

Wendell Hull & Associates, Inc. A PASSION WITH A WORLDWIDE IMPACT

By Charlotte Tallman Photography by Bill Faulkner

Within the Las Cruces community, Wendell Hull & Associates, Inc. (WHA) is a company with a worldwide influence in forensic engineering, fire sciences and oxygen safety.



IN 1984, Dr. Wendell Hull took

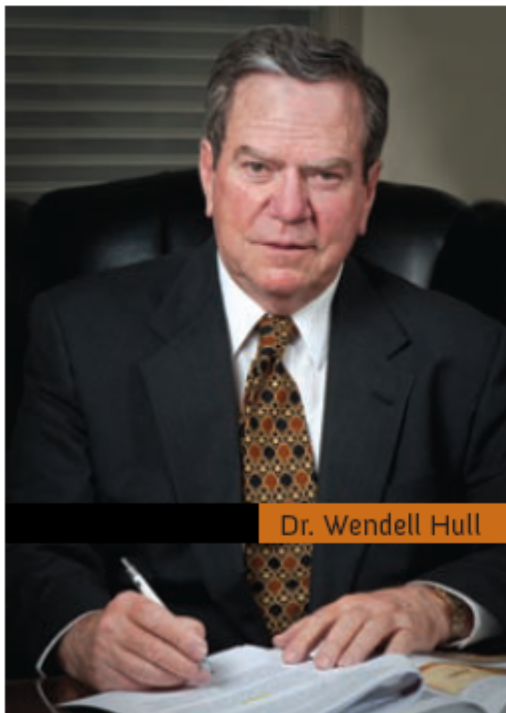
a leave of absence as a Professor in Mechanical Engineering at New Mexico State University (NMSU) to work on forensic cases. At the time, the need for forensic investigations applying principles of engineering and physics was great, and Hull saw an opportunity for a business and a passion. By 1987, he was working on forensic cases full-time with the start of WHA. Over the years, Hull's business has seen substantial growth, first within the community, then nationwide and now worldwide.

In 1997, Hull bought a small chile processing warehouse and two acres on Doña Ana Road and used the acreage and existing building for forensic testing, while he and his staff worked from a small office in the downtown area. What was once a 3,750 sq. ft. testing facility now provides 20,600 sq. ft. of space for Hull's thriving business, including

offices, classroom space used for training and a forensic testing lab used to conduct certified fire and explosion investigations, testing and forensic analysis.

The high-tech facility is well designed – everything developed and used by the engineers within WHA. Standardized testing is important when it comes to product safety, and at the WHA test facility, standardized tests are conducted by WHA engineers who also helped develop the standards through their work with international standards organizations like the International American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM), ISO, NFPA, CGA and others.

“We have constructed test systems to evaluate products, not only for ourselves but for other companies, contributing to higher levels of safety for the entire industry,” Hull said. “WHA advances the science of oxygen safety, forensic engineering and



Dr. Wendell Hull

fire sciences throughout the world." WHA engineers have extensive formal training, including advanced degrees in engineering and related fields and various certifications. The WHA team is also known worldwide as experts in oxygen and fire-safety technologies.

Because oxygen is used in so many areas, oxygen safety has become a critical part of what WHA does. Practically all materials can react and burn in an oxygen-enriched atmosphere, with such violence that there is a risk of severe personal injury and total system loss. By studying oxygen risks and safety, WHA is able to understand what causes oxygen-related accidents and provides industry guidance for the way materials are utilized in the presence of an oxygen-enriched environment.

Their achievements in oxygen safety and forensic engineering have

earned WHA international renown and many awards. Barry Newton and Dr. Gwenael Chiffolleau won the ASTM International International Advantage First Place Award for their article, "Preventing Oxygen Equipment Fires." The article showcased WHA's efforts to prevent devastating medical equipment oxygen fires, and the standards created for medical equipment supply companies. WHA focuses on ensuring oxygen safety through proper material selection, good design practices and proper operation and maintenance of systems and equipment.

WHA is actively involved in ASTM International, where several of WHA's engineers serve as chairmen of technical committees. Through ASTM International they help develop standard test methods, guides, practices and even training courses that ultimately improve the safety of oxygen components and systems.



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Newton continues to educate on oxygen safety as an officer for ASTM G04 committee on Flammability and Sensitivity of Materials in Oxygen-Enriched Atmospheres and by teaching the Oxygen Safety Training Course Series with Chiffolleau and technical consultant Elliot Forsyth. To date, attendees have included NASA Kennedy Space Center, U.S. Navy Experimental Diving Unit, U.S. Navy Sea Systems Command, Royal Australian Air Force and Navy, General Motors, Air Liquide, Air Products and Chemicals, Inc., Airgas, The Linde Group and European Industrial Gas Association, among others.

Another example of WHA's international work is their partnership with Apragaz, a European Notified Body in Belgium which tests equipment based on strict directives from the European Union (EU) and is a regu-

latory body that allows only equipment which has passed the directives to be safely sold in Europe. Apragaz partnered with WHA so products from U.S. companies could be tested within the U.S., then sold in Europe once receiving a recommendation from WHA that they are compliant with the EU directives.

Along with world-wide attention, WHA is a community leader in economic development, providing jobs to three full-time consultants and 20 employees (half of which are NMSU graduates) and bringing in engineers nationwide and internationally for educational classes, testing and consulting. WHA also works statewide with fire marshals, fire fighters and building officials on standards, testing and forensic investigations.

"Our objective is to contribute to the local community, the nation and even the world," Hull said. ■

THINGS TO KNOW

WENDELL HULL & ASSOCIATES CONTINUE ON WITH CUTTING EDGE RESEARCH AND TESTING. BELOW ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF THE FUTURE OF WHA.

Hyperbaric Chamber Research Laboratory

WHA is planning a research and test laboratory for testing materials and equipment in hyperbaric chambers for oxygen exposure and endurance testing.

High Pressure Promoted Combustion Test System

WHA is planning a new promoted combustion chamber capable of reaching 10,000 psig to burn metals in oxygen.

Adiabatic Compression Research

WHA is developing equipment for the calibration of adiabatic compression test systems.

Component Test Electrical Upgrade

WHA is upgrading the electrical and data acquisition equipment in their component test system to allow complete remote digital control and automation.

