

# DOWN TO EARTH

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## WRIGHT EXCAVATING, INC.

Learn how this Williston firm provides platform installation and maintenance for natural gas, oil industry



Todd Wright,  
Chief Executive  
Officer

Katie Grant,  
Chief Operating  
Officer

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Published by Construction Publications, Inc. for



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# WRIGHT EXCAVATING, INC.

## Williston firm provides grading, excavation, installation, maintenance for oil and gas industry



Todd Wright,  
Chief Executive  
Officer

Todd Wright began his career in the construction industry 40 years ago. Moving from one job to the next, he worked his way from the farmlands outside of Charlotte, N.C. to the oil fields of Williston, N.D. When crude oil prices began falling a few years ago, Wright's employer laid off nearly the entire staff due to lack of business. In 2016, Wright decided to do the only rational thing in the midst of economic strife – open his own company, which he named Wright Excavating, Inc.

"I started when everybody else was leaving," explained Wright. "I was a project manager and had established good relationships with local producers. After all the contractors pulled out, I decided to do it myself."

Demand for business was steady. Wright, however, quickly realized that his lack of experience in the day-to-day operations of a company presented several unforeseen

challenges as the stacks of paperwork began piling up. He decided to ask a former co-worker, Katie Grant, to join his company as Chief Operating Officer.

"Todd's an excellent operator but never really liked paperwork or computers," joked Grant. "He was trying to do it all on his own, including many of the things that I assisted with at our previous employer. When he called me to help here, I was more than happy."

The two, often referred to as the dynamic duo, have grown the company to 10 employees. The business serves the Bakken Shale Play region, focusing on facility site work for oil and gas pads. After the drilling process is complete, Wright Excavating grades the tank and facility pads for liners, including undercutting the surface for compaction and installing flow lines, electrical and any other underground utilities. The firm also provides year-round maintenance to keep the pads and access roads serviceable after production starts. It completes more than 100 projects annually, ranging in size from \$5,000 to \$200,000.

"Nothing is too big or small for us," said Wright. "It doesn't matter if we build a 10 x 10 electric pad, spend two hours cleaning up dirt or a month installing a new pad. We'll stand by our word to do quality work and get it done right."

### Up for the challenge

While the company offers a wide variety of services, new-build pad prep and utility installation comprise the largest portion of its business. Whether that requires removing 7,000 tons of rock to install flow lines or undercutting six inches and backfilling with crushed concrete to reach compaction, Wright's team completes the job.



Katie Grant,  
Chief Operating  
Officer

A Wright Excavating, Inc. operator uses this Komatsu WA270 wheel loader to move dirt between piles at a natural gas pad in the Bakken region of North Dakota.





▶ VIDEO

Field Foreman Weston Voss moves a pile of dirt during final cleanup of a Bakken oilfield site in North Dakota using Wright Excavating, Inc.'s Komatsu D39PX dozer. "We work in a lot of small spaces," noted Voss. "The dozer can go anywhere and is very smooth for its size."



"We're never doing the same thing two days in a row," noted Wright. "During the summer, we handle a majority of our site work and small projects, then start plowing in the winter to keep the roads clear. Last winter, another person and I invented a process to heat the ground to a point that would allow us to dig flow lines."

The method is slow and requires melting the snow while warming the ground with an oversized heating blanket before excavating the partially frozen material, but Wright is always up for a challenge.

"The process is just as tough on the machine as it is on the operator," explained Grant. "The temperature is below zero, so once the material is out, it refreezes and becomes difficult to compact again. It can take two or three times as long as it would in the summer."

When the warm weather returned, Wright Excavating began installing a new freshwater facility at a well site in Keene, N.D. The endeavor was one of the firm's largest to date and provided a new test.

"There was a well in one location, and we had to grade the entire project off of that," explained Wright. "We took it from first cut to final grade, added water lines from the well to the tanks and laid crushed concrete for the base to minimize the impact from trucks."

Crew members installed flow lines for the natural gas before starting the final cleanup of the location, which included installing a workover pad and cutting to final grade.

### **Komatsu is a "no-brainer"**

When Wright decided to open his own company, he began searching for quality equipment that met his price point. He found that at General Equipment & Supplies, Inc., where he met Sales Representative Ed Branquinho.

