



# A PERFECT FIT FOR NEW ACE HARDWARE RETAIL SUPPORT CENTER

## Organization

Ace Hardware Distribution Center, Fredericksburg, Pa.

## Challenge

Select the right dock leveler equipment to properly fit 90 pre-cast, but dimensionally inconsistent, dock pits in an 800,000 square-foot spec distribution center without incurring the high expense of modifying the dock pits themselves.

## Impact

An array of high-performance dock equipment and industrial HVLS fans that are all contributing to a thriving hardware cooperative distribution center with 280 personnel that's receiving 35 trucks per day while supporting a growing network of retail stores in four states and Washington, D.C.

## Solution

Kelley aFX® Air-Powered Dock Levelers (45,000 lb.-capacity) along with ENERGY GUARD® Kits, Kelley DSH Series Foam Dock Seals with Head Curtain, interlocked Master Control Panel (dock leveler/door operation) with red/green Automatic Light System (ALS), TURBO-ES™ Fans, High Impact LED™ Dock Lights, 24-foot diameter I-Class™ industrial HVLS fans (Entrematic Fans), and an iFan™ Industrial Networked Fan Control system.

Big box retailers can often seem impersonal and overwhelming. Ace Hardware though, with its much smaller store locations that are collectively and famously known as "The Helpful Place", offers a deep tradition of high quality, personalized customer service.

From the moment a customer walks into a local store to purchase several gallons of paint, a new power tool or a simple replacement washer for a kitchen faucet, a knowledgeable Ace Hardware associate is always on hand to assist.

**That same high level of personal attention to service** also applies to the more than 5,000 retailer-owned Ace Hardware stores themselves. To further improve on that standard, the Oak Brook, Ill.-

based company and world's largest hardware cooperative, is currently engaged in an aggressive retail growth strategy.

Operating a distribution center that's carefully positioned to quickly service the company's stores is critical to Ace Hardware's growth plans and continued success. To date, Ace Hardware operates 17 distribution centers across the U.S.



## New Retail Support Center replacing older facilities

Following closely behind another large distribution center expansion project in Wilton, New York, Ace Hardware recently opened its newest Retail Support Center (RSC) in Fredericksburg, Pa. The facility replaced an older RSC in Prince George, Va. as well as a small cross dock in the Baltimore area.

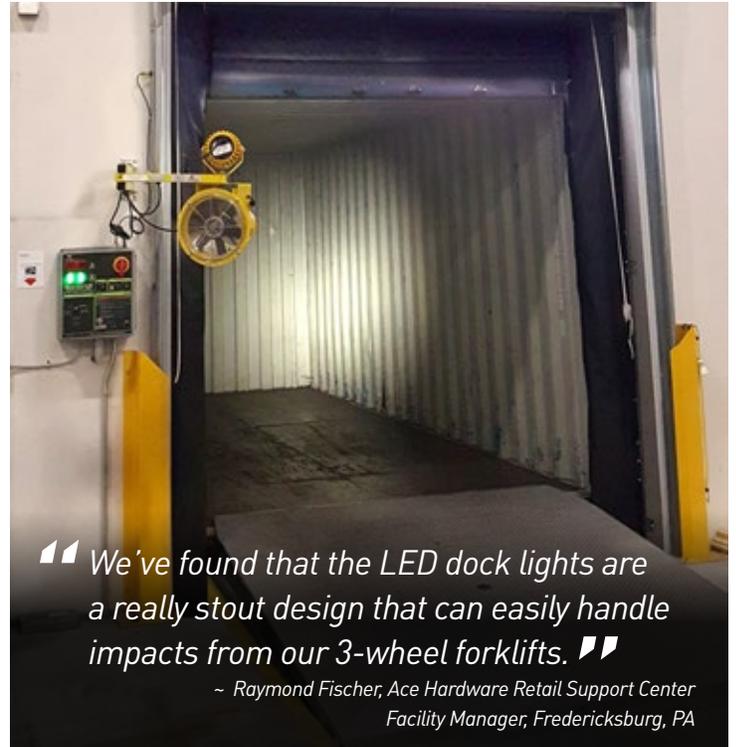
According to Dirk DeYoung, Corporate Planning & Design, Ace Hardware, "The Fredericksburg Retail Support Center places us in a much better geographically strategic location to better service retail stores throughout Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia, New Jersey and Washington, D.C." The new facility, which will soon be increasing its total number of personnel to 350 and operating 24/7, is currently receiving about 35 trucks per day, said Raymond Fischer, RSC Facility Manager.

