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DOWN TO EARTH

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SWINGEN CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

Grand Forks company celebrates 100 years of building bridges and concrete structures

See article inside . . .

Dan Swingen, President

Miles Christianson, Equipment Manager

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SWINGEN CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

Grand Forks company celebrates 100 years of building bridges, concrete structures

Dan Swingen, President

Miles Christianson, Equipment Manager

If you've driven the roads of the Dakotas and northwestern Minnesota, chances are you've crossed or seen one or more of the myriad of concrete structures Swingen Construction Company has built during its century-long history. Formed in 1911 by T.M. (Tom) Swingen, this year marks the Swingen family's 100th anniversary in business, and as President Dan Swingen points out, it hasn't always been easy.

"Think about what's happened in the last 100 years: World War I, the Great Depression, World War II," said Dan, naming a few historic events. "Those were major events that had profound effects on the economy and in turn, the construction industry. Then we've had recessions and other factors that impact the construction industry on top of that. To survive this long is certainly a major achievement."

Dan and his cousin James L. (Senior Vice President) are the fourth generation of Swingens heading the family business. Dan's father, Walter I. Swingen, and James' father, Jim, were the third. Jim passed away several years ago, while Walter remains Chairman of the company and was recently named a member of the North Dakota Highway Hall of Fame. Jim and Walter's father, Lonnie, was second-generation and moved the company from Cooperstown to Grand Forks in the mid-1940s, where it's remained since then. He also incorporated the company around that time and changed the name from T.M. Swingen & Sons to Swingen Construction Company.

In addition to Dan and James, key management staff today includes Vice President of Construction Robert Peterson, Vice President of Engineering Jason Odegard and Treasurer/Secretary Laurie Christianson.

Swingen Construction completed the $12 million tri-level bridge in Fargo that routes traffic from Interstates 29 and 94. Built nearly 20 years ago, it was the largest project ever let in North Dakota to that date.

A chance happening

Through four generations and a name change, the Swingens' niche has always been bridge building. But their foray into the bridge industry happened by chance. While founder Tom Swingen was doing a lath-and-plaster job at a church, the local banker suggested he tackle bridge work for farmers around the community.

"Bridge work has been our major focus ever since," said Dan, who also noted that during rough times, the family performed services such as paving and home construction to survive, and also did utility work for a while. "We've built new bridges, repaired old ones, torn out and replaced ones we've built and ones we haven't and added on to some. We self-perform all aspects, including pier construction, I-beam placement and paving of the deck, as well as any necessary removals on

existing structures. If we're the general, we'll sub out items such as storm sewer and major earthwork."

Throughout the past several years, the Swingens continued to add complementary services to their bridge construction specialty. Swingen Construction is also well-known for its work on flood walls, concrete box culverts, heavy foundations and pile driving. The company has seven to 10 projects going at any one time.

"Our work falls almost exclusively in the public sector for municipalities, county and state governments, as well as the Army Corps of Engineers," said Dan. "It's about a 50/50 split as to whether we're the general contractor or a sub."

Dedicated staff gets jobs done on time

About 20 years ago, Swingen Construction was general contractor on the largest project ever let in North Dakota. The company built the $12 million tri-level bridge in Fargo that routes traffic along Interstates 29 and 94, receiving an Excellence in Concrete Award as part of its work. It's one of numerous accolades Swingen Construction has garnered during its history.

In the cities of Fargo and Moorhead, Swingen crews worked on flood walls, including a 121-foot extension of an existing flood wall the company built last year. The project called for incorporating a 48-inch storm sewer and installing a ditch liner. In Fargo, a crew built a 600-foot wall that runs along a creek on the back side of a residential neighborhood. Because of its location, the project called for the concrete wall to have a decorative look.

"We have the ability to complete a diversity of projects because of our staff, which during peak season numbers about 150," said Dan, noting that the company typically runs seven crews of seven to 20 individuals at any one time. "We've always believed in finding good, motivated and hardworking individuals, giving them the responsibility to make decisions and supporting those decisions. That's helped us build a very dedicated staff that plays a direct role in Swingen Construction's success. We wouldn't be where we are without them, and many have been here a decade or longer."

NEW! online video

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Komatsu excavators remain key machines in Swingen Construction's fleet after nearly 20 years. "We hammer with them during the removal process, dig, load and place riprap," said Equipment Manager Miles Christianson. "The applications are often ones that are extra taxing to a machine, but our Komatsu excavators have always stood up to the challenge."

NEW! online video

www.GeneralDownToEarth.com

Swingen Construction uses several pieces of Komatsu equipment, including D31 dozers for small grading work on the bridge and concrete structure projects in which it specializes.

Longevity in personnel, equipment

One of Swingen Construction's many longtime employees is Equipment Manager Miles Christianson, who's closing in on 42 years with the company. In addition to overseeing the contractor's equipment fleet, he also does AutoCAD work and occasionally runs a paver.

"Our approach to doing a job hasn't changed," said Christianson, who started with the company as a laborer and has worked as a welder and crane operator. "The focus is still on getting a project done safely, on time and on budget. What *has* changed through the years is the quality and efficiency of the machinery we use to get the job done."

Komatsu hydraulic excavators have been a staple in Swingen Construction's fleet for about 20 years, including PC200 and PC300

Continued . . .

Commitment to customers pays off

. . . continued

sizes. "What I appreciate most about Komatsu excavators is their versatility and longevity," said Christianson. "We hammer with them during the removal process, dig, load and place riprap. The applications are often ones that are extra taxing to a machine, but our Komatsu excavators have always stood up to the challenge. Because of that, we've been able to keep them for years with confidence that they'll remain productive."

One area of expertise for Swingen Construction is flood-wall construction, such as this one built in a residential neighborhood in Fargo.

A museum in Cooperstown, where Swingen Construction was originally founded, contains artifacts from the 100-year history of the Swingen family and its contributions to the highway and bridge industry in North Dakota.

