

# ENGINEERED WOOD CONTAINERS DELIVER VALUE FOR BELL & HOWELL



## Application Summary

### COMPANY

Bell & Howell Mail Processing Systems

### LOCATION

Durham, North Carolina

### MATERIALS HANDLING SYSTEM

Plywood pallets and containers

### PRODUCTS PACKAGED

Automated mail insertion machines

### CONTAINER MANUFACTURER

Timberline

Manufacturing a great product is just one step toward satisfying your customers. Ensuring that products are delivered on time and in excellent condition is also essential. When items are expensive and fragile, packaging can present a challenge. For Bell & Howell Mail Processing Systems, plywood containers provide essential protection and at the same time, help to contain materials handling costs.

Bell & Howell manufactures high-speed automated mail insertion machines for direct mail companies, public utilities, and financial services companies such as Visa and Mastercard. The machines are large and heavy, yet delicate due to built-in electronics and software. Demanding customers expect on-time deliveries with zero product damage. When lumber pallets and containers failed to meet expecta-

tions, Bell & Howell turned to Timberline Industries, a local container manufacturer, for help. The solution was plywood pallets and containers.

“Bell & Howell is really committed to pleasing our customers. When we deliver a machine to a site, we want it to look good and be in good shape. Plywood has worked well for us in these applications,” said Jerry McCandies, Materials Leader.

Bell & Howell’s container needs are diverse because they manufacture products of different sizes and weights and ship to a variety of locations within the United States and overseas. In addition, they use specialty containers in various sizes to ship field replacement parts to customers. Timberline was able to custom-design container configurations for each of Bell & Howell’s needs.



*Heavy and delicate mail insertion machines are packed in plywood boxes that can be assembled in minutes.*

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*The Engineered Wood Association*



Plywood boxes waiting for international shipment at Bell & Howell.



Bell & Howell uses a variety of box sizes and configurations.

"If we ship international, we ship air freight, so we use plywood panels because they offer a bit more protection during the flight. This is important because the units move from truck, to plane, to truck again before they get to the customer site," said McCandies.

For shipments within the United States, Bell & Howell contains costs with reusable boxes. Customers can easily collapse the containers for return shipment. Plywood has been durable enough to withstand repeated trips via common carrier semitrucks.

Most of the containers are made using 7/8- or 3/4-inch-thick plywood panels, manufactured under the provisions of the Rated Sheathing classification of APA – *The Engineered Wood Association*. All boxes are fastened using proprietary Climp hardware.

"Plywood provides the security that Bell & Howell needs from an impact protection and pilfering standpoint," said Gary

Norberg, Timberline's general manager. He adds "We take a very long view on quality. APA plywood helps in that we know we're going to get a consistent product."

Because Bell & Howell's products are fragile and expensive, the shipping department does not take packaging risks. Personnel follow a simple crating instruction sheet to help insure packaging is consistent and complete. Working with plywood containers has been easy for McCandies' staff. All the boxes are equipped with either a built-in plywood ramp or can be fitted with a temporary ramp to help load the mail processing units, which weigh between 600 and 1800 pounds.

At Timberline, a CNC machine drills holes into the base of each container during the fabrication process. This allows Bell & Howell to easily and quickly bolt a product to its container base with T-nuts and simple air tools. Strapping holes are routed into some containers, as well. As a final procedure, shipping personnel shrink-wrap each product, then fit and nail down the container lid. The entire process takes just minutes.

The shipping industry uses a system called G-ratings to classify fragile products. A G-rating defines how much force can be applied to a product before the item gets damaged. Bell & Howell's containers are designed to meet each product's G-rating. The containers are

manufactured with Skidmates® cushions attached to the base as an extra measure of product protection during shipping. The cushions are color-coded according to the container's G-rating, which allows Bell & Howell's shipping personnel to easily verify that a container is manufactured to meet a product's shipping requirements.

According to McCandies, "Working with a company like Timberline has been great. They can custom design boxes to meet all our needs; they have simplified our shipping process; and they have reduced our costs."

Bell & Howell's satisfaction doesn't surprise Timberline. "Our customers like to use plywood boxes, partly because of the flexibility that it gives them in design," said Norberg.

Partnerships and engineered wood can help contain materials handling costs for virtually any industry. To find out how your company can benefit, contact one of the APA offices listed below.

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