



# Newspaper gets new processor

By Kathryn Burke  
The Goodland Star-News

Not even a tsunami could keep your newspaper from installing a new film processor to make news pages clearer and easier to read.

The Goodland Star-News invested \$14,000 in a new film processor, a machine that turns a photograph of a newspaper page into a negative for transfer to a metal printing plate.

The processor was delivered in late December, but the tsunami that struck Asia last month swept Indonesian-made parts out to sea.

When the processor was delivered, a missing part delayed the installation by more than a month. The dealer, Xpedx, told Jim Bowker, general manager of Nor'west Press, that the part had been washed out to sea and they would send a new one.

"No one knows what happened to it," Bowker said.

The machine was finally installed by technicians from the Wichita branch of Xpedx and Nor'West personnel on Wednesday, Jan. 19, and finished up on Thursday, Jan. 20. Bowker said the technicians taught the crew how to use machine during the installation.

He said the old processor, a 1976 model, ran slower and was much less reliable.

"It's much faster, more efficient," he said, "We run 10 papers; we needed something to speed up the process."

Sometimes, he said, the old processor wouldn't start up and even when running, it needed constant care.



"We weren't sure it was going to work," Bowker said.

Richard Westfahl, press foreman, said his job is easier because now they are always sure the processor will work.

Newspaper pages are assembled on a computer, then printed on regular paper. That paper is brought to a camera, where a photograph is taken and the film is removed and run through the processor.

Using rows of rollers, Bowker said, the machine sends the film through a developer bath. The chemicals in the developer react to the surface of the film, producing a negative image of the newspaper

type and photographs.

The machine then rolls the film through a fixer bath, a set of chemicals that clean off the developer chemicals and clear the film. The fixer prevents the developer from reacting with other parts of the film, too.

After the fixer, the processor sends the film through a water bath to rise off all of the chemicals. The film is then rolled through a dryer, coming back out of the processor clean and ready to use.

The new machine holds 3 1/2 gallons each of developer, fixer and water. Bowker said his crew is still working to get the processor set up right, using the perfect amount of chemicals and the perfect temperature to develop the film.

"It's an experimental thing," he said, "until we get it set just right."

He said the new machine produces nicer images with sharper, better-looking negatives that translate into better newspaper pages.

The equipment is designed to work with another machine that takes images directly from a computer to film.

"This machine has been on Jim's wish list for years," said Steve Haynes, president of Nor'West Newspaper. "It's the first new equipment in the press room for a decade."

"We think it's a good investment in the future of our company and our Goodland operation, where we print most of the newspapers for northwest Kansas."

Richard Westfahl (above) guided the piece of film as it came out of The Goodland Star-News' new processor ready to go onto a plate and the press. Ron Van Loenen (right), darkroom technician fed a sheet of film into the new processor. The film is put into the machine in the darkroom.

Photos by Kathryn Burke/The Goodland Star-News

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