(L-R) Swingen Construction President Dan Swingen and Equipment Manager Miles Christianson meet with General Equipment Sales Representative Dale Hatfield at Swingen's home base in Grand Forks. "Our relationship with Dale and General goes back (almost 20 years) because they've always delivered for us, whether it's sales, parts or service," said Christianson.

In addition to excavators, the company runs Komatsu wheel loaders and dozers. "Our experience with the excavators factored into our decision to try other Komatsu pieces," noted Christianson. "They have the same productive and fuel-efficient attributes. We especially like the D31 dozers because they're just the right size for our projects, which often call for moving dirt in a confined area."

Christianson worked with General Equipment Sales Representative Dale Hatfield on Swingen Construction's initial Komatsu acquisition in the early 1990s and on all subsequent purchases. "Our relationship with Dale and General goes back that far because they've always delivered for us, whether it's sales, parts or service," he acknowledged. "We handle maintenance for the most part, but there are times I need General's expertise. I know I can call Dale or anyone else at General and get a quick response."

A commited focus

Now, fifth-generation family members are working, or have worked, at Swingen Construction. Although there are no immediate plans for the next generation to run the business, the possibility is there. If so, it's likely that Dan Swingen would offer them the same advice his father gave him when he was younger.

"I remember my dad saying 'Do what you do well, and when times are tough do it even better,'" Dan recalled. "We've developed our niche, and that's what we focus on. Sure, there are other opportunities out there, and we've explored them. But we're not ones to go after something just for the sake of being able to say we do it.

"In our 100-year history, the family had to do some other things to survive, but the main focus never strayed," he added. "Fortunately, through the years, the business has been built to a point that we can concentrate our efforts on bridge building and other complementary projects. That, along with a commitment to providing quality work, will remain our focus for as long as Swingen Construction exists." ■

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TAKING A TEST DRIVE

Demo Days provides opportunity for equipment users to try out new Komatsu machines

Komatsu interim Tier 4 machines headlined the most recent Demo Days event at the Komatsu Training and Demonstration Center in Cartersville, Ga.

"There's always some concern on the part of equipment users when new models are introduced with new technology in them," said Bob Post, Komatsu Director of Marketing and Sales Training. "That concern may even be greater when the change is mandated by the government, as is the case with Tier 4 (to meet new emissions requirements).

"The fact is, at Komatsu, we've made our Tier 4 machines better," he noted. "In addition to being cleaner emission-wise, they're also more productive and more fuel-efficient. And contrary to what many believe, there's not that much more maintenance involved. Demo Days is the perfect opportunity to introduce equipment users to our interim Tier 4 units as well as all our other latest machine models."

At the Fall Demo Days event, Komatsu had dozers ranging from the D39-22 up to the D275. Several of the dozers were equipped with 3D machine-control systems for operators to try out. Excavators at the show included the world's only true hybrid hydraulic excavator (HB215LC-1) and several new interim Tier 4 models including the PC360LC-10 and PC390LC-10, as well as the PC1250LC-8. Other new machines featured were the WA380-7 wheel loader and D65-17 crawler dozer.

"We welcome all opportunities to get equipment users inside our new machines," said Post. "Once they test our equipment in a real-world environment like Demo Days, they can see for themselves the Komatsu difference." ■

General Equipment Sales Manager Jon Shilling (left) was at Demo Days with Mike Mikkelsen, Mikkelsen Brothers, Langdon, N.D.

General Equipment Sales Reps John Gromatka (left) and Grady Bakken (right) check out dozers with Milt Gowan of Gowan Construction, located in Oslo, Minn.

Equipment users tried out many Komatsu machines, including the new HB215LC-1 hybrid excavator and the popular WA500-6 wheel loader.

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

There's a need for infrastructure investment, but how to fund it remains in question

Congress passed and the President signed an act that provides an extension of funding for surface and air transportation. It came as welcome news to construction companies, their subcontractors and suppliers who work in those sectors, but the reality is that they can only breathe a sigh of relief for a short period of time.

The Surface and Air Transportation Extension Act of 2011 only provides monies into the first quarter of next year — another short-term mechanism for funding, much like what Congress has done since the previous highway bill expired in September of 2009. That means the fight for dollars to build the nation's infrastructure will be brought up again soon.

This comes at a time when numerous studies show America's highways, bridges, airports and other modes of transportation are suffering from a serious lack of investment. An American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) report shows that to bring the nation's surface transportation infrastructure up to tolerable levels, about $1.7 trillion is needed between now and 2020. Current funding levels fall short of that total by $846 billion or $94 billion per year, according to the report.

The nation's transit systems, including roads and rail, are in need of repair. One study shows $1.7 trillion is needed during the next eight years to bring infrastructure up to tolerable levels.

The results of underfunding are stark, the report notes. It will cost the economy 870,000 jobs and suppress growth of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by more than $3 trillion by 2020. It will also cost American households and businesses more than $129 billion in vehicle operation, delays, accidents and environmental damage.

"Clearly, failing to invest in our roads, bridges and transit systems has a dramatic, negative impact on America's economy," said ASCE President Kathy J. Caldwell, P.E., F.ASCE. "The link between a nation's infrastructure and its economic competitiveness has always been understood. But for the first time, we have data showing how much failing to invest in our surface transportation system can negatively impact job growth and family budgets. This report is a wake-up call for policymakers because it shows that investing in infrastructure contributes to creating jobs, while failing to do so hurts main street America."

According to a study by the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis, inadequate infrastructure systems also contribute to health problems. The analysis looked at health costs resulting from higher emissions associated with road congestion. Results showed traffic-related air pollution as a contributing factor to heart attacks and strokes, with emissions from idle vehicles causing nearly 4,000 premature deaths.

It also costs the country in terms of stature. A World Economic Forum report in 2007-2008 ranked our nation's infrastructure systems sixth best in the world. In a new report released in September, the U.S. slipped to 16th.

Numerous roads and bridges have been rated as structurally deficient or in need of repair, causing our nations's global rank to fall from sixth to 16th in terms of infrastructure systems.