Originally an 800,000 square-foot spec building with 94 dock pits, the new RSC's developer was aggressively marketing the property when Ace Hardware discovered it. The company liked the location so much, it decided to acquire the facility while immediately making plans to expand its footprint to 1.1 million square feet. The expansion included an additional 35 new dock bays bringing the total for the RSC to 129.



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*~ Dirk DeYoung, Corporate Planning & Design, Ace Hardware*



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*~ Raymond Fischer, Ace Hardware Retail Support Center Facility Manager, Fredericksburg, PA*

DeYoung worked closely with Dean Francis of MHC Systems to make that all happen. The solid relationship between Ace Hardware and MHC Systems goes back more than 20 years starting when Ace Hardware was working with a general contractor on a distribution center project in Little Rock, Ark.

The general contractor ran into an issue with its loading dock product vendor at the time. MHC Systems stepped in to help solve the problem and the two companies have worked together ever since. MHC Systems continues to survey existing equipment conditions for Ace Hardware and offers full-service loading dock products selection, installation, and maintenance

## Dock pit sizes inconsistent

As with any project of this magnitude, a few challenges arose along the way. The most significant being that the quality and sizes of the dock leveler pits in the spec building were inconsistent. Pit squareness and varying depths, along with the pits being poured based on the specifications for another dock leveler manufacturer, were serious concerns.

“It quickly became obvious that modifying 94 dock pits would be cost prohibitive,” DeYoung pointed out. Instead, **MHC Systems worked closely with Entrematic to find just the right Kelley brand dock leveler that would ultimately become part of the solution.** There were 90 dock pits to contend with as four of the dock pits already contained a leveler from another manufacturer.

“Being able to match the right dock leveler to the right pit—location by location—was extremely important to us,” DeYoung emphasized. Entrematic’s Rich Schlesinger, Manager, U.S. Distribution Sales and Francis (MHC Systems) worked closely together to ensure that the recommended product—the Kelley aFX® Air-Powered Dock Leveler—could be adapted to meet the required height and length adjustments for each pit.

“Overall, the dock pit size issues ended up requiring about three to four different leveler size variations,” DeYoung added, “but just looking at the final installations, you wouldn’t be able to discern any visible differences.” He also pointed out that Ace Hardware was very familiar with the Kelley aFX Air-Powered Dock Leveler since the company had a successful track record of using the product for the past 20 years.

## Robust leveler stands the test of time

DeYoung said that Ace Hardware opted to start installing 45,000 lb.-capacity aFX levelers at its distribution centers about 15 years ago. “We’ve been really pleased with the aFX leveler’s performance over time, especially since we’ve experienced no dishing in the decks.” He also commented that the Fredericksburg RSC hired all new employees, with most having no previous warehouse experience. Dock personnel like that the aFX leveler is not intimidating and very easy to use due to its push-button operation.

Each Fredericksburg RSC pit also includes a Kelley ENERGY GUARD® Kit which provides a perimeter seal along the sides and rear of a dock leveler. Even though the facility relies on manual chocking due to the predominance of lift gate trailers, each dock position does feature an integrated red/green Automatic Light System (ALS) that’s interlocked and sequenced for safe dock leveler and door operation.

**In addition, all dock positions feature Kelley DSH Series Foam Dock Seals with Head Curtain.** The hood-style head curtain seals the rear of trailers and accommodates a variety of trailer heights. Each RSC dock position also includes a TURBO-EST™ Fan to keep



dock personnel comfortable working inside trailers as well as a High Impact LED™ Dock Light for increased visibility and energy efficiency. “We’ve found that the LED dock lights are a really stout design that can easily handle impacts from our 3-wheel forklifts,” said Fischer.

## HVLS fan supports heating system

Located around the RSC’s inside perimeter are (12) 24-foot diameter I-Class™ industrial HVLS fans from Entrematic Fans. The fans, which are spaced about 150 to 200 feet apart, are all controlled via an iFan™ Industrial Networked Fan Control system. Entrematic Fans designed the location placement for all fans, with special consideration given to the facility’s steel framing, overhead conveyor systems, fire suppression as well as racking throughout the facility.

