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## Communicating OE Quality



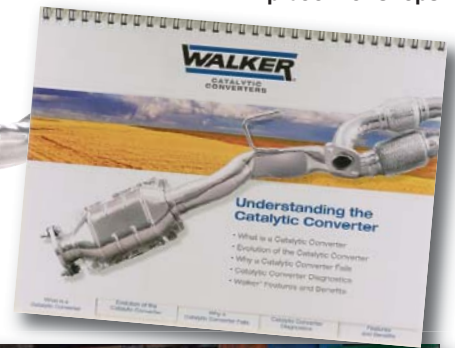
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Reprint Edition

Tenneco's Walker Exhaust

# Communicating OE Quality

Walker's new catalytic-converter  
flip book for shops



Walker's Quiet-FlowSS muffler, made from 409 stainless steel, is giving shops an opportunity to up-sell with a lifetime warranty.

By Jim Wilder  
Undercar Digest Editor

Tenneco's strong connection with the original-equipment (OE) market is making it possible for shops throughout North America to sell the highest-quality aftermarket mufflers, exhaust pipes and catalytic converters to consumers – and those who sell



Veteran plant worker Roger Beale (left) and Ed Keshen, engineer/quality manager, check the fit of a 409-stainless-steel Quiet-FlowSS exhaust system.

the Walker brand have started a communication blitz to make sure everyone involved is aware of it.

Bill Shutt, product manager for the Walker Emissions brand, says that Tenneco continues to invest in the Walker brand, as it has for the past five years. As a result, the product line introduced more than 600 new part numbers in 2008 alone, and more than 1,600 parts have been added since 2004. Tenneco offers a strong OE connection and covers a significant amount of OE applications.

"On the Tenneco side, we are OE in all the Big 3 plants (Ford, GM and Chrysler) as well as with European, Japanese and Korean carmakers."

More and more OE and original-equipment-service (exhaust products used for warranty work by vehicle dealerships) has been

infused into the Walker Emissions manufacturing facility in Harrisonburg, Va., in recent years, Shutt said.

Mike Peters, regional director/plant manager, noted that there are more than 500 seasoned employees at the 753,000-square-foot facility who have learned the OE method of manufacturing, which is being passed on to the aftermarket processes. The average employee has worked there for more than 12½ years. They hold a safety record as the first Walker facility to reach 5 million hours of work without lost time due to an accident. The plant, which opened in 1961, has its own slitter and tube mill, nine muffler-manufacturing lines, 20 pipe cells, three converter assembly lines, and even a coordinates measurement machine and interpreter to



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**Bill Shutt, Walker product manager, notes that shop operators, technicians and their customers are in the process of receiving more information on catalytic-converter functions and diagnostics.**

guarantee the best fit possible. The plant was awarded TS-16946:2002 certification in 2004.

"It's a real mix of product, and we have the opportunity that no other North American aftermarket company has at this point, which is to learn and utilize the OE technology," Shutt said. "With that, we have made various changes for 2009.

"The first involves Walker's premium muffler line, Quiet-Flow<sup>®</sup>SS," he said. "Being an OE company we were able to leverage our buys on materials and we are now giving the aftermarket a true salable premium product." With the exception of the branded outer wrap, the Quiet-FlowSS (stainless steel) muffler is all 409 stainless and is designed to give the consumer the option to step up to a true premium product, he said. Consumers who buy the muffler for their vehicle receive a "guaranteed for life" warranty.

Shutt noted that because of Tenneco's savings in ordering materials, the price of the muffler has not increased for the shop or the consumer. The new Quiet-FlowSS muffler is selling for the same price as that of the Quiet-Flow<sup>3</sup> muffler last year.

Research had shown that the premium muffler was a dying market because the consumer didn't see any value in it and nei-



**Jason DeNardo, DynoMax product manager, poses with the new packaging for DynoMax UltraFlo welded performance mufflers at the plant in Harrisonburg, Va.**

ther did the shop operator. For the shop, that reasoning related to not having the right product to up-sell, but now they have it with a stainless muffler, Shutt said.

"The opportunity to sell a job that is much more profitable for them is there now. The transition in the field to Quiet-FlowSS started last fall and has now reached about 93% of the product line.

Once shops began to receive the stainless-steel inventory, Tenneco began to receive positive feedback from them. Shutt said a shop operator now has more up-sell opportunities with motorists who own high-end vehicles such as Lexus, BMW, Cadillac and Lincoln. More and more of those owners will be coming to the aftermarket for replacements because the mufflers will be identical to what came off the vehicle. The Quiet-FlowSS is truly a seven- to 10-year muffler.

"If you really look at our business, you've only got one opportunity to grab that customer now, because that car is already 10 years old before it needs its first muffler.

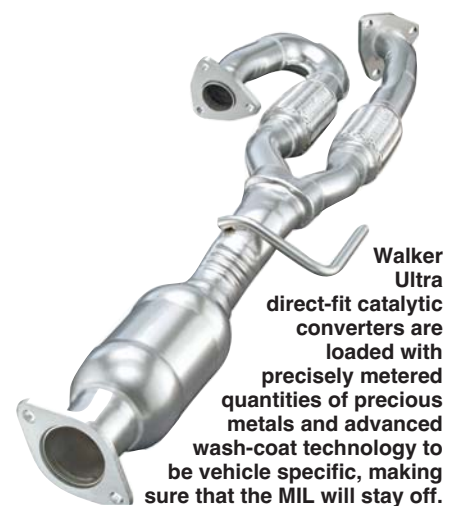
"There will be a split between those buying a premium and a standard replacement muffler," he said. "Take a Toyota Camry, for instance. There are Camrys that are high-end that have leather interior, sunroof and the V-6. We can

get that customer to buy the premium muffler because they are going to be willing to spend the money on it. But you also have the entry-level Camry. That owner is going to gravitate more to an entry-level product."

