

Q&A

with John Lyons,
Owner of MEDI+Products

MEDI + PRODUCTS



When it comes to the required power-failure protection strategies what options does a free-standing facility have?

There really are only two choices: an engine-driven generator or a stored energy conversion system. An engine must be fueled by gasoline, diesel-fuel, or gas — natural or propane. Obviously, an engine must be located outdoors or in an engine-room. Engines also have waste heat and noise associated with them. Stored-energy systems include flywheels and fuel-cell systems but, for practical reasons, batteries are state-of-the-art for small facilities doing procedures with highly predictable outcomes, sealed lead-acid batteries being the most economical choice for indoor use.

Why have you centered your business around batteries?

After leaving my last employment as an engineer, I was helped by a friend into the biomedical field simply because he had more work than he could handle. As I became involved in the biomedical field, I kept my eye open for a niche business. Several of my cosmetic surgery customers asked me to help them set up their operatories as free-standing surgical facilities began to proliferate in the '80s. I began to realize that there were also back-up power needs in ophthalmic, ENT, OB/GYN, arthroscopic, endoscopic, and veterinary practices, as well. So I eventually sold my biomedical business and specialized in battery-based emergency power.

What distinguishes your products from other products on the market?

Well, I guess to begin with it was my engineering and biomedical background, combined with knowing what a surgeon needed and how to produce it. Soon we had developed a rather unique product.

To clarify, what makes your products unique?

Well, who else makes a castor-wheeled, one-piece system in a stainless steel case? Perhaps I'm jumping ahead too fast! If you look at the typical products on the market, on one hand you have low-power devices that you can plug into your cigarette-lighter in your car, and on the other you have medium-power devices — big enough to power a liposuction pump, electrocautery or a C-arm X-ray — but they aren't user-friendly. They are designed for an electrician to hook up to building wiring and a separately-acquired battery bank. However, the average electrician doesn't know how to integrate a battery charger and an automatic transfer switch into a unified system. There also are computer-supported UPS systems on the market, but they typically are short on battery capacity because they generally are intended to just run long enough to shut down a computer, not the two hours required to support a surgical procedure. Furthermore, they are designed for an office environment — under a desk — in a plastic case with tiny wheels, if any, and extended-runtime batteries are usually in an add-on box in another plastic case (or two) connected by wires. They also are weak when it comes to starting motors and other heavy inductive loads like electrocautery units.

How does a doctor go about finding out what to buy?


All too often he asks his architect!

So what's wrong with that?

Well nothing really, but in my experience I find that the result is usually grossly oversized. Often the doctors who call me are fellows who sense

that there's a more economic way to accomplish what's needed. Often, too, I get calls from the doctor's architect, following "doctor's orders" to fact-find about our product and service.

I suppose as a Biomed you can speak the doctor's language — equipment wise?

Oh yes, it's very important to understand what he needs. First, he needs help figuring out what to buy. It's been a long time since physics class for most doctors, let alone their assistants. Very often he just wants to add back-up power to his existing office. We can offer a powerful system that requires no installation at all. One thing a doctor does know is that his O.R. is already very crowded with all sorts of equipment, so we tried to keep it as compact as possible and provide a flat top surface that would be a useful spot for placing a pump or monitors. Recently, we've added a shelf kit that can be added above the system. Now we're working on a wall-mounted system that anyone can install - it'll ship UPS and it just plugs in! In my opinion, it's "Just what the doctor'll order!" 

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