"Ed helped me when other dealers wouldn't," explained Wright. "We got along instantly; Ed could see what I envisioned for the company."

Today, Wright works with Sales Representative Ryan Hokenson, who took over for Branquinho after he moved.

"Ryan hasn't missed a beat since he's been here," continued Wright. "He's good at following through on what he says he's going to do."

Wright and Grant agree that General Equipment has played a key role in supporting Wright Excavating's steady growth.

"We have 10 pieces of equipment financed through Komatsu Financial and General Equipment right now," stated Grant. "They've made the process simple; I can look at the amortization schedule online or get any information that I need from them quickly."

*Continued . . .*

# 'I can do anything with that dozer'

... continued



(L-R) Wright Excavating, Inc. Chief Executive Officer Todd Wright, Chief Operating Officer Katie Grant and her daughter, Annabelle, meet with General Equipment & Supplies Inc. Sales Representative Ryan Hokenson.



T.J. Wright uses the company's Komatsu PC210LC-11 excavator at a jobsite in the Badlands of North Dakota. "The excavator has excellent reach for its size," said Field Foreman Weston Voss. "And, it has the power to match."



"General Equipment is great about making sure we have the parts and equipment that we need," added Wright. "I never have to wait for them to order something; they always have it on hand. They're a big part of where we're at today, because we don't have to worry about downtime."

The wide array of projects the firm takes on requires versatile equipment. For Wright, the Komatsu D39PX crawler dozer is the perfect machine.

"I can do anything with that dozer," stated Wright. "It has great power for its size and is very balanced. Whether I'm fine-grading or moving a pile, that dozer is my go-to choice."

Wright's operators have also been impressed with the Komatsu equipment.

"The Komatsu WA270 wheel loaders have a lot of power and maneuverability," noted Field Foreman Weston Voss. "The throttle-control switch for making adjustments when digging into a pile is a great feature. Overall, I enjoy how smooth the ride is."

"Weston was a huge supporter of a competitive brand when I hired him," explained Wright. "I put him on our Komatsu PC210LC-11 excavator and within 30 minutes he was converted. It's really a no-brainer once you operate the equipment."

## Teamwork, continued growth

Wright has spent the last two years establishing a quality reputation based on hard work and results. He knows none of that would have been possible without Grant's help.

"She's been the backbone of our company since joining," said Wright. "We make an excellent team."

Moving forward, Wright wants to achieve the best financial situation possible to help the business weather the natural volatility of the oil and gas industry.

"We've found a good niche in taking a lot of the jobs that bigger companies may not want to handle," explained Wright. "There is a consistent demand for what we do. Hopefully, we can continue to provide that and add some services along the way." ■



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## FULL SHOWCASE

### Demo Days makes it easy for customers to test latest Komatsu equipment

More than 250 current and prospective customers attended Komatsu's spring Demo Days at its Cartersville Customer Center in Georgia. Mornings began with a tour of the Chattanooga Manufacturing Operation, where many of the Komatsu excavator models are assembled. After lunch, attendees listened to a brief informational tech session before heading to the recently renovated demonstration site to check out the latest equipment that Komatsu has to offer.

"The Demo Days event is a great opportunity for customers to see the facility and operate a wide range of Komatsu products," explained

*Continued . . .*



Justin Lorenz (left) of Mikkelsen Aggregates and Ryan Hokenson General Equipment & Supplies Sales Rep



Bill Chimley,  
Komatsu Director  
of Training and  
Publications

The recently renovated Cartersville Customer Center features several safety updates, including new gravel walkways between working zones and permanent stairs.

#### ▶ VIDEO



# Twenty-six machines available for demo

... continued

Ron (left) and Steve Lorenz of Mikkelsen Aggregates



Director of Training and Publications Bill Chimley. “Customers can get first-hand experience with the newest *intelligent* Machine Control capabilities as well as a variety of our other equipment with experienced staff readily available to answer any questions.”

## New excavator included

The event showcased the full lineup of *intelligent* Machine Control dozers and excavators, including the new PC390LCi-11 excavator. In total, 26 machines were available for customers to operate, including wheel loaders, haul trucks, excavators, dozers and a motor grader.

