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Worldflow Flash Report

Emerson opens new flow calibration facility in Abu Dhabi – the first of its kind in the Middle East

March 22, 2011 (Wakefield, Massachusetts)- Emerson Process Management has opened the first internationally certified flow calibration facility in the Middle East. Located in Abu Dhabi, the facility has been in the works for about two years. In the past, most customers in the Middle East have had to send their flowmeters to calibration facilities in the United State, Canada, or Europe for calibration. Emerson's new flowlab gives customers the option of reduced shipping costs and quicker turnaround time. This is especially important when flowmeters have to be pulled out of service for calibration — not all companies have backup flowmeters.

While Emerson's new flowlab will fill the needs of many companies in the region, it does have some limitations. The new facility is water-based, and it is for liquids only, although Emerson is opening up the flowlab to calibrate various types of flowmeters. In Phase One the lab will flow liquids at a rate of up to 3,000 liters per minute. There is currently a line size limit of four inches for the flowmeter connection.

In interviews conducted in the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar in the latter half of 2009, Flow Research found a substantial need and desire on the part of oil and gas producers for a flow calibration facility in the Middle East. While Emerson's facility is the first of its kind, and its opening is a groundbreaking event, it will not satisfy all the calibration requirements of companies in the Middle East and North Africa. Many of the oil and gas producers are looking for a facility that calibrates gas flowmeters as well as flowmeters used for liquids. In particular, they want a facility that can calibrate ultrasonic and turbine flowmeters used for custody transfer applications.

There are significant cost considerations for establishing a flowlab capable of calibrating

gas flowmeters. While Emerson invested \$3 million in building this facility, adding gas capability would cost significantly more. And for such a facility to be effective, it would have to tap into a high-speed natural gas pipeline. This would mean partnering with a local natural gas producer or distributor, or at least making an arrangement to make use of another company's natural gas for calibration purposes. This barrier is not insurmountable, but it is one step that any company establishing such a facility would have to take.

What it means. Despite its inability to measure gas flow, Emerson's new flowlab will undoubtedly help it make more friends in the Middle East. This is a region that feels neglected by the major instrumentation companies, who have no flowmeter manufacturing facilities there. While the impetus for Emerson's flowlab came from Micro Motion, the world's leading manufacturer of Coriolis flowmeters, it will be interesting to see if this move helps them penetrate the market for ultrasonic flowmeters for custody transfer applications. Emerson's ultrasonic flowmeters are manufactured by Daniel, but the region's ultrasonic flowmeter market is dominated by Instromet (now Elster).

Emerson has taken an important first step with its liquid flowmeter flowlab for flowmeters up to four inches in size. This step will help their instrumentation business more broadly. It will be interesting to see if the company decides to build on this first step by adding greater capability — a step that would be welcomed by many companies in the region.

The press release issued by Emerson on its new flowlab appears on the following two pages.