

Remote pods expand clamping capabilities

Work-easing pneumatic clamps can be used on drill press, bench, CNC table and other surfaces

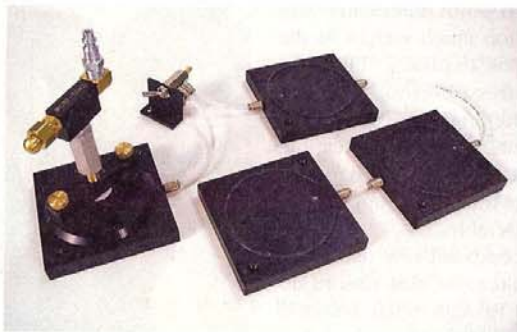
By Brian Caldwell

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For years, the Micro Fence Vacuum Center Assembly has provided the pneumatic clamping ability for the company's ellipse jig and circle jig. The company recently introduced a switch and remote 4-1/2" x 4-1/2" pods to the system, which expands the clamping capabilities to include larger work pieces of a variety of materials.

"Up to this point, we've only been able to use one pod or to use the vacuum center remotely on the ellipse jig," says Rich Wedler, owner of Micro Fence. "But we've never had the individual clamps to clamp the other materials. The original vacuum center would hold down the center of our circle jig. Then we came up with the additional pod in order to use it as a vacuum generator for the ellipse jig. Everything downstream from that is new — the additional pods, the vacuum switch.

"The users can add as many pods as they wish, such as when they are holding down a bigger piece of material. It doesn't change the pneumatic requirements; as long as the air is evacuated, you get the vacuum seal. To that end, one of the advantages of our system is that the pods are machined out of a billet of aluminum and they're surfaced on both sides. So they're dead flat, and that's important if you are trying to maintain a seal over a multiple application."



The Micro Fence vacuum clamp product line has expanded to include a switch for use with remote pods that increases the system's versatility and ability to be used with larger materials.

The recommended pneumatic requirement for using the system is 80 to 100 psi, and the system only draws about 3 cfm. The remote pods allow the complete work surface to be clear from obstruction, a distinct advantage over traditional hand clamps.

"Say you are doing a run of a dozen drawers or something, and you want to rout the grooves or the rabbets on all the drawer sides and drawer backs to accommodate a drawer bottom," Wedler says. "You can just put the piece on the clamp, start the vacuum, do your operation, flip the switch, remove it and put

it on another one. There's no manual clamp that has to be clamped to the surface, which will usually be in the way of where you want to rout. It's just a lot more time consuming and arduous to work with the manual clamps."

The switch has a vacuum input from the vacuum assembly, a vacuum output to the remote pods and a filter port for when the vacuum is evacuated. The pods use 10-32 connectors and a 5/32" diameter vacuum hose. The ports are on opposite sides of each pod so they can work in tandem, and a plug is placed on the last one to sustain the vacuum. The switch and remote pods can be used with the Micro Fence Vacuum Center Assembly or most standard vacuum pumps.

There are several pricing options for the Micro Fence vacuum clamp products. The original Vacuum Center Assembly sells for \$229.95. For those who already own that, a Vacuum Clamp Kit consisting of one remote pod, the three-way valve/switch, 6' of tubing, connectors and hardware is priced at \$119.95. For those who want to purchase everything, a Vacuum Clamp Package for \$359.95 includes the vacuum center assembly, the pod it sits in, a three-way valve/switch, tubing, connectors, hardware and one remote pod. Additional remote pods are available for \$59.95 each.

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