A government report said America spends about 2 percent of GDP on infrastructure, about half what it did 50 years ago and well below other global leaders.

Gas tax increase unlikely

A recent Market Watch article, "How to fix crumbling U.S. roads, rails and airways," pointed out that "Deficits in the U.S. trust funds that support the country's Interstate system and civil aviation have been widening for years, as tax revenue failed to keep up with inflation. To fill the gaps, Congress has been taking cash from the general fund.

"But tax revenue for the general budget has declined as well because of the economic recession and the Bush-era tax cuts, and now Congress is determined to eliminate the shortfall by reducing spending across the board," it continued. "For every $1 billion pulled from the U.S. budget for highways, an estimated 30,000 jobs are lost, according to a 2007 report from the Department of Transportation."

The ASCE report noted a modest investment would go a long way, saying an amount "equal to about 60 percent of what Americans spend on fast food each year, would: protect 1.1 million jobs, save Americans 180 million hours in travel time each year, deliver an average of $1,060 to each family and protect $10,000 in GDP for every man, woman and child in the U.S."

The gap in funding isn't likely to decrease soon, and may widen further. The national 18.4-percent gas and 24.4-percent diesel per-gallon taxes haven't been raised in nearly two decades, and the recession has meant less driving, which in turn means less fuel purchased. More fuel-efficient cars and new standards to further improve fuel efficiency equate to even fewer fill-ups.

Funding for surface and air transportation was extended into next year, but long-term plans remain elusive.

Potential funding sources

So where will the money come from to repair and replace an ever-increasing deterioration of the nation's surface, air and other transit systems?

Given the economic and political climates, an increase in the gas tax isn't likely any time

Continued . . .

Various funding sources offer potential solutions

. . continued

soon. Alternate funding methods have been discussed, but there are no sure bets right now. Past research from a survey by the firm HNTB showed Americans preferred tolling to increased gas taxes.

HNTB's Pete Rahn said tolls will likely be a more prominent source of future funding. The organization's survey revealed most of the nation supports highway tolls with 82 percent saying the rate should be a dollar or less for every 10 miles on an Interstate. Fifty-six percent of those said the rate should be less than 50 cents.

Sixty-six percent of the people polled by the organization said they would like their toll money to go toward relieving congestion issues, with 41 percent saying they would support their toll money going to road and bridge repair. Others said they would like to see the money go toward dedicated truck lanes or adding lanes to existing roads.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act — also known as the stimulus bill — that was passed in 2009 funded some road construction project during the past two years. In a speech before Congress in September, the President proposed additional spending on infrastructure as a way to boost the economy.

One idea he mentioned was an "infrastructure bank" that would provide loans or loan guarantees for transportation and other projects. The idea has been brought up several times before, including bills proposed by congressional leaders. One put forth in the Senate would make the bank an independent government entity with congressional oversight. The proposal would give the bank a one-time appropriation of $10 billion that would lead to more than $600 billion in future projects.

The rest of the money would come from private investments in the infrastructure bank. Investors could partner with local, state and regional governments and propose a project to the bank, which would determine its worthiness based on factors such as public demand and support and the ability of the project to generate revenue that would pay back investors.

If deemed a worthy project, the bank would loan up to 50 percent of the total cost, making the bank another investor. Loans would be repaid through revenue generated from the project, which may come from such sources as dedicated state taxes, fees, tolls and passenger tickets.

PPPs

These "public-private partnerships" (PPPs) have already worked together on some state-level projects. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, PPPs are agreements that allow private companies to take on traditionally public roles in infrastructure projects, while keeping the public sector ultimately accountable for a project and the overall service to the public. A government agency typically contracts with a private company to renovate, build, operate, maintain, manage or finance.

"Though PPPs are not optimal for many transportation projects, they have been shown to reduce up-front public costs through accelerated or more efficient project delivery," said the organization. "PPPs don't create new money but instead leverage private-sector financial and other resources to develop infrastructure."

Not everyone agrees on how to pay for the infrastructure investment, but most everyone agrees that something has to be done.

"We can no longer ignore the growing liability our aging roads present to U.S. economic competitiveness and the mobility of our citizens," said HNTB's Rahn. "Americans are feeling the pain, every day, as they commute and cross the nation's highways and bridges." ■

Several funding sources have been proposed, including public-private partnerships, which allow companies to pair with government entities as investors in a project. Known as PPPs, they have been used on state-level projects around the country.