“It’s a great event,” said BC Construction President Ray Borges, who came from Hawaii to attend Demo Days. “There are a lot of machines to try out. Operating the equipment and seeing how it’s assembled was worth the trip.”

The updated demo site includes gravel walkways to increase safety between machine operation zones and permanent stairs. The various zones allow current and potential customers to test each machine to its fullest capabilities. ■



(L-R) Steve Westlund, Westlund Excavating; Jason Abbott and Phillip Eslinger of Abbott Arne Schwindt; and Ryan Muehler and Nick Olson of General Equipment & Supplies

An attendee tests the new Komatsu PC390LCi-11 excavator and its *intelligent* Machine Control features while digging a trench during Demo Days. The PC390LCi is the most recent addition to Komatsu’s extensive line of *intelligent* Machine Control dozers and excavators.



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**Brian (left) and Thomas Cronin / Prosperity Construction / Jackson, MS**

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# RECRUITING A NEW GENERATION

## Creating a sense of community and belonging can attract, retain millennial workers

Construction companies are facing a critical time. An abundance of available projects is unquestionably a good thing, but the industry's positive momentum is exposing one of its most serious issues – the lack of skilled workers.

While company owners are beginning to invest in recruiting measures, keeping new staff members will be the next challenge. That may be especially true for millennials. Hiring and retaining them is a growing concern, especially considering that they now comprise the majority of the workforce. According to a Gallup poll, six in 10 millennials are currently open to exploring new job opportunities.

Part of the reason is the ability to easily search for a seemingly infinite number of jobs at any time. There are thousands of positions listed

across hundreds of online job sites, so why would employees limit themselves to one career for the rest of their lives? Society fosters the perception that the next employer will pay more or will offer other attractive features.

Some of the blame lies in the culture of instant gratification, but a majority of the issue stems from a disconnect between employer and employee. Many young workers would like to stay at a job long term, if only their companies did a couple of things differently.

Cracking the code that is the millennial workforce will make or break businesses throughout the next decade, notes Iluma Learning, Inc. Founder Amy Parrish. "Millennials are looking to be a part of something; they crave a sense of community and belonging," she writes. "The idea of working for a faceless corporation is not always appealing to millennials – they want to be welcomed and appreciated for their efforts, regardless of the industry. A company's culture goes a long way toward helping it transcend a workplace and become something more meaningful that employees can really buy into and commit to."

Companies can attract and retain millennial employees by creating a positive culture. "The real culture is what happens at the workplace every day," said Iluma Learning, Inc. Founder Amy Parrish. "If a company says it values employees' opinions, staff members should feel like their input matters. Talk to employees and managers to truly determine if your company's practices are matching up with your culture."

### Match practices to your culture

Taking concrete steps can help your company understand how to hire, develop and retain this generation of young, ambitious workers. According to Parrish, every organization has a culture, whether it defines one or not.

"The way a company runs its daily operations, values employees and works with customers shapes its culture," she writes. "Making a concerted effort to delineate and develop a positive culture goes a long way toward attracting and retaining employees. While rules and regulations can create the outline





for a company, the culture colors, shades and highlights the areas that reside outside the lines. Policies and procedures may tell the what, but culture provides the who, why and how.”

Parrish points out that a culture is about more than buzzwords on letterhead or a website. “The real culture is what happens at the workplace every day. If a company says it values employees’ opinions, staff members should feel like their input matters. If it says it cherishes time away from work, then an organization should not require 80-hour workweeks or shame workers into forgoing their vacation days. It is important for owners and leaders to monitor the real culture of their workplace continuously. Talk to employees and managers to truly determine if your company’s practices are matching up with your culture.”

### **Avoid the turnover trap**

Millennials want to be pushed and challenged to do more. Creating a culture where employees feel welcome and encouraged to test their resolve from day one will entice new hires to join your team and also stay longer. You will be rewarded with hardworking, long-term employees who are invested in the company.

Winning over millennial talent has less to do with offering hip perks or remodeling the office than it does with showing millennials that they have a future at your organization where they can learn, grow, achieve and lead, according to a recent Gallup poll. Providing opportunities for

career growth as well as personal development plays a major role for millennials when deciding where to work and how long they are willing to stay with one company.