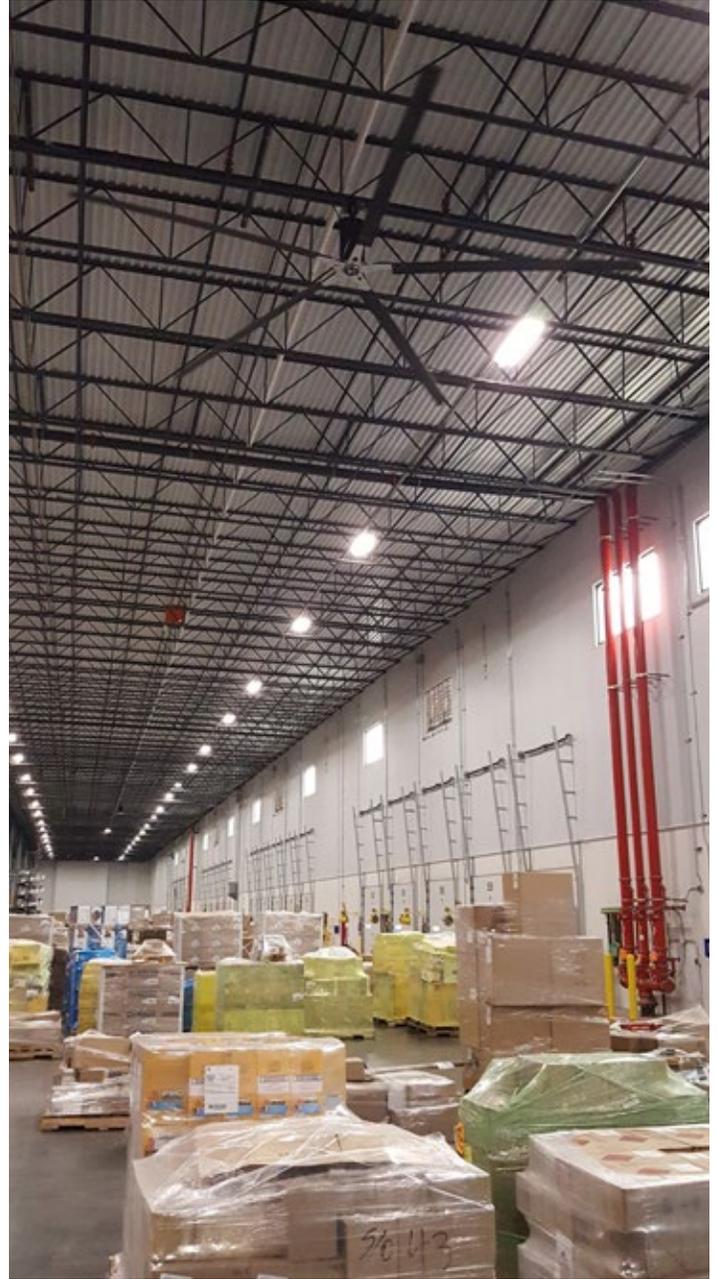
All of the RSC’s HVLS fans are interlocked with an ESFR (early suppression fast response) fire sprinkler system. If the system is activated, then all of the HVLS fans will immediately shut down. DeYoung recalled that getting the fans installed in the right locations so they don’t interfere with sprinkler heads was critical.



The RSC doesn't have a cooling system but it does operate several Cambridge gas-fired space heaters in the dock areas. "The HVLS fans really help to pull down and destratify the heated air to keep our dock personnel warm when the temperature drops outside," said Fischer.

DeYoung added, "In my opinion, industrial HVLS fans are one of the best inventions ever conceived for warehouses. They provide excellent air movement for dock personnel to keep them productive and comfortable." Ace Hardware is even considering installing additional fans in the future.

For more than 90 years, Ace Hardware has been known as the place with the helpful hardware folks in thousands of neighborhoods across America. **Kelley dock levelers and other important dock equipment—along with Entrematic industrial HVLS fans—are helping to ensure that tradition will keep growing for many years to come.**



The Kelley brand was established in 1953 with the invention of the world's first counterbalanced dock leveler. Today the Kelley product line includes dock levelers, vehicle restraints, integrated control systems, dock seals and shelters, HVLS warehouse fans, ergonomic scissor lift tables and a full array of products and services specifically designed to support customers' sustainability initiatives.

[www.KelleyEntrematic.com](http://www.KelleyEntrematic.com)

