



Infrared Thermography and the Future of IR

An interview with Mary Molle, VP at Jersey Infrared Consultants

By: Traci Hopkins

At the recent IR/INFO 2022 Conference in Orlando, FL, I got to sit down and talk with Mary Molle, Vice President at Jersey Infrared Consultants. During the interview we discussed how she entered the world of infrared thermography, why IR is a valuable tool in the electric power industry, and what characteristics are required to become an infrared expert.

There is no doubt that Mary is a leader in the industry, a breaker of glass ceilings, and true subject matter expert. Continue reading to learn more about her and her thoughts on the future of Infrared Thermography.

T: Mary, thank you for sitting down with me today. It is an honor and privilege to talk with you and learn about how you ended up in the IR world. So, tell me when did you get started in this industry?

M: Thank you Traci. I began working in the industry in 1984 for the family business.

T: When you first began what were some of the challenges you face?

M: When I first started out my father-in-law told me that if I was going to be successful, I needed to read and understand "The Cableman's Handbook." Then as I studied and went with him on jobs, he would challenge me to identify all the electrical assets in the power system.

T: That is certainly one way to learn! And it must be safe to say, you have enjoyed it because you're still here today. Tell me why is Infrared Thermography such an important tool for electrical asset management professionals?

M: One of the biggest reasons thermal imaging of electrical assets is so valuable is that that it provides you with additional information about your equipment that cannot be seen by the naked eye. It's a visual representation of how heat is affecting your equipment and helps the technician & asset manager easily identify potential areas of risk or concern. It is a non-invasive tool that does not require an outage to evaluate the condition of the equipment and when combined with other diagnostic data can help you to extend the life of that asset.

T: Very interesting, are there any other benefits to thermal scans of electrical equipment?

M: Yes, over the years the cost and size of thermal imaging cameras has significantly reduced which has made thermal imaging an inexpensive tool to collect data on the equipment, which provides asset managers the ability to identify patterns and trends related to the health of that asset.

T: It sounds like cost effective tool that all asset managers should have in their toolbox. But of course, for a tool to be effective you must know how to use it and interpret the information. In your experience what makes a good IR Thermographer great?

M: Thinking outside the box. Understanding what you're scanning and why it's important is key. In the electrical world Transmission lines are aging, equipment that is essential to everyday operations needs to be monitored more frequently, not only when your PM's indicate that it's time. **Ask questions...**do not be afraid to ask WHY? Why am I seeing this? Is there an alternate reason for this anomaly? Take the time to train and mentor, never stop learning.

T: That is sound advice that applies to any industry or field. I am curious with the automation of many activities, where do you see the future of IR Thermography with relation to the human element?

M: Fortunately for us, the human element is not going anywhere. Yes, there have been many advancements made on the equipment side, for example IR cameras are now lighter, less expensive and easier to use than when I first started out. You can attach even find them on drone cameras now; however, the human element is still key. You are still in need of a technician to operate the equipment, and when it comes to interpretation



of the images you need those expertly trained technicians to ask the questions and understand what that image is showing you.

T: It sounds like there will always be a human element to thermal imaging. One final question for you - What advice would you give young women who want to enter non-traditional fields but are unsure?

M: What many young women need to realize is nothing is no longer non-traditional. The only person that can talk you out of being successful is yourself. Yes, you will face different challenges, but you have to embrace who you are accept your strengths, challenge your weaknesses and take it one step at a time. Only you can break the mold and create your own.

T: Mary, thank you for taking the time to sit down with me during the IR/INFO conference 2022 and I cannot wait to come back to Orlando January 2023.



As Vice President of Operations with over 35 years' experience, Mary actively works in sales and oversees daily operations. She is a member of RCI and currently serves on the Board of Directors of the NY Chapter of RCI. She is a Level III Infrasppection Institute Certified Infrared Thermographer. To learn more about Infrared Thermography, Jersey Infrared Consultants or Mary send her an email mary@jerseyir.com.