the key improvement over its old plant system was the overall accuracy of its mix.

"If there's anything off as far as proportioning, the system lets you know. You can drill into that feeder, if there's something wrong with the electric it tells you what's going on in great detail. When you're doing work for the Department of Transportation, it's important to have that level of information," Joesten said.



Joesten said he also appreciates DrumTronic's sub-module AccuLab, which offers detailed reporting on test data, mix and asphalt content, deviations, and more. "They're really great tools to use. I use it to check deviations and A/C contents, that's my number one go-to to see how the plant is running."

As part of the plant automation package, Brannan installed MINDS' BurnerControl software, a retrofit solution that allows plant operators to finely tune and improve the efficiency of their burners. Joesten said BurnerControl has improved the reliability of Lipan's burners and eliminated many of the small issues they used to experience. "Being able to track the gas usage is a really nice feature, as well as the real-time data it provides," he added.

Lipan's two plant operators — one in his late 20s and the other in his 60s — have both taken to the "self-explanatory" plant automation software, Joesten added. He noted that any issues that have come up after the software was installed have ended up being related to something within the plant, rather than the software itself. But MINDS has been available round the clock to address any questions and remotely guide Lipan's operators through a recalibration even though it was late into the evening. "They're there when you need them," he said.

**This winter, Brannan will install DrumTronic, BurnerControl, and MINDS' PlantManager dashboard for its two other plants, a CMI 400 tons/hour portable plant and a 400 tons/hour Gencor plant.**

Joesten said the company also wants to eventually install MINDS LiveTank mobile app, which allows for remote monitoring and basic control of liquid tank farms and boilers.

"DrumTronic is a really great product, it was pretty much exactly what we were looking for," he said. "It gives us the capability to not be locked in with a certain manufacturer or one specific type of system, and we can put it in any plant. It has the longevity for any upgrades the future may hold, and sets us up for succeeding in the future."

*Stop losing time and money on insufficient plant control systems. MINDS' suite of automation control and data acquisition systems simplify and improve plant management for the asphalt industry. Contact us at 1-866-519-3494 or visit our website to learn more.*