Bihl + Wiedemann
THE AS-INTERFACE MASTERS

Interview with André Hartmann,
Applications Specialist at Bihl+Wiedemann GmbH

# „The bottom line is efficiency“

**Prejudices seem to have especially long half-lives when it comes to safety technology. One of these is: AS-i Safety is only worth it in larger applications where AS-Interface is used in the non-safety areas. In an interview with AS-i MASTER NEWS André Hartmann explains why this has long been untrue – and what kinds of users are actually profiting from the current innovation offensive.**

**AS-i MASTER NEWS:** Mr. Hartmann, over recent years you have consistently been able to offer AS-Interface users a variety of innovations in the area of safety technology. Are there still more potential new customers for you within this target group?

**ANDRÉ HARTMANN:** Yes, absolutely. It's true that we have gathered greater attention in the AS-i community through our safety innovations. But we still find in our discussions with customers that the economical and functional advantages of our concept are even now not sufficiently well-known. Even among users who otherwise are quite well informed about AS-Interface we all too often encounter long-outmoded prejudices with respect to safety technology.

**AS-i MASTER NEWS:** Such as?

**ANDRÉ HARTMANN:** One we hear especially often is that AS-i Safety only pays for itself in larger systems which also use AS-Interface in the standard areas – which of course has been old hat at least since we introduced our Safety Basis Monitor. So you see, we have a lot of missionary work to do even among those who are knowledgeable about AS-i.

**AS-i MASTER NEWS:** Then why are you also directing more of your communication efforts also to users for whom the AS-Interface is uncharted territory in the first place?

**ANDRÉ HARTMANN:** For exactly the same reason: because the use of AS-i Safety is now practical in virtually any safety application – regardless of the size of the system and whether or not AS-Interface is used in the non-safety areas of the system. The bottom line isn't the name of the system a customer is using to stay ahead – the bottom line is efficiency.

**AS-i MASTER NEWS:** At the risk of sounding less than informed though: isn't there some minimum system size necessary before AS-i Safety makes economic sens?

**ANDRÉ HARTMANN:** Yes and no. Of course the savings potential is generally greater in large, distributed systems than with those that fit on a table. But even small applications nearly always have room for optimizing. Often for example you find several door switches wired in series to a simple safety relay, which represents a problem with respect to the new Machine Directive. And so why should I as a user in this case choose a dubious solution when I can use AS-i Safety and be absolutely safe at even less cost?

**AS-i MASTER NEWS:** So what you're saying is, there are in fact more and more users who are choosing AS-i switching elements even when there are only three or four safety signals involved?

**ANDRÉ HARTMANN:** Exactly. And not only that: by the same token there are more and more customers who use our

Safety Basis Monitor more as a safety mini-controller and wire the E-STOP switches and door sensors conventionally to the unit. The great advantage of our solution lies in the fact that we do not use a proprietary backplane bus, but rather AS-i even in this scenario. This way the expansion modules with the safe in- and outputs can also be used decentrally – in other words exactly where they are needed.

**AS-i MASTER NEWS:** With your latest innovation, I'm referring to safe cross-communication, there would seem to be no doubt: this is mainly directed towards larger systems…

**ANDRÉ HARTMANN:** That's correct. Here we are thinking mainly of customers who need more than 2 AS-i segments in a machine or system – either because they really have so many safe signals to manage, and/or because through the combination of safe and standard slaves they need to network more than 62 slave devices. Yet another customer group which has been longing for precisely this functionality are systems manufacturers who need to group individual machines into larger complete systems. This has of course been possible all along, for example by using the AS-i coupling circuit. But especially when multiple signals need to be coupled from each machine this arrangement was sometimes arduous.

**AS-i MASTER NEWS:** And now we have safe signal exchange from machine to machine simply over an Ethernet cable?

**ANDRÉ HARTMANN:** That sums it up. And in most cases there are not even any additional costs involved, since the Ethernet connection is already there for diagnostics purposes.

**AS-i MASTER NEWS:** Mr. Hartmann, thank you for speaking with us.