

Swedish Match Philippines fires up lighter exports

Meralco counsels Cricket manufacturer on energy smart measures



The Cricket lighter is one of the best-selling disposable lighters in the world. Sixty percent of the total number of Crickets sold worldwide are produced locally by Swedish Match Philippines, Inc.

With 360 million units produced a year, the staggering popularity of the Cricket lighter has compelled Swedish Match Philippines, Inc. (SMPI) to invest in more manufacturing equipment.

Ninety-four percent of SMPI's yield is exported, with 70 percent sent within Asia and another 30 percent to Europe. In fact, 60 percent of the total inventory sold around the world is produced in the Philippines.

The company says it has reached enough capacity to meet requirements for the next three years. But it will keep reviewing output due to shifting market trends, particularly in the Asia Pacific.

Consulting on energy efficiencies

Meralco performed a thorough power quality audit by providing monitoring and electrical systems survey as a basis for designing SMPI's power requirements.

Meralco also made additional recommendations to replace fluorescent lights with LED bulbs and install air-conditioning units equipped with inverter technology which helped SMPI become more energy efficient.

Their headquarters in Stockholm also mandated a reduction to the company's carbon footprint. Meralco subsidiary Spectrum, experts in solar energy solutions, was called on to install a 100 kilowatt-peak solar photovoltaic power system.

SMPI now expects to generate 140 megawatts (MW) of its own energy annually from the installation, save the company an estimated P950,000, and reduce its overall CO₂ (carbon dioxide) emission by 80,000 kilograms.

"We just finished the installation of the solar panels in July 2017," said Leo Obias, Swedish Match Philippines, Inc. Managing Director. "Meralco helps us be more energy efficient, designs our facilities, and provides fixes to fluctuation in the energy that affects our highly sensitive equipment and our productivity."

"We always consult with Meralco to make sure that we're doing the right thing. With all their technology, engineers, and experience, we have to recognize that we can always learn from them."

Meralco as adviser in safety protocols

In 2008, SMPI relocated from Sta. Ana, Manila to the Laguna Technopark in Biñan to accommodate growth.

Butane, SMPI's flammable key raw material, required careful handling so steps had to be taken during equipment and material transfer to prevent accidentally igniting the highly combustible fluid.

Meralco retrofitted SMPI's Biñan facility - previously an old zirconium cutting plant - for manufacturing lighters. The distribution utility solved inconsistencies in the fast assembly lines and injection molding machines by fine-tuning electrical equipment to ensure the new facilities were spark-free.

"To be sustainable as an organization, very high on our list is safety. We have to make sure that we have a safe environment. Meralco is helping us by making sure that we have the right safety designs," said Obias.

Successful repositioning

Since their product was associated with the unpleasant habit of smoking, it began positioning lighters as a household item. Gas stoves, camp fires, even birthday candles need lighting. And a P2 box of matches with 48 matchsticks costs more in the long run than a P20 lighter that lights up 2,000 times.

As a result, Cricket is now available in supermarkets, accepted as a home utility, and sold worldwide.

This success led to Swedish Match Philippines, Inc. being named a Meralco Corporate Industrial Luminary for 2016.

"Swedish Match Philippines, Inc. is an international brand with a Philippine site dominating worldwide distribution," said Alfredo S. Panlilio, Meralco Senior Vice President and Head of Customer Retail Services and Corporate Communications. "Meralco will do its part to sustain their dominance by continuing to provide the right energy solutions."

To learn more about Meralco partnerships, speak to your Relationship Manager, or contact the Meralco Corporate Partners at 16210, or email corporatepartners@meralco.com.ph, or visit www.meralco.com.ph/corporatepartners.



"Meralco helps us be more energy efficient, designs our facilities, and provides fixes to fluctuation in the energy that affects our highly sensitive equipment and our productivity."

- Leo Obias
Managing Director
Swedish Match Philippines



Meralco recommended replacing SMPI's fluorescent lights with LED bulbs at its production floors for better energy efficiency.



SMPI Quality Assurance Manager Nelson Solis (right) and SMPI Engineering Manager Edgar Zulaybar (middle) thank Meralco Relationship Manager Rolan Mercado after a successful installation of SMPI's solar panels.



(From left to right) Meralco President and CEO Oscar S. Reyes, SMPI Managing Director Leo Obias, and Meralco SVP and Head of Customer Retail Services and Corporate Communications Alfredo S. Panlilio pose for a photo at the 6th Luminaries Awards Night.