Like any employee, as millennials learn and grow, they want opportunities to provide input and the ability to work independently when appropriate. Show a candidate that there is genuine mutual trust between employer and employee to accomplish a task without micromanagement. Once a millennial is hired, create a monthly review to show progress and areas of improvement. The review should be a two-sided equation. When you involve millennials in the process and define their aspirations, you will create a stronger connection between the company and the work that millennials are doing.

“Employers will be relying on millennial talent for decades to come,” writes Klyn Elsbury, CEO & Founder of Landmark Makers in an article that appeared on Forbes.com titled “Five Proven Tactics for Hiring and Retaining Millennial Employees.” “If you want your new talent to stay with you, you have to give them unique reasons to. Only the organizations that understand how talent wants to be treated will avoid the turnover trap.” ■

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*Note: Information in this article was gathered and compiled from various sources, including an interview with Amy Parrish, M.Ed., MBE, a Professional Management Leadership Specialist for the heavy equipment industry. She has 15 years of experience in the industry and has worked with the Association of Equipment Distributors as well as several heavy equipment manufacturers.*

**A recent Gallup poll found that six in 10 millennials are currently open to exploring new job options. You can attract and keep millennials by giving them opportunities to grow and learn.**

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# COMMUNITIES AT RISK

## Additional federal infrastructure investment is critical to ensuring safe drinking water

When news of the Flint, Mich., water crisis made headlines, nearly 21 million people across the country relied on water systems that violated health standards. Low-income communities, minority populations and rural towns disproportionately deal with barriers to safe water.

Drinking water challenges are complex: failing infrastructure, polluted water sources and low-capacity utility management are all part of the issue. Declining investment in water infrastructure throughout the last several decades has exacerbated the problem.

Access to safe water is essential for our survival and our economy. Without serious investment in water infrastructure, we will continue to put communities at risk. As a country, we must support existing funding sources for water infrastructure, develop new and innovative funding mechanisms and more effectively prioritize the water needs of underserved communities.

Investment in water infrastructure has decreased. An analysis from the Value of Water Campaign shows that combined federal investment in drinking water and wastewater infrastructure declined from 63 percent of total capital spending to 9 percent since 1977. State and local governments have also decreased their capital spending on water infrastructure in recent years. The EPA estimates that the United States needs to invest \$472.6 billion in the next 20 years, the majority of which can be attributed to rehabilitating, upgrading and replacing existing infrastructure.

### Essential for health, economy

Safe water is essential to our health – and if we're not healthy, we can't work. Businesses

and industries rely on water to support worker productivity and as a raw resource for goods and services. According to the Economic Policy Institute, \$188.4 billion spent on water infrastructure investment in five years can yield \$265 billion in economic activity and create 1.9 million jobs.

Federal investment in water infrastructure must continue to grow. The reality is that Flint is not an isolated incident. Communities across the country struggle to provide safe water. People are working hard to address these issues, but more effort is needed. Everyone can play a role by making our failing water systems and the communities that rely on them a priority. Safe water must no longer be a luxury. ■

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*Sara Schwartz holds a master's degree in environmental management from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. This article is excerpted from a blog post. For the full version, visit [blog.ucsusa.org](http://blog.ucsusa.org). Connect with Schwartz at [www.linkedin.com/in/saraschwartz1/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/saraschwartz1/).*



Sara Schwartz,  
Union of Concerned  
Scientists, Early  
Career Scientist  
Mentor Program  
Participant

**Investment in the nation's water systems is critical, and we must put more money toward existing infrastructure, especially in underserved communities, says Sara Schwartz, Union of Concerned Scientists, Early Career Scientist Mentor Program Participant.**



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## INTELLIGENT INSTALLATION

### Boomerang Corp. finds added value on utility applications with PC490LCi excavator

Since opening his own construction company in 1998, Bryce Ricklefs has always looked outside the box to find a hidden niche to help his company, Boomerang Corp., thrive.

Twenty years later, Ricklefs continues to search for those advantages, which is why he selected a Komatsu *intelligent* Machine Control PC490LCi excavator with integrated GPS technology last year.

"We were one of the earliest adopters of GPS because we knew it would help save time and money, and it's a strategy that continues to work," shared Ricklefs. "For us, it was a no-brainer to add the PC490LCi to our fleet."

