

AIRMATIC®
CASE STUDIES

Solving Stubborn Railcar Gate Challenges in Potash Transloading

About the Project



This job story centers on a Mid-Atlantic fertilizer product transloading terminal responsible for receiving and unloading covered hopper cars of potash. AIRMATIC identified the opportunity after observing rail activity on-site and having a prior success story with a sister company. During initial discussions, the operations team explained that they frequently dealt with frozen, corroded, and stubborn railcar gates and mechanisms, which made routine unloading far more difficult and time-consuming than necessary.

The Challenge

The terminal unloads approximately five railcars per week, but gate-opening was a persistent problem.

Operators often encountered railcar gates that required extreme effort to open, and this sometimes led to hours spent trying to open a single gate.

In more severe cases, entire railcars had to be rejected and sent back to the rail company for repair before the gates could be opened, which caused delays, inefficiencies, and additional operational frustrations.

Their only existing equipment was an electric-powered gate opener that had not been functional in years. The site also had no nearby compressed-air source, ruling out pneumatic options. As a result, operators were forced to rely on manual effort, which increased the risk of injury and undermined morale. These stubborn gates were a major source of delays and operator frustration.

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How We Solved It

AIRMATIC recommended the WORKMASTER GO-B3A Battery-Powered Hopper Car Gate Opener, a portable, self-contained, battery-operated tool capable of delivering high torque without requiring air or electrical utilities.

Operators originally expressed skepticism that such a compact, portable tool could generate the torque needed to open badly damaged and difficult railcar gates. Once in use, however, the GO-B3 quickly overcame that doubt by opening gates that had historically been the hardest to move.

The GO-B3A Gate Opener addressed the terminal's needs by offering:

- No dependence on air utilities
- Strong torque for stubborn railcar gates
- Lightweight, highly portable design
- Suitability for low-volume transloading operations

The AIRMATIC Impact

After implementing the GO-B3A Battery-Powered Gate Opener, the terminal saw immediate improvements. Railcar gates that previously took hours to open could now be opened quickly and safely, reducing strain and improving workflow. Operators experienced a boost in morale and gained significant time back for more productive tasks.

The team was shocked by how effective the compact, battery-powered tool was compared to their long-unused electric opener.

The Plant Manager of the facility summarized the experience well:
"For the cost, mobility, and ease of use, I cannot imagine anything being a better fit."

This case demonstrates how fertilizer product transloading facilities dealing with hard-to-open railcar gates—especially those without air utilities—can greatly improve safety, reliability, and efficiency through a modern, portable, battery-powered gate-opening solution.

If your team struggles with stubborn or hard-to-open railcar gates, AIRMATIC can help identify the right opener for your material, gate condition, and unloading volume. Call us at 215-333-5600 or email infocenter@airmatic.com to discuss your application.

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