



Mark Booth
VP supply chain technology

RAISING THE GLASS TO BETTER DOCK SAFETY

SGWS (Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits) has been using the POWERCHOCK vehicle restraints since 2008. GMR Safety talks to Mark Booth, VP of Supply Chain technology of the beverage distributor in North America.



SGWS facility in Las Vegas - Installation in 2021.

The liquor market is a big business.. Every year the equivalent of 3 billion bottles of spirits, 5 billion bottles of wine and nearly 70 billion bottles of beer are transported across the U.S. to satisfy the national thirst for alcoholic beverages*. Speed, safety, and great care are needed during the transportation of these beverages to ensure they get to the customer in good condition, and for this reason much of the distribution of these products is handled by specialist companies.

The biggest and best-known North American distributor of wines and spirits is the Miami-based, Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits (SGWS), which has been going strong for nearly 90 years. GMR Safety talks to Mark Booth, vice president of supply chain technology at SGWS, about the company's use of the Powerchock trailer restraint system for loading dock safety.

Firstly, can you please introduce yourself and your role in SGWS and then give us a few words about the group.

Mark: As the VP of supply chain technology, my responsibilities include all the material handling equipment in our distribution facilities that amount to over 14M sq. ft., along with lift trucks, rolling stock, safety equipment, racking and most anything that has to do with what goes on inside a warehouse. Here at SGWS we have 44 production facilities across the United States, and we have a lot of cross-docks for all our internal trucking. I've been with the company for 35 years and doing this part of my job for the last 20-years. I've been involved in all our new-plant construction projects.

One of the main points that comes out of your Corporate Social Responsibility report 2021 is just how important employee safety is to the company. Has always been this way or has it increased in importance over the last few years?

Mark: It's always been important, but the safety focus has probably increased over the past 3 or 4 years. We now have a **fully resourced internal Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) department, and each facility has its own site safety specialist covering all aspects of EHS** including fire protection, trailer loading and unloading for dock safety, personal protection, safety training and much more.

Can you tell us what safety challenges and difficulties you have been facing at your warehouses and distribution centres which required you to look seriously at new safety equipment such as the GMR Safety Powerchock wheel restraint?

Mark: Like any warehousing operation we have a lot of 'over-the-road' trucking companies that deliver to us, and we had a few incidents where the driver would pull away from the dock when he shouldn't have. We've not had anything serious, but this has prompted us to take a closer look at safety and the solutions that are out there.



Tell us more about your experiences with GMR Safety equipment

Mark: We've been using the GMR Safety equipment since 2008 and its ease of installation and its ease of use made it easy for us to choose this type of technology. The Powerchock vehicle restraint was mainly selected to protect the external truckers that come here because it is harder to manage outside workers than SGWS team members, but we soon realised it was needed for our own drivers as well.

It's interesting that you receive a mix of in-house and third-party trucks. How many trucks of your own do you operate?

Mark: Quite a few – around 2,000 across the U.S. and growing.

At GMR Safety we have now been working together with SGWS for 14 years. Do you remember how it all started? Was it you that introduced the Powerchock vehicle restraint to the company?

Mark: Yes, and I believe it all started at a ProMat trade show where we saw a Powerchock product demo.



SGWS facility in Las Vegas – Installation in 2021.

Did you consider any other trailer restraint systems, during your evaluation stage?

Mark: Yes, we tested a hook system, but we moved away from this for two reasons. Firstly, because we have a lot of ocean containers, and we were finding that we couldn't easily attach the types of chassis used for these. The other reason was because the hook-type systems are as much about security as they are about safety. However, because of the type of products we distribute, our yards are already very secure and fully enclosed, so we didn't need the trailers to be locked to the wall. **We just wanted the safest system possible.**

So, you saw that a wheel-based solution would be the best way of eliminating the unscheduled departure incidents that you mentioned?