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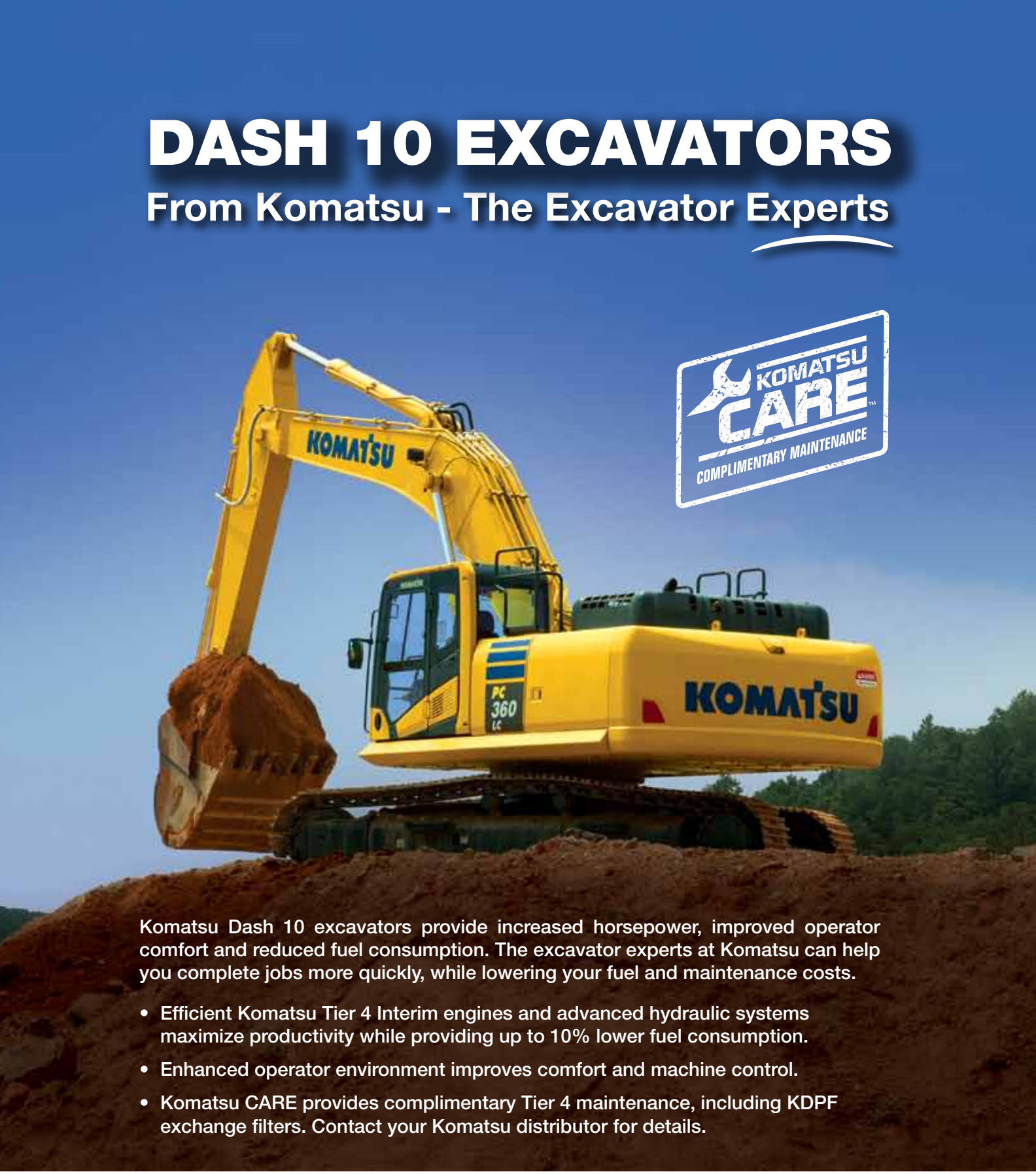

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MORE POWER, LESS FUEL

New Komatsu PC360LC-10 offers more efficient excavation

Efficiency is the name of the game when it comes to moving dirt. Now, a new player in the excavation game, Komatsu's interim Tier 4 PC360LC-10 excavator, has taken the lead. Using its proven Tier 3 platform, Komatsu added features to provide greater efficiency with lower fuel consumption, improved operator comfort and enhanced serviceability, all of which maximize productivity while lowering operating costs.

In addition to meeting interim Tier 4 engine standards, the 257-horsepower PC360LC-10 uses an integrated design with Komatsu-exclusive hydraulic pumps, motors and valves. The design has a closed-center, load-sensing hydraulic system that uses variable speed matching to adjust engine speed based on the pump output. To make the excavator even more efficient, Komatsu enhanced the hydraulic system to reduce hydraulic loss and fuel consumption.

Komatsu lowered the fuel consumption while providing additional horsepower (compared to its predecessor, the PC350LC-8) with a larger-displacement engine that features an advanced, electronic control system to manage air-flow rate, fuel injection, combustion parameters and aftertreatment functions. An integrated Komatsu Diesel Particulate Filter (KDPF) reduces emissions without interfering with machine performance.

"Komatsu's mid-size excavators have always been considered the top of their size class, and the PC360LC-10 fits right in," said Product Manager Doug Morris. "Users will find it an excellent digger for speciality work, such as trench and large foundations, as well as for productive bulk excavation. It also has good power to run attachments, such as demolition grapples or hammers."

Strong, comfortable cab

A new, strong, ROPS-certified cab has a reinforced pipe-structure framework with viscous damper mounts for low vibration. A high-back, fully adjustable seat uses air suspension and is heated for improved comfort. An auxiliary input and two 12-volt ports are standard.

"Outside the cab, the PC360LC-6 has handrails that surround the upperstructure for easy access to service points," noted Morris.

"We want users to get maximum production with minimal downtime. The PC360LC-10 delivers just that," he concluded. ■

Doug Morris, Product Manager

Brief Specs on PC360LC-10

Model	Operating Weight	Horsepower	Digging Depth
PC360LC-10	79,930 lbs.	257 hp	26 ft., 10 in.

"Komatsu's new PC360LC-10 excavator offers excellent digging power for large trenches as well as bulk excavation," said Product Manager Doug Morris. "It also has good power to run attachments, such as demolition grapples or hammers."

www.GeneralDownToEarth.com

NEW! online video

NEW ARTICULATED TRUCK

Increased load capacity among more productive features of Komatsu's new HM300-3 truck

Rob Warden, Product Manager

When Komatsu made changes to its articulated dump trucks to meet interim Tier 4 regulations, it took the opportunity to also make the trucks more productive. Case in point, Komatsu's new HM300-3. The artic truck now reduces emissions and offers increased capacity compared to its predecessor model.

Komatsu also increased operating weight, while maintaining a maximum ground speed of 36.4 miles per hour in order to move more material in the same amount of time. "The HM300-3 has a low, nine-foot, three-inch loading height, so it matches up well with 30-ton to 60-ton hydraulic excavators and five-yard to seven-yard wheel loaders," said Product Manager Rob Warden. "In addition, it has two, single-stage, body-lift cylinders that give it a 70-degree dump angle. It's a very efficient and productive truck that fits well into load-and-carry applications."

The HM300-3 features a new Komatsu Traction Control System (KTCS) that automatically provides optimum traction when operating in soft ground conditions. The HM300-3 continually monitors machine performance and detects changes in momentum due to soft ground conditions. When a change in momentum is detected, the inter-axle differential lock applies automatically, activating KTCS. KTCS monitors tire slippage with sensors located on four wheels. If slippage occurs, the four independent brakes automatically apply as necessary to regain traction.