While most PC490LCi owners use the excavator in mass grading applications, Ricklefs believed the machine also offered advantages on Boomerang's utility-installation projects.

"Using the PC490LCi for utility applications has improved our efficiency," reported Ricklefs. "It's quicker and more cost effective because we can hit grade without a person in the hole guiding the operator; the machine does that step for us. Plus, the plans are right there on the screen in the cab, so the operator doesn't have to get out or stop to ask as many questions. We can get on grade, switch to pipe and move to the next cut faster."

"We reduce the amount of material because the excavator prevents overdigging, which also saves on rock as the bottom of the cut is always uniform," he added. "In addition to material savings, it enables us to provide a quality finished product with consistent bedding throughout the project."

#### Komatsu delivers

Komatsu was on-hand to assist Boomerang in unlocking the advantages of the system.

"They came here for training and helped us set up," noted Ricklefs. "It was quick and easy. Right now, we are about 10 percent more efficient and regularly within one-tenth of a foot of grade. As we get more comfortable, I'm confident we will see both of those numbers improve."

Boomerang recently expanded its investment in *intelligent* Machine Control technology as it acquired a PC360LCi excavator last fall and two D51PXi dozers earlier this year.

"Our purchase of the PC360LCi is a direct result of our experience with the PC490LCi," stated Ricklefs. "They are the first of what I envision as many Komatsu i-machines for us." ■



Bryce Ricklefs,  
President  
Boomerang Corp.

A Boomerang Corp. operator uses a Komatsu *intelligent* Machine Control PC490LCi excavator to dig a trench to install storm pipe. "Using the PC490LCi for utility applications has improved our efficiency," said Boomerang Corp. President Bryce Ricklefs. "We can hit grade, switch to pipe and move to the next cut faster."





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## A 'GAME CHANGER'

### First contractor to use revolutionary *intelligent* Machine Control is more efficient, productive than ever



Joe Liesfeld III,  
Vice President



Kelby Morgan,  
Project Manager

Liesfeld Contractor takes pride in being at the forefront of construction technology. The Richmond, Va., earthwork contractor was one of the first in its community and surrounding area to use a dozer with an aftermarket GPS grading system.

"It was awkward, but it was cool; and, at times, it would grade by itself using an indicator system," recalled Vice President Joe Liesfeld III, who along with his father, Joe Jr., own and operate the firm. "The technology continued to improve, which helped with efficiency, but the drawback was that our operators had to spend time installing and taking down masts and cables every day. That takes a bite out of production time."

When Komatsu introduced its initial *intelligent* Machine Control dozer five years ago, Liesfeld

Contractor jumped at the chance to be the first to demonstrate the revolutionary D61i-23 with factory-integrated GPS that required no time-consuming set up of masts or cables.

Komatsu has since added five more sizes of the machine: D39i, D51i, D65i, D85i and D155i. Some of the dozers are in their second generation, including the D61i-24s. All feature fully automatic blade control from first pass to last. During rough-cut, if the system senses excess blade load, it automatically raises the blade to minimize track slip and maintain forward momentum. The blade also automatically lowers to push as much material as possible for maximum production in all situations.

"Right away we recognized that the original D61i was a game-changer," stated Project Manager Kelby Morgan. "Komatsu built a bulldozer around GPS, versus trying to adapt GPS to the bulldozer. By doing that, they created a superior product. After the trial period, we made it part of our fleet and have since put additional units to work. We use them in all facets of construction, from stripping topsoil to putting a site to final grade. The accuracy is outstanding."

#### Accuracy delivers productivity

With thousands of machines in North America and total fleet hours into the millions, Komatsu's *intelligent* Machine Control dozers have proven to reliably deliver accuracy on jobsites.

"The blade is a dirt pusher, and it's also our survey crew," stated Liesfeld. "The dozers always know where they are in relation to final elevation. They have virtually eliminated staking and the need for extra labor to check grade, which is a huge cost savings. After the

A Liesfeld Contractor operator grades with a Komatsu D51PXi-24 dozer. "The blade is a dirt pusher, and it's also our survey crew," said Vice President Joe Liesfeld III. "This technology allows us to do (finish grading) three to four times faster than before we acquired the first *intelligent* Machine Control dozer."

