

Reputation Reaffirmed

NEW LGL3021 SERIES MULTI-PURPOSE LPG SLIDING VANE PUMP FROM BLACKMER®
 PROVIDES THE OPTIMIZED FLOW AND INSTALLATION TIMES THAT APEX PROPANE SERVICE REQUIRES

By Doug Chapman



A competitive pump was recently replaced with a new Blackmer LGL3021 pump at the Apex Propane Service's bulk plant. The LGL3021 was installed without breaking or cutting welded pipe, or even the need for a pipe wrench.

There may be no more impactful statement that a professional in a certain industry can make to his client base than, "If it's good enough for me, it's good enough for you," or, conversely, "If I won't use it, why should I sell it to you?"

In the southeastern United States, Rickey Watkins has earned a certain level of respect in the propane business. For 17 years, he worked for Gardner Marsh Gas Equipment, headquartered in Raleigh, NC, USA, which is a value-added distributor of propane and natural gas equipment and appliances. While at Gardner Marsh, Watkins worked in the company's plant construction business and helped supply a significant number of Gardner Marsh's customers the best products and services available to the propane-plant industry.

Then, in 1994, Watkins took the experience he had gained in propane-plant construction at Gardner Marsh and left to open his own business, which he named Apex Propane Service and based in Apex, NC, USA. In the ensuing 18

years, Apex has grown to become a well-recognized name in the retail propane market and propane-plant construction industry over a five-state area, from the Carolinas north to West Virginia, Virginia and Maryland.

"Apex Propane is now a long-standing customer of ours, and through our capacity as a value-added distributor, we provide them with technical assistance and sizing assistance for their plant projects and their retail propane business," said Steve Ward, a Sales Executive with Gardner Marsh. "We have had a great relationship with Apex since its inception and have watched it grow to become known throughout the Carolinas."

Go With What You Know

In his 30-plus years in the propane business – on both the distributor and end-user sides – Watkins has learned the value of identifying the right equipment for the job, equipment that is both reliable and meets the specific needs of a wide array of propane-related applications. And when you do find equipment that satisfies the varying



Apex Propane Service (Apex, NC, USA) serves the retail propane market and propane-plant construction industry over a five-state area, from the Carolinas north to West Virginia, Virginia and Maryland.

needs of the end-user, there is every reason to continue to recommend that brand, as long as it keeps performing.

“While working for Gardner Marsh for 17 years, I installed a lot of Blackmer® pumps, so I knew the brand when I started Apex Propane,” explained Watkins. “I’ve always liked Blackmer. They always perform and they definitely make my job easier.”

So, when Blackmer introduced the new LGL3021 Series Multi-Purpose LPG Sliding Vane Pump to the market in early 2012, Ward asked Watkins if he had any clients who might be on the lookout for a new LPG pump for their LPG-transfer operations. It turned out that Watkins had the most important customer in mind: Himself.

“I had reminded Rickey to let me know that if he ran into an application that needed a pump like this that we could supply a Blackmer LGL3021 on a trial basis,” said Ward. “When I called him back a few months later to see if he had any jobs that required this type of pump, he said that he had two competitor’s pumps at his retail propane office that could be replaced, and that he would agree to be the

test case and allow us to put the LGL3021 pump in for a performance trial.”

The decision to install the Blackmer test pump was really a no-brainer for Watkins for a few reasons: no pipe changes were needed; the wear parts that were needed were readily available; and the pump is protected by Blackmer’s performance warranty, which is acknowledged as the “best standard warranty in the business.”

The initial switchout took place in March – with the second Blackmer LGL3021 pump installed in April – and



Rickey Watkins, owner of Apex Propane, has been in the LPG industry for 30-plus years.

it has been full-speed ahead, literally, from day one for Apex Propane.

“The Blackmer is real quiet and it pumps real well,” said Watkins. “We’re also getting 130 gallons per minute (gpm) out of the new Blackmer, which is 30% (32 gpm) more than we were getting from the old pump. That’s a big plus when you’re trying to get your trucks loaded quickly.”

The LGL3021 pump can deliver these elevated flow rates because it has been designed for high-volume LPG-transfer applications at bulk plants and terminal facilities. Based on Blackmer’s LGLD3 Series transfer pump, the LGL3021 provides the same horsepower requirements and foot-to-flange and flange-to-flange dimensions as competitive pumps.

What also separates the LGL3021 from competitive pumps is that it provides significantly more flow depending on the LPG installation and application conditions, a major consideration during bulk plant and terminal operations. LGL3021 pumps feature ductile-iron construction with an internal relief valve that protects against excessive pressures, ensuring performance and reliability even under the most severe service conditions.

Additional features and benefits of the LGL3021 include: replaceable casing liners and end discs for easy rebuilding of the pumping chamber; a patented cavitation suppression liner designed for reducing the noise, vibration and wear normally caused by entrained vapors; excellent self-priming and dry-run capabilities; easy maintenance; made in the USA; and covered by Blackmer’s best-in-class performance warranty. LGL3021 pumps are available with differential pressures up to 150 psi (10.35 bar) and maximum pump speeds of 800 rpm.

“With the interior design of this pump, the way the vanes work, you have the capacity to sweep more gas out of the pump cavity than you do with alternative pumps, at equal or lower speeds,” said Ward. “We see the LGL3021 as being a huge growth opportunity for Blackmer in the next few years.”

Time Is Money

Increased flow speeds and fill rates are not the only crucial time improvements that the LGL3021 pump offers to its users. The pump’s design allows for easy installation during pump changeovers or plant maintenance without the need to change piping or motor drives because the inlet and discharge flanges are on the pump shaft’s centerline.

“When we went to switch out the old pump with the new Blackmer, it lined up perfectly,” said Watkins. “You don’t

Blackmer LGL3021 Upgrade





Steve Ward (left) of Gardner Marsh and Rickey Watkins of Apex Propane Services next to the new Blackmer LGL3021 sliding vane pump at the Apex bulk plant.



LGL3021 Series Pump

have to take the pump loose from the base or the flanges, you just slide it right in. I was impressed with that.”

“Any dealer can change out a pump now,” added Ward. “Before it required breaking or cutting welded pipe, now no re-welding is necessary. You just remove the outlet flange, slide the old pump out, slide the LGL3021 pump in and tighten the flanges; it can be done without a pipe wrench. It can also be done without calling a construction professional, which takes time and is an additional cost. If a pump goes down, you can switch it out in a matter of minutes.”

Conclusion

For more than three decades, Rickey Watkins has worked hard to build a positive reputation in the retail propane and propane-plant construction markets in the Southeast. One of the quickest ways that this hard-earned reputation could be compromised is if he started recommending or installing pumping equipment that didn’t live up to the needs of his customers. By agreeing to install a new Blackmer LGL3021 Series Multi-Purpose LPG Sliding Vane Pump at his own retail propane facility, Watkins demonstrated that he values Blackmer products

and the reliability and operational excellence they provide. Now, he’s ready to confidently spread the word to his customers.

“I’ve seen a lot of pumps in my time, but I depend on Blackmer. That’s why my plant is all Blackmer. It’s been just over a month since we put that first Blackmer LGL3021 in and it’s been doing great,” said Watkins in early April. “I think we’ll be recommending them to our clients.”

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