In addition, a Komatsu Advanced Transmission with Optimum Modulation Control System (K-ATOMiCS) offers a six-speed, fully automatic transmission that selects the ideal gear based on vehicle speed, engine rpm and shift position. It results in powerful acceleration, smooth downshifting and synchronized engine speed when climbing slopes. K-ATOMiCS also helps keep the load in the body and increases productivity.

A new cab design on the HM300-3 provides a more comfortable and quiet work environment, including a rounded front dash panel with easy-to-reach switches. A redesigned dashboard and relocated, air-ride seat improve visibility. From the new, high-resolution monitor, the operator can modify settings, such as reversing the fans or selecting the starting gear.

"A newly designed engine hood provides convenient access to service points and improved forward visibility," Warden pointed out. "Of course, it has the same standard features, such as KOMTRAX, that make it a true Komatsu machine, so we know users will find the HM300-3 a valuable addition to their fleets." ■

Brief Specs on HM300-3 Artic Truck

Model	Operating Weight	Load Capacity	Ground Speed
HM300-3	116,823 lbs.	22.4 cu. yds.	36.4 mph

NEW! online video

Komatsu's new interim Tier 4 HM300-3 articulated haul truck provides greater load capacity and a new traction-control system that automatically provides optimum traction when operating in soft ground conditions.

www.GeneralDownToEarth.com

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NEW D155AX-7 DOZER

Interim Tier 4 model builds on already productive features for greater efficiency

Bruce Boebel, Product Manager

On its surface, Komatsu's new D155AX-7 dozer is much like its predecessor: the operating weight, net horsepower and blade capacity all remain the same. However, many comparisons stop there as the new interim Tier 4 D155AX-7 offers lower emissions, yet maintains low fuel consumption for reduced per-yard costs.

Coupled with a highly efficient, automatic transmission, the new interim Tier 4 engine uses advanced electronic control to manage air-flow rate, fuel injection, combustion parameters and aftertreatment function for optimal performance. The automatic gearshift transmission and lock-up torque converter transfer engine power directly to the transmission, providing a 10-percent decrease in fuel consumption compared to conventional models. The D155AX-7 uses a much larger cooling package with improved airflow to keep the engine running cool in harsh working conditions.

"Even in the toughest working conditions, the D155 remains efficient and productive," said Product Manager Bruce Boebel. "It meets all the interim Tier 4 standards for reduced emissions, without sacrificing the excellent power previous D155 models have become known for in dozing and ripping applications where mass quantities of material are involved."

To fit the application at hand, operators can choose from automatic or manual gearshift modes: automatic for general dozing and manual for dozing and ripping in rough ground. The automatic gearshift transmission shifts to the optimal gear range based on working conditions and load.

Auto blade pitch, ripper controls

Equipped with Komatsu's unique SIGMA dozer blade, the D155AX-7 has a capacity of 12.3 cubic yards. While that's the same as the previous model, Komatsu incorporated a new, automatic, blade-pitch function that reduces operator effort and increases efficiency. With the flip of a switch, it sets blade-pitch position between digging and dump positions with no additional lever movements. Operators can set the blade-pitch control through the seven-inch HD monitor to automatically return to the digging position when they select reverse.

"A new ripper-control lever is more ergonomic for increased operator comfort," said Boebel. "Like our other interim Tier 4 machines, we didn't stop with just putting in a new engine. Komatsu worked with customers to identify features that would improve their dozing and ripping performance. We believe we've made a dramatic improvement with the D155AX-7." ■

Komatsu's new D155AX-7 dozer features an automatic blade-pitch function that increases operating efficiency and reduces operator effort. The new dozer is interim Tier 4 compliant and maintains the same low fuel consumption as the D155AX-6.

ENGAGING EXCAVATION

Komatsu's KMAX tooth system offers cost-effective solution in a large range of applications

In 2003, when Komatsu introduced its KMAX tooth system, it was limited to six tooth styles strictly for excavators. Today, those numbers have expanded to more than 20 ground-engaging tools for both excavators and wheel loaders — PC120 to PC800 and WA150 to WA800 — that handle a wide range of applications.

"There's a right fit for virtually anyone who does excavation or similar types of work, whether they need teeth for digging in clay or rock, or they need something with good penetration into a pile, such as quarry work," said Gary Jones, General Manager Product Support & Marketing for Hensley Industries, a Komatsu company that produces the KMAX tooth system. "The number of styles we have is a direct result of listening to our customers' needs and cost-effectively crafting teeth that meet those needs."

The KMAX tooth system, which now comes on Komatsu buckets, is cost-effective for several reasons, said Jones. Chief among them is durability, which is achieved through superior heat treatment that hardens KMAX teeth to the core, as opposed to some teeth that have hard exteriors but are soft on the inside.

"That gives our teeth a longer life, allowing use to 60 percent of wear as opposed to the usual 40 percent before replacement," said Marketing Manager Brent Dennis. "Heat treatment to the core is one part of the equation. Another is our streamlined design that allows KMAX teeth to offer better penetration of the material while staying sharper longer. That means added efficiency and durability for lower owning and operating costs."

Fast, easy, safe

When teeth need to be changed, the process is fast, easy and safe. Users simply need a socket wrench to unlock the reusable, non-load-bearing fastener in order to remove the tooth from the adapter on the bucket. After placing the new tooth on, it's easy to tighten it back down. In most cases, the process takes less than a minute.

"We believe it's the best system on the market because there are no pins to be hammered out," said Jones. "Our teeth are designed so that if users see uneven wear, they can flip the teeth."

"While KMAX teeth are first-fit on Komatsu machinery, the KMAX system can adapt for use on other brands," Dennis pointed out. "If you add it all up — durability, better penetration of material, speed of tooth changes, safety — we're convinced the KMAX system offers the best tooth value in the industry." ■

Gary Jones, GM Product Support & Marketing, Hensley Industries

Brent Dennis, Marketing Mgr., Hensley Industries

www.GeneralDownToEarth.com NEW! online video

Komatsu's KMAX tooth system offers durability in more than 20 tooth styles for a wide range of excavators and wheel loaders. It's easy and safe because the system requires only a socket wrench — no pins to hammer — to remove and replace teeth from the adaptors.