#### ▶ VIDEO





Komatsu *intelligent* Machine Control excavators, including this PC360LCi-11, are go-to machines for Liesfeld Contractor, which puts them to work excavating, digging trenches and constructing ponds. “They have the versatility to move mass quantities of materials as well as do precision work such as slopes, so we were able to construct a relatively large pond rather quickly,” said Technology/GPS Manager Chris Ashby.

site model is loaded into a machine, we set up a base station and a benchmark, and that’s it. We have noticed the biggest savings with fine grading. This technology allows us to do (finish grading) three to four times faster than before we acquired the first *intelligent* Machine Control dozer.”

Liesfeld Contractor’s Technology/GPS Manager Chris Ashby builds 3-D site models based on CAD files provided by engineering firms. After checking for accuracy, he sends the models to the dozers via Topcon’s SiteLink3D system.

“It’s seamless, and once the model is loaded, the machine is ready to go to work,” said Ashby. “The operator always has an overall, site-grading map available on the high-res monitor, detailing elevations and where cut-and-fill locations are. If there is a change, I can send an update directly to the machine, so that adjustments are virtually instantaneous.”

### **Excavators effective in every application**

Ashby can also transmit revised information to the firm’s *intelligent* Machine Control

excavators. Komatsu announced their arrival with its PC210LCi-10 – the world’s first such excavator – approximately one year after the D61i-23 dozers. Liesfeld Contractor runs a second-generation PC210LCi-11, as well as PC360LCi-11 units.

Among a host of standout features in the excavators is an exclusive control function that goes beyond simple guidance to semi-automatically limit overexcavation and trace a target surface. Once the target elevation is reached, no matter how hard an operator tries to move the joystick to lower the boom, the excavator won’t allow it. This reduces wasted time and the need for expensive fill materials.

“The main uses for our excavators are trench digs for dry utilities, so the models are done on a ditch-by-ditch basis, because each is unique,” Ashby pointed out. “Recently, on a large project, we had dozens to dig. If each required staking and we needed someone to constantly check grade, the cost would have been fairly high. Once I loaded the models, the operators could simply excavate the trenches and move the dirt.”



**Chris Ashby,**  
Technology/GPS  
Manager

*Continued . . .*

# 'The technology allowed us to work confidently'

... continued

## What others are saying about *intelligent* Machine Control



*"The accuracy is spot-on, and we aren't wasting materials due to overcutting. The technology is easy to use – download a file to the machine, and you're ready to roll in just a few minutes."*

**Bret Barnhart, Owner, Bret Barnhart Excavating**



*"I think what stood out the most to me was using the PC490LCi to cut a slope, and when it was done, the slope was smooth as glass. We loaded the plans, and it cut right to grade with no stakes or grade checkers."*

**Pete Sewczak, Vice President, Zak Dirt**



*"(The integrated system) saves us time and money by eliminating the need to put up and take down masts, and we no longer worry about them getting damaged or stolen. What stands out is the increased production and efficiency. We simply plug the plans into the machines and go to work."*

**Randy Ellis, Owner/Vice President, R&T Ellis**



*"The savings of time and material costs have been significant. We don't need surveyors to drive new stakes or replace the ones that invariably get knocked down."*

**Mike Greenfield, Owner/President, Greenfield Trucking**

Liesfeld Contractor uses its *intelligent* Machine Control dozers, including this D61PXi-24, from first pass to last. "Right away we recognized that the original D61i was a game-changer," said Project Manager Kelby Morgan. "Komatsu built a bulldozer around GPS, versus trying to adapt GPS to the bulldozer. By doing that, they created a superior product."



Morgan added, "There were a lot of ups and downs to those utility trenches compared to straightforward ditch digs, which added to the complexity. As a result, there was no way to use laser guidance. Every grade break required staking, but the integrated system eliminated the need for that. The technology allowed us to work confidently, knowing that once the excavators reached target depths at each point of the trenches, our operators could not go beyond that."

On the same project, Liesfeld Contractor used the excavators for additional applications. "They have the versatility to move mass quantities of materials, as well as do precision work such as slopes, so we were able to construct a relatively large pond rather quickly," said Ashby. "Because these excavators are accurate and could put the entire area to grade, we did it without a dozer. That eliminated additional machine costs."

