



## — Packing stations that fit your product. Not the other way around.

**Medical equipment manufacturer Aesculap relies on AEB's ASSIST4 Transport Management to manage 2,500 daily shipments from its state-of-the-art logistics center in southern Germany.**

The small town of Tuttlingen on the upper Danube is known as the “center of medical technology” or, referring to its largest employer, “Aesculap City.” The cornerstone for this international reputation was laid by Gottfried Jetter right here, at the foot of the Swabian Alps in southern Germany, when he began specializing in the manufacture of surgical instruments in the 1860s. The company headquarters, an imposing brick building from 1898 standing directly opposite the main station, still dominates the cityscape of Tuttlingen.

The decision to build a new warehouse was made in 2007, after the old facility with its cluster of production halls had grown too cramped. The highly automated logistics center, with its state-of-the-art conveyance technology, was commissioned in 2008. Since then, this new central storage facility has managed all shipments worldwide and now houses finished goods valued at some €55 million.

At a total investment of €13 million, the new warehouse has an automated small-parts storage area with room for 50,000 trays, a pallet storage area and a manual storage area for fast-moving items.

### **Optimal interplay of man and technology**

What's so special about the cutting-edge, high-capacity logistics center is that despite all its automation, it still reflects the needs of the employees. The workstations of the pickers, packers and warehouse personnel were designed with ergonomic principles in mind. They are attractive, well-lit and clean. Stools are available at the eight picking stations for the workers to sit on during their idle time. The small-consignment packing stations are designed such that the workers do not need to lift or carry containers or packages. Finished packages are pushed onto the conveyor belt, which transports both the packages and empty containers.

Automated processes and manual interventions go “hand in hand” at the packing stations. The packers themselves decide which box is most appropriate for a particular shipment. They scan the divider, package type and – in the case of collective consignments – the product as well. The weight is automatically transmitted from the scale to the software. No manual entry of data is required, thereby avoiding input errors. Once

a package is complete, the correct shipping label and delivery note are automatically printed.

AEB's ASSIST4 Transport Management is used at a total of 28 packing stations in the Aesculap logistics center. What's unique here is that five different types of packing stations have been set up. The size and quantity of the articles determine which shipment is put together where.

### **Project packing station for large projects**

Aesculap handles orders for more than just scalpels, drills, hip joints and surgical sets. The global market leader also equips entire hospitals with surgical instruments and supplies the military with complete field hospitals. A project packing station has been configured within ASSIST4 to manage this type of large project. The software ensures that goods from one order container are distributed evenly across multiple packing stations – automatically. The “project packing station” application can be used at two physical workstations in the shipping

department. Andreas De Wall: "The largest project we've handled here contained 10,000 line items – 200 individual shipments with 5,000 different instruments." Once all the packages are complete, they are consolidated and passed to the carrier in a single consignment.

## Small, medium, collective

Some 2,300 shipments are processed each day at the 12 packing stations for small-parts consignments. When products for one customer come from multiple containers, packing is carried out at one of the three packing stations for medium-sized consignments, which handle an average of 150 shipments each day. One packing station has been specially configured to accommodate collective consignments, where shipments can be combined. Regardless of which packing station is used, ASSIST4 makes sure you always know which article is in which package.

## Seven large-consignment packing stations

A separate area has been set aside for the shipment of large and heavy packages. Here



At the large-consignment packing station, one employee is responsible for packing while another weighs the consignment and hands it off to the carrier.

a shipment can be processed and packaged in parallel at multiple packing stations. This division of labor saves time. Physical packing and weighing is carried out in two separate steps.

One employee is in charge of packing while another works at the "pack operator," taking care of weighing and handoff to the carrier. ASSIST4 is installed in both areas.

Wall. De Wall appreciates this freedom in working with ASSIST4. He has been using ASSIST4 since 1999 and is happy with how quickly data is transmitted from SAP and how stable and reliable ASSIST4 supports the shipping processes.

Hermle adds: "With our new logistics center, we offer highly professional, worldwide services ourselves. To ensure individualized customer service, we need intelligent shipping software that can be quickly adapted and lets us fill in fields according to specific customer requirements. Part of our service, for example, is sending packages from Tuttlingen to France under the name of B. Braun."

## ASSIST4: island in the SAP® system

When the plan to build a new logistics center in Tuttlingen was put into action, close scrutiny was also given to the choice of software. Aesculap uses SAP® for all its sales order processing. For packing and shipping and the electronic link to carriers, they turned once again to the software from the logistics specialists AEB in Stuttgart. What they sought was the high degree of flexibility that ASSIST4 offers, explains head of logistics Bernd Hermle.

Adaptations like linking a new carrier are implemented quickly and smoothly by AEB, and smaller adaptations can even be carried out by the in-house IT specialist, Andreas De

## Quick implementation of carrier links

"Whichever carrier we happen to be using, I can be sure that the consignment has the right label," says Bernd Hermle, explaining one of the benefits of ASSIST4. ASSIST4 and the AEB project developers make sure that all the specifications stipulated by each carrier are implemented.

Four carriers – Dachser, TNT Innight, trans-



A user-friendly interface and integrated Assistant ensure a high quality of shipping.



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o-flex and UPS – are linked electronically. This means that, in addition to labels, loading lists are generated and transmitted remotely to the carrier.

Orders received by 4:30 p.m. are sent out the same day. The shipping papers are assigned to the individual shipments waiting for carrier pickup in front of the loading platforms.

Consignments for countries outside the EU are sent out as soon as the export accompanying document has been printed. For communication with the German customs office, Aesculap uses the export solution ATC :: Export, which is integrated into SAP®. This accounts for a third of all consignments. Exports go out primarily to the United States, Japan, Korea, Brazil and Australia. Recipients include doctors’ offices, hospitals and Aesculap’s own branch offices. Each of these countries receives shipments once or twice a week.

Hermle’s assessment: We have an error rate of 0.14%, and you can’t blame that on the system. At the most, it just happens that sometimes the wrong label is affixed. Since we started using ASSIST4, our processes have become very reliable, and

standardization of the processes has enhanced overall productivity.

## About Aesculap

Aesculap, first founded in 1864, became a division of B. Braun in 1998.

Aesculap has some 9,000 employees worldwide, including 2,800 in Tuttlingen.

Aesculap offers over 20,000 products. From the smallest dental drills and forceps to a complete set of surgical instruments for implanting an artificial hip, Aesculap manufactures everything surgeons rely on in the operating room.

Aesculap has production plants in China, Malaysia, Mexico, Poland, France, England and Germany but controls its worldwide distribution from a single logistics center in Tuttlingen.

## AEB GmbH

Julius-Hölder-Str. 39  
70597 Stuttgart | Germany  
Phone +49 711 72842-300  
E-Mail [info@aeb.de](mailto:info@aeb.de) | [www.aeb.de](http://www.aeb.de)

## Contact in the UK:

### AEB (International) Ltd

Pure Offices | Plato Close  
Tachbrook Park  
Leamington Spa  
Warwickshire CV34 6WE | United Kingdom  
Phone +44 1926 801250  
E-Mail [info@aeb-international.co.uk](mailto:info@aeb-international.co.uk)  
[www.aeb-international.co.uk](http://www.aeb-international.co.uk)

## Contact in Singapore:

### AEB (Asia Pacific) Pte Ltd

1 North Bridge Road  
# 14-01 High Street Centre  
Singapore 179094  
Phone +65 6337 9300  
E-Mail [info@aeb.com.sg](mailto:info@aeb.com.sg)  
[www.aeb.com.sg](http://www.aeb.com.sg)