MINING

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KA13

FORECASTING THE FUTURE

GM says PMO continues to expand production to meet present, future global mining demand

QUESTION: There have been a few sparks in construction, but overall activity remains low. How's mining?

ANSWER: Mining has been strong for quite a while now. We are producing more than four or five times the number of trucks we did just 10 years ago. It's probably more than many of us here at Peoria Manufacturing Operations (PMO) thought was even possible back in 2002. Mining continues to be very strong globally, so there's a great demand for the five Komatsu mining trucks we manufacture.

QUESTION: How are you meeting demand?

ANSWER: Taking into account several factors, such as historical trends, current mining and what we see down the road, we update our forecast frequently. More recently, our firm-order backlog is very strong and we are able to see the future more clearly. We're basing our production on what we believe the long-term trends will be. Again, we expect mining to remain strong, so we're being proactive.

Most of our operations are running around the clock to ensure we meet our production goals and the demand for our mining trucks, which is globally very high. Because demand is so high, we added a second assembly line and further refined our processes to make them even more efficient. That's allowed us to double the number of trucks produced a day, and we're working to further increase that.

QUESTION: Why are Komatsu mining trucks in such demand?

ANSWER: Komatsu trucks have always been at the top of the class in terms of per-ton costs because they're not only efficient, but reliable and have a long life cycle. A big reason why is because the trucks are electric-drive as opposed

Continued . . .

This is one of a series of articles based on interviews with key people at Komatsu discussing the company's commitment to its customers in the construction and mining industries — and their visions for the future.

Jim Mathis, General Manager of Manufacturing, Komatsu Peoria Manufacturing Operation (PMO)

Jim Mathis has returned to his roots. Mathis is a General Manager of Manufacturing at Komatsu's Peoria Manufacturing Operation (PMO), where he has spent most of his career with Komatsu.

Mathis started at PMO in 1984 as Production Scheduler and moved his way up to Superintendent of Component Manufacturing. In 2008, he was promoted to Director of Manufacturing Administration, which meant a move to Komatsu America's headquarters in Rolling Meadows, Ill.

"I've spent my entire adult life with Komatsu," Mathis said. "I'm very happy to be returning to Peoria and getting the chance to work with many of the same people I worked with during the 20 years I was here before. I can't say enough good things about the people who work here. Their hard work, dedication and commitment have helped PMO expand its production capacity greatly."

Mathis, along with another general manager, oversees a staff of more than 600 salaried and hourly workers at PMO, where five models of electric-drive, mining haul trucks are produced. He's responsible first and foremost for safety, then quality, followed by production, delivery and profit and loss.

"It's a challenge, but one that I enjoy," said Mathis. "I've seen many changes through the years that have made our equipment better, both in production and reliability. There's nothing more satisfying than knowing we're building a truck that's going to help a customer be more profitable."

Mathis completed an MBA at Peoria's Bradley University a few years ago, while working at PMO. Jim and his wife, Suzanne, have five children, the youngest of which started her freshman year of college this fall.

Komatsu — at the forefront of technology

. . continued

Komatsu's Peoria Manufacturing Operation works around the clock to ensure timely assembly and delivery of five sizes of mining trucks.

Some of the world's largest mining trucks, including electric-drive 830Es are assembled at PMO. "It's been proven that our trucks work longer with less downtime. That makes a huge difference to a mine that's running 24 hours a day," said Jim Mathis, General Manager of Manufacturing at PMO.

to mechanical. It's been proven that our trucks work longer with less downtime. That makes a huge difference to a mine that's running 24 hours a day. Our customers tell us that.

Of course, many other features have been a direct result of our working with customers and listening to their needs to incorporate those into our trucks. Based on their recommendations, we've integrated convenience features, such as ramp-style staircases to the driver's cab rather than a ladder hanging on the side.

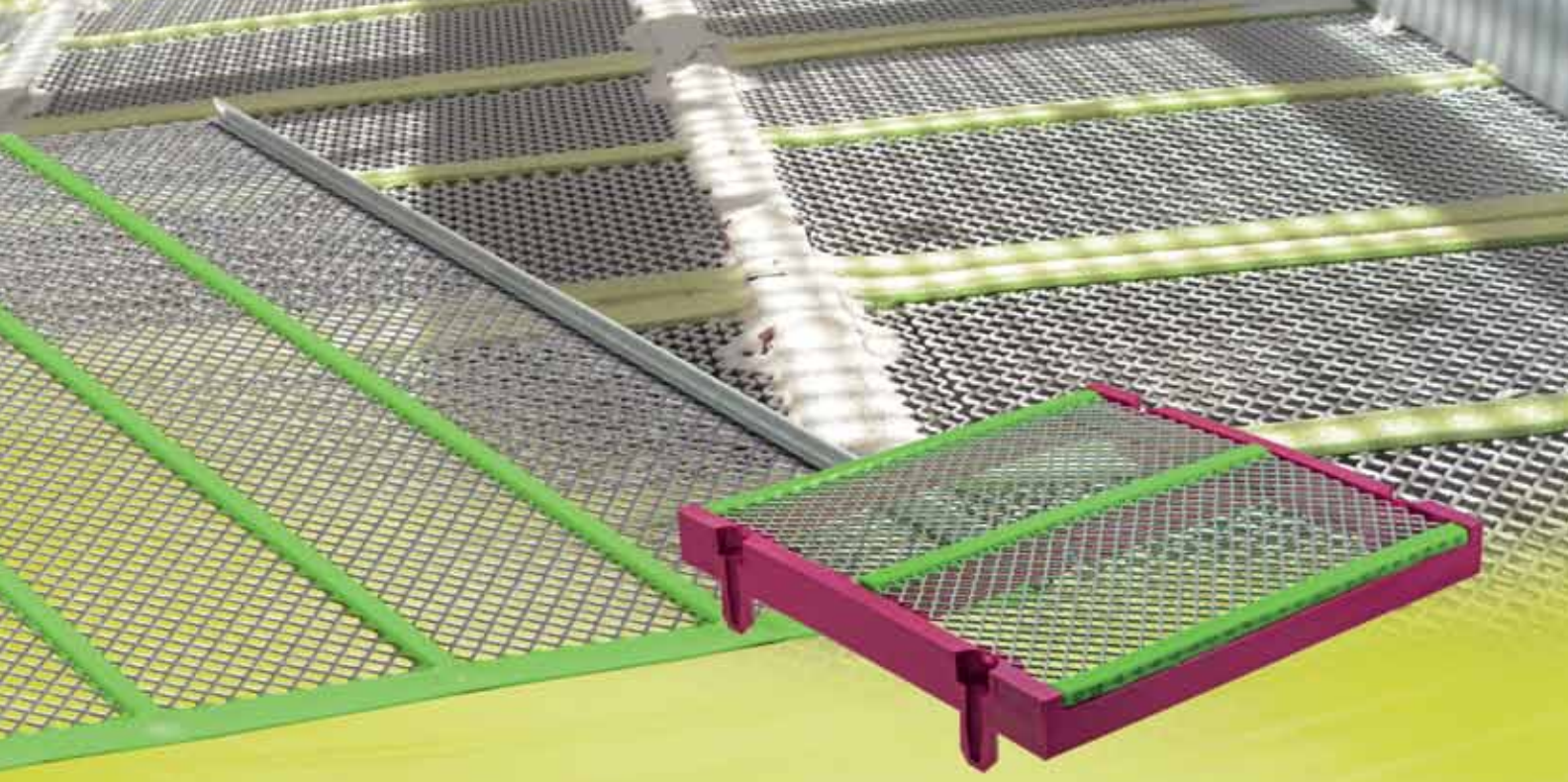
QUESTION: Komatsu has built its reputation for mining trucks based on the foundation of reliability. What does the factory do to ensure each truck reinforces this reputation?