## Upped the ante

Joe Liesfeld Jr. founded Liesfeld Contractor in 1972, clearing house lots with a dozer, chainsaw and a dump truck. As the years progressed, so did the company. By the mid-1980s, commercial site work and other large projects that involve a comprehensive package of services became the norm, most of them for repeat customers. The Liesfelds also operate an environmental company that offers wetland construction, as well as a recycling operation.

Expansion continued through the 1990s, when Joe III and his brother, Kenny (who's no longer with the company), as well as Morgan joined the business. The trio were instrumental in bringing GPS technology to Liesfeld Contractor's jobsites.

"We have moved millions of yards of dirt through the years, and we've always sought ways to be as efficient and productive as possible," said Morgan. "The *intelligent* Machine Control products really upped the ante. They make operators at every career level more effective, and our people love them." ■

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# EFFICIENT MATERIAL MOVEMENT

## Komatsu's new wide-blade dozer excels when low ground pressure is needed

The ability to move mass quantities of material and finish grade with one machine on a variety of jobsites is a distinct advantage. Komatsu's new D65PX-18 Wide VPAT (Variable-pitch Power Angle Tilt) Blade Specification dozer provides it in a package that includes nearly a foot more blade width and six-inch larger track shoes than its standard counterparts. Traditional and *intelligent* Machine Control models are available.

The 53,925-pound dozers have 14.1-foot, six-way blades, which deliver greater grading productivity and versatility, according to Chuck Murawski, Komatsu Product Manager, Dozers, who emphasized that customers are increasingly using these size-class dozers for more than slot dozing. Komatsu beefed up the C-frame to ensure it could carry the wider blade.

"Our D65s handle the heavy lifting of stripping, cutting and pushing, and the Wide VPAT blades make them excellent finish dozers," he said. "Each has increased steering power for greater maneuverability, and we added an automatic shift mode with a full-time torque converter that maximizes production and efficiency on both short and long pushes. The hydraulics are smooth, so operators can control the blade with little effort."

### Light footprint

The D65PX-18 Wide VPAT Blade Specification models really stand out in sensitive areas, said Murawski. Ground pressure with the 36-inch track shoes is approximately 5 PSI, which is 14 percent lower than machines with 30-inch shoes.

"This makes them ideal for projects such as landfill cells where the dozer is running across a liner or in pipeline construction where it's operating on top of buried pipe," reported Murawski. "Another advantage is that the

shoes are centered on the track compared to being offset like some competitive models, so the load is always evenly distributed. That helps lengthen undercarriage life."

Komatsu equipped the D65 dozers with its PLUS (Parallel Linkage Undercarriage System) Undercarriage, which features rotary bushings and larger components that undergo a unique heat-treating process for increased strength and durability.

"Customers report increased flotation and better traction with the wide, 36-inch track shoes; greater stability on slopes with the 7 percent wider track gauge; faster times when spreading material using the 14.1-foot blade; and a smooth, comfortable ride from a well-balanced machine," said Murawski. ■



Chuck Murawski,  
Komatsu Product  
Manager, Dozers

### Quick Specs on Komatsu's D65PX-18 Dozer Models

Model	Horsepower	Operating Weight	Blade Capacity
D65PX-18 Wide VPAT and D65PXi-18 Wide VPAT	217 hp	53,925 lb	5.8 cu yd

Komatsu's new D65PX-18 Wide VPAT Blade Specification dozer has wider blades and track shoes, allowing for more efficient material movement on areas where low ground pressure is essential.

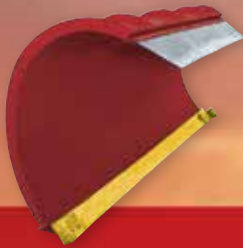


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# NEW PC1250-11 EXCAVATORS

## Increased horsepower significantly boosts productivity and profitability

Numbers tell the tale on Komatsu's upgraded PC1250 excavators. They offer a 13 percent boost in horsepower and up to 8 percent greater productivity, all while maintaining the fuel consumption of their Dash-8 predecessors. Two configurations are available – the PC1250