

“ We provide maintenance and service, but it is essential we enhance that offering and provide software that improves our customers’ experience. We do not see ourselves as just selling pieces of metal and componentry,” says Wakefield.

“ It is important to stay at the forefront of our market. Also, from a corporate point of view, balancing capital revenues with recurrent revenues is very attractive.”

Safetech has begun trialling data collection from connected lift equipment, as well as using this to provide customer insights about asset use.

The company will move its SIMS Plus (Safetech Information Management System) servitisation platform from Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 4 to TRL 8 through a collaborative project with one major resource company, two supermarket chains, German sensor and hardware specialist IFM Efector, and Federation University Australia.

When complete, this will enable benefits such as detection and alerts due to ‘out-of-parameter’ incidents.

Safetech is making a \$15,000 in-kind and \$250,000 cash contribution to the project, matched by \$250,000 in co-funding from the Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre.

IFM Efector is providing \$6,000 in in-kind support, in the form of expertise and componentry.

The supermarket companies will provide test sites for the Safetech, and, if trials are successful, expect to make the new product standard on certain equipment. The resources company, which is consulting on this project, is interested in new IoT capability in future elevated work platform purchases.

Federation University will contribute \$6,000 worth of in-kind assistance through three interned IT students. The company has collaborated with local universities, and Aalborg University in Denmark, for over a decade³.

Software and control engineering have been a growing area for Safetech over that period.

“ We had one part-timer then. Now it is about three full-time,” explains Wakefield.

“ That is a sixfold increase, and we will add more through this program.”

Successful completion of the 18-month project will develop advanced knowledge, processes and business models at Safetech. The project demonstrates collaboration with customers and researchers, and the adoption of Industry 4.0 principles.

“ We fully expect it to provide better performance from our equipment, fewer breakdowns, and anticipation of problems that are in the field,” explains Wakefield.

“ We plan to deliver information about how the equipment’s being used, how it could better be used, and how they might be better managing logistics in their plant.”

The potential of the new platform and associated services is strong. It is likely that one supermarket customer will make SIMS Plus mandatory on all future freight lifts and scissor lifts. This alone would represent a boost of \$1 million in sales annually.

Wakefield says AMGC has helped Safetech to crystallise plans under development, and to understand these within the context of the transformation of manufacturing.

“ It really has allowed us to understand what we need to do for our customers, with changes in industry and how we need to respond to these, as well as having funding to do it,” he adds.

“ It has focussed our minds and our skills on understanding what we had to be able to offer customers in the future.”

³ <https://www.amgc.org.au/news/collaborative-partnerships-help-safetech-capitalise-on-their-point-of-difference/>