ANSWER: It's important to recognize that product quality begins with unrivaled design, followed by rigorous testing and confirmation. Only then can manufacturing truly excel at producing high-quality products and deliver reliability to our customers. We make countless quality checks and confirmations every day on every truck throughout the production process. This also includes the critical role our suppliers play in supporting us. It's not something special or unique. It's what we do every day with every process.

QUESTION: What does the future hold beyond Tier 4?

ANSWER: In some sense, Komatsu is already there and has been for quite some time. We've been developing, producing and testing autonomous haul trucks — trucks that run without a driver — for several years. They are already being used in active mines. That's a huge technological advantage for the customer because it keeps costs down, and for us because it puts us at the forefront of the mining equipment industry.

We've always been strong in technology, especially in tracking machine usage, function, production and maintenance with our KOMTRAX PLUS system. It allows both us and the customer to see how a truck is being used so we can build future machines based off that information and customer recommendations. We never stop trying to improve. ■



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TRACK-VISION CAMERA

Backup and precision-work camera designed and built specifically for heavy-duty use

You can't work well if you can't see well. That's the basic premise behind backup cameras. It's why Komatsu has begun installing them as standard equipment on many new machines. It's also why many equipment owners are choosing to put aftermarket cameras on their older-model mobile machines.

There are a number of backup camera systems to choose from, but only one — Track-Vision from RMT Equipment — that's designed and built specifically for heavy-duty use, such as work trucks and construction and mining equipment. Track-Vision cameras feature:

- 115-degree wide-angle view;
- Nitrogen filling to ensure camera is 100-percent watertight;
- Heated lens to prevent frost/condensation;
- Seven-inch, color, flat-screen LCD monitor (auto activation in reverse and auto brightness);
- Shock-proof/vibration-resistant camera and monitor;
- Best-in-industry warranties (three years camera/two years monitor).

The rugged Track-Vision camera and monitor, designed specifically for construction equipment and heavy trucks, can provide an operator with a much better view of what's happening behind his machine.

"It's an impressive product," stated General Equipment Customer Service and Support Rep Wayne Slinger. "Compared to other aftermarket camera systems, there really is no comparison. It gives operators an excellent view no matter what the weather is — and it holds up."

While improving rear visibility is the primary reason for a camera system, some users have also found cameras to be very useful when mounted on the front and/or side of a machine.

"A camera can significantly improve production and performance in precision work, such as demolition or digging around existing utilities," said Slinger. "For example, having a camera on the articulating boom or near the bucket of an excavator will give operators a much better, up-close view of the job at hand so they can work more efficiently.

"They're beneficial in any number of situations," he added. "I have a customer who installed them on his garbage trucks, and another in the scrap business who added one to the arm of his excavator to improve the loading of rail cars. Anytime you can't physically see what you're doing, this is like another pair of eyes right where you need them."

For more information on the Track-Vision camera system that will work best for your job, contact your General Equipment Customer Service and Support Rep or the nearest branch parts or service department. ■

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KOMATSU CARE

Innovative program provides complimentary maintenance for Komatsu Tier 4 machines

Jake Tiongco, Senior Product Manager, Parts Division

Komatsu has announced an innovative program designed to help end users lower their cost of equipment ownership and increase their profitability. It's called Komatsu CARE and is included with all Komatsu interim Tier 4 machines. Key features of Komatsu CARE are:

- Complimentary scheduled maintenance for three years or 2,000 hours (whichever comes first);
- Maintenance performed by a trained Komatsu distributor technician;
- Komatsu genuine parts and fluids are used for each scheduled maintenance interval.

"Komatsu CARE significantly reduces the overall cost of ownership of a Komatsu machine by covering the cost of maintenance for the first three years or 2,000 hours," said Jake Tiongco, Senior Product Manager, Parts Division. "One of the main goals of Komatsu CARE is to assist in the overall profitability of the end user. Lower owning and operating costs will lead to more competitive quotes on jobs for our customers. In addition, proper maintenance of the machine with Komatsu genuine parts and factory-certified, trained technicians will increase the longevity and reliability of the Komatsu machine throughout its life."

