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Firstronic Installs IBL Vapor Phase Equipment in Juarez Facility

Grand Rapids, MI—Firstronic LLC has enhanced its manufacturing processes with the addition of an IBL CX600 vapor phase soldering system.

“The broader process windows, mitigation of defects common to convection reflow and the experience of our Mexican production team with vapor phase technology all influenced our decision. As a company committed to leadership in Lean manufacturing processes we also like the fact that vapor phase requires zero wait state between products and requires far fewer profiles than the typical convection reflow oven,” said Steve Fraser, Firstronic’s Vice President of Operations.

While the facility also has convection reflow capability, Fraser said that Firstronic plans to continue to invest in vapor phase soldering technology since it represents a robust solution to a number of challenges convection reflow doesn’t address as well. In addition to the advantages stated earlier, the system also produces cleaner solder joints at lower temperatures. The vapor blanket immersion process ensures perfect wetting and void-free, high quality solder joints.

“Convection reflow oven stabilization can add as much as 15 minutes to a changeover process. With vapor phase, there is no changeover wait state. This capability also broadens our ability to support customers with dense printed circuit board assemblies (PCBAs) that include fine pitch technology,” added Fraser.

One other advantage is lower energy costs.

“When people think of low cost labor markets they often fail to understand that all costs are not equally reduced. Utility costs are often much higher than those of the U.S. Plus, our geographic location in Southwest translates to summer temperatures that routinely exceed 100 degrees F. Vapor phase technology uses about one-tenth of the energy used in a convection reflow oven. The vapor blanket is inert, which means we don’t need to use nitrogen. And, since the machine expels less heat than conventional reflow processes, we don’t have to spend more on cooling in the summer,” Fraser said.

About Firstronic LLC

Firstronic LLC (www.firstronic.com) provides advanced electronics manufacturing services and optimized supply chain solutions for companies in a wide range of industries including automotive, industrial and medical device. Headquartered in Grand Rapids, MI, Firstronic has a 35,000 square foot facility, state-of-the-art equipment and a seasoned management team with an average tenure of 20 years and a 70,000 square foot facility in Juarez, Mexico. It also supports companies needing access to global manufacturing locations via operations in China and the Czech Republic.