Walker also is answering the needs of the shops and their customers with its new line of catalytic converters, Shutt said.

Converter sales continue to grow, and Walker is satisfying the needs of shop operators by supplying OBD-II converters that meet or exceed EPA regulations and are application specific to the vehicle make and model.

A common problem in the industry, Shutt noted, was that some





Thrush aluminized mufflers, such as this Hush Thrush model, are being marketed as the traditional performance line for 1960s and '70s muscle cars.



Welding work cells increase productivity at the plant.



Ed Keshen, engineer/quality manager at the Harrisonburg facility, uses a fixture to check the fit on an OE application for Jaguar. Walker makes all its own fixtures and performs quality-control checks regularly. Many of its OE processes are used in aftermarket applications.



Lorene Warner labels Thrush Glasspacks after they go through the powder-coating process.

shop operators had a bad perception of aftermarket converters because of problems with the malfunction indicator lamp (MIL) coming on shortly after installation.

In most of those instances a technician was treating the symptom with a new converter instead of diagnosing what caused the converter to go bad. As a result, some of these shops started buying converters from car dealers because "they keep the light off for two years."

As part of Walker's continuous enhancement of its converter line, it is also including tools to help educate the consumer and the technician.

A new laminated flip book titled "Understanding Catalytic Converters" is now available for shop operators' use to inform customers about emissions control. Major tips include obtaining a vehicle history, correcting other engine codes, exhaust-system leaks, converter temperature, backpressure, O<sub>2</sub> sensors, cooling system, fuel trim, the emissions gas analyzer, cylinder balance, the mechanical condition and PCM re-flash. Tenneco also is expanding its emissions training program, enabling the company to conduct more emission-control seminars throughout the country. WDs and parts stores will assist by encouraging technicians to attend. Seminars will be similar to the popular Monroe Ride Control Ride & Drives, with certified instructors providing diagnostic information and then teaching technicians how to perform efficiency checks.

Walker's updated converter lines now include the Standard catalytic converter for pre-OBD-II vehicles. The Ultra line – which had been used in California for several years – is now the OBD-II line for 1996 and newer vehicles licensed in all states except for California. The latest Walker CalCat line is specifically formulated to comply with all current California Air Resources Board (CARB) regulations.

Instead of offering higher catalyst loadings for all part numbers, Walker is making each of its Ultra units vehicle specific.

"You have to have a product that meets the needs of that vehicle," Shutt said. "These converters are engineered to be vehicle specific."

The CalCat line carries universal units that are application specific and provide coverage for more than 82% of passenger cars and light trucks that don't have mani-



Nick Macaluso, engineering manager for performance products, installs an all-welded stainless-steel DynoMax performance muffler. DynoMax is Tenneco's premium performance-exhaust line.



Ron Purnell checks the specs on a DynoMax mandrel-bent exhaust elbow.



Walker's vast inventory guarantees high order-fill rates.

fold/converters. Direct-fit manifold/converters will follow soon, he said.

Shutt said shops and consumers can trust Walker: "You don't need to buy the most-expensive converter; you need to buy one that meets the needs of the vehicle. And it will meet the needs of the vehicle because of our OE connection. We have the right technology for their vehicle."

He added that more and more states will be adopting emissions regulations similar to California's and that Walker will be ready to meet the needs of those states.

Tenneco's performance line also is making dramatic strides, according to Jason DeNardo, DynoMax

product manager. Two distinguished brands – DynoMax and Thrush – are now available through both the traditional distribution channel and the specialty undercar distribution channel.

DeNardo noted that DynoMax is Tenneco's premium performance-exhaust line and switched to complete stainless-steel systems this year. A running change began with trucks and SUVs, followed by certain muscle cars including Mustang, Camaro, Challenger and Charger.

"We've got a really nice sound with our UltraFlo mufflers," he said.

Thrush is being marketed as the "traditional muscle" line for performance enthusiasts with vehicles including 1960s and '70s muscle cars such as Camaro, Mustang, Olds 442, Road Runner and other "vintage iron." It's also a great product for the classic customers, DeNardo said.

"Everybody knows the Thrush name because it's such a recognizable brand," he said. Thrush's popular bird logo is eye catching and has been made "edgier" looking for today's performance motorists, he noted.

Like the Quiet-Flow muffler line, DynoMax and Thrush products incorporate OE processes that help ensure exceptional structural integrity, he said.

Shutt and DeNardo note that shop operators and their technicians trust the Tenneco brands even more than ever and will pass along their confidence to the customers they serve. **UD**

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**OE fit and performance.  
Because aftermarket is never an afterthought.**

At Walker, we produce our aftermarket emissions components under the same roof as our original equipment. Using the same strict standards and processes. So you get high-quality mufflers, converters, pipes and systems with the same precision fit as the originals. Every time.



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