Mark: Correct. But there were other benefits too such as the fact that the chocks work in snow areas which was a big plus. The interlock with the dock leveller and has inside/outside lighting much like the lights at a street intersection (Red/Green) with clear operator signage included.

You have 44 distribution centres and we have equipped about half of these. Does this mean you have a mix of systems in operation?

Mark: Yes, the Powerchock vehicle restraints are not replacing existing equipment, but they are being installed on all new facilities and upfits. There are also some buildings that we don't own, and it can be difficult to get the necessary permissions for these. However, we have quite an extensive new building program underway where GMR Safety equipment is being used. In fact, as we speak, we are putting in your equipment at our Dallas-Fort Worth and Missouri locations.

You mentioned you were attracted to the simplicity of operating the Powerchock truck restraints. What other benefits did you see?

Mark: Certainly, the speed and ease of installation were important. No major alterations to the building are required. The integration with the dock leveller is very simple, the power draw is very low and no special equipment such as hydraulic lines are required. It is also worth mentioning that the operator instructions are very clear and easy to understand.

What about the maintenance requirements of the system? And what do you think about our unique 5-year warranty?

Mark: The warranty is great although we haven't had to use it simply because in our experience the units simply do not fail! In fact, the only time they might fail is when a truck has managed to back into the device and damage it. The robustness and simplicity of the design and the low number of moving parts means there is no real maintenance required for these systems besides a periodic inspection.

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Certainly, many of our other customers tell us they like this simplicity and the fact that their own staff can easily undertake minor repairs and adjustments without any disruption or having to wait for our technicians to arrive. Do you have any feedback from your staff about the wheel chocking system that you can share?

Mark: Yes, of course. The feedback I am getting is that they are basically self-explanatory, very easy to use, and they require no maintenance. These are the biggest factors. **They do exactly what they are meant to do.**

GMR Safety: That's great to hear. You've mentioned several reasons why SGWS selected Powerchock truck restraints but are there any other benefits you would highlight if you were trying to convince someone to choose this equipment?

Mark: It was one of our concerns that a vehicle restraint system might not work with certain trailer types. So, one of the things I would emphasize about the Powerchock vehicle restraints is that they work on every kind of rolling truck.

GMR Safety: That's a very good point. It was one of the Powerchock design specifications that it had to operate with all designs of trucks and trailers including the container chassis you already mentioned.

Now we've talked about the product, can you tell us what you think about GMR Safety as a company and its collaboration with SGWS over the years.

Mark: Well, the first thing for me is that GMR Safety appears to be a successful, profitable, and growing company. That's important to me because when you are investing in new systems and technology like this you don't want to be dealing with a company that might not be around in the future. And also, the installation and after-sales support teams have been very good. The phone at GMR Safety is always answered and we get support if we need it. Orders and installation have always happened on-time and we've never had any delays or issues.



SGWS facility in Phoenix – Very first installation of Powerchock restraints in 2008.

GMR Safety: This feedback is really appreciated because our customer support and satisfaction sit at the very top of our corporate priorities.

Finally, I would like to mention that due to the long-standing relationship between GMR Safety and SGWS it is quite possible that you took some of our very first Powerchock wheel chocks. Are these original devices, which were gray-colored, still in operation?

Mark: Yes, they are all still in use. Apart from just two incidents where damage was incurred from backing -up trucks we've not changed any of them. We also use the portable version of the Powerchock dock locks in Hawaii due to space restrictions there, and this work great too.



SGWS facility in Puyallup, Washington.

“ POWERCHOCK vehicle restraints are basically self-explanatory, very easy to use, and they require no maintenance. ”

GMR Safety: As a final question we'd like to ask if you would recommend us to other potential users?

Mark: Yes, I'd certainly recommend GMR Safety especially to anyone that wide variety of vehicles in its fleet since these chocks work on all types of trucks.

We would like to thank Mark Booth for sharing his favourable experiences with GMR Safety.

***Sources :**

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