The innovative, new Komatsu CARE program provides Tier 4 machine owners with three-year/2,000-hour, complimentary maintenance.

Different — and better

Through the years, Komatsu has been a leader in designing machines and developing innovative parts and service programs that directly benefit equipment users. Examples include being the first equipment manufacturer to install a wireless machine-monitoring system as standard equipment with free communication (KOMTRAX), and coming out with the first hybrid construction machine (currently in its second generation as the HB215LC-1). And now, Komatsu CARE. ■

COMPLIMENTARY TIER 4 SERVICES

KOMATSU CARE™

Komatsu CARE for Komatsu Tier 4 Interim models is a new, complimentary maintenance program designed to lower your cost of ownership and improve your bottom line. It provides factory-scheduled maintenance on the machines for the first three years or 2,000 hours, whichever comes first. This includes up to two exchange Komatsu Diesel Particulate Filters. Be sure to contact your Komatsu distributor for all the details.

Once again, Komatsu leads the industry. No other construction equipment manufacturer offers a complimentary maintenance program like this.

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AGC lauds EPA's decision to back off on new stormwater rule

The Associated General Contractors applauded the EPA's decision to temporarily withdraw limits on the amount of dirt it will allow in stormwater from construction sites. At the same time, the organization is pushing for the EPA to not impose the measure altogether.

"The fact that the EPA recognizes the serious flaws in the data supporting its efforts to impose a rigid, one-size-fits-all limit on the amount of dirt in rainwater leaving construction sites is encouraging," said AGC Chief Executive Officer Stephen Sandherr. "Indeed, contractors are already required to take significant measures to ensure that dirt — clean, uncontaminated dirt — does not escape from project sites. Setting a specific limit on how much dirt should be in rainwater will only force contractors to spend billions more on new dirt-busting measures that may not work; expose firms to costly lawsuits from outside groups; and put them at risk of receiving tens of thousands in daily fines." ■

On the light side

"That's it, no more casual Fridays!"

"Mr. O'Reilly couldn't be here today. I'm his attorney."

Brain Teasers

Unscramble the letters to reveal some common construction-related words. Answers can be found in the online edition of the magazine at www.GeneralDownToEarth.com

1. P R I R P E _ _ _ _ P _ _
2. T A M O K U S _ _ _ _ _ _ _ U
3. L I R A X A U Y I _ _ _ X _ _ _ _ _ _ _
4. P E G A R L P _ _ _ _ _ _ _ L _
5. G I L I N D _ _ D _ _ _ _ _

Did you know...

- George Washington was the only unanimously elected U.S. president.
- The average human body contains enough:
  - iron to make a three-inch nail,
  - sulfur to kill all fleas on an average dog,
  - carbon to make 900 pencils,
  - potassium to fire a toy cannon,
  - fat to make seven bars of soap,
  - phosphorous to make 2,200 match heads,
  - and water to fill a 10-gallon tank.
- The average mature oak tree sheds approximately 700,000 leaves in the fall.
- Snails move at a rate of approximately 0.000362005 miles per hour.
- A "jiffy" is an actual unit of time for 1/100th of a second.
- A typical lightning bolt is two to four inches wide and two miles long.
- The Hoover Dam was built to last 2,000 years. The concrete in it will not even be fully cured for another 500 years.

END EXCESSIVE IDLING

Komatsu personnel explain how non-productive hours negatively affect your machinery

Rizwan Mirza, Manager, KOMTRAX, ICT-Construction Business Division

Goran Zeravica, Distributor Operations Development Manager, ICT-Construction Business Division

Equipment monitoring systems, such as Komatsu's KOMTRAX, provide valuable information on machine functions, including hours, fuel consumption, machine location, trouble warnings and more. All items are important, but there's one function that's often overlooked, and Komatsu's Goran Zeravica and Rizwan Mirza are on a mission to let users know that it may be the most important one of all.

"Owners and operators don't seem to take idle time into account as much as they should," emphasized Zeravica, Distributor Operations Development Manager, ICT-Construction Business Division. "It has a huge impact on owning and operating costs, in many cases driving up those costs well beyond what they should be."

Studies show that a rather large percentage of a machine's working hours are spent idling rather than actually working. According to Mirza and Zeravica, the industry average is about 37 percent of time idling. "If that's the average, it means there are machines out there idling well above that, sometimes in the range of 50 percent or more," said Mirza, Manager, KOMTRAX, ICT-Construction Business Division. "In nearly every case, it would be better to shut the machine down when it's not in production and reduce the idle time."

Idle time adversely affects machines in several ways. "The most obvious is the amount of wasted fuel," Zeravica noted. "But something else to think about is the number of unnecessary hours being put on that machine. That drives up owning and operating costs, too."

"Letting a machine idle means reaching service intervals sooner, thereby raising owning and operating costs even more," added Mirza. "Tier 4 machines will increase the need to eliminate idling because the Komatsu Diesel Particulate Filter (KDPF) must be cleaned/serviced at 4,500-hour intervals, according to Komatsu's recommended specifications. In addition, idling for extended periods prevents the KDPF's passive regeneration system from meeting optimal temperatures for maintaining cleanliness. The result could be additional active regenerations consuming more fuel or additional KDPF cleanings at less than 4,500 hours."

Warranty affected

Piling up the hours idling also hurts your bottom line from a warranty standpoint. Idle hours count against the warranty clock just as productive hours do. If you're idling, you'll reach the end of the extended warranty period sooner.

"That's something that hardly ever crosses most users' minds, and it should be at the forefront of their thinking," Zeravica pointed out. "One other area most don't consider is resale value. If you have a five-year-old machine to sell or trade with 10,000 hours as opposed to 5,000 or 6,000, you're obviously going to get less for it. Bottom line, machine owners and operators need to take a proactive approach to idling. If the machine isn't producing, shut it down." ■

Letting a machine idle can cost you in many ways, including everything from wasted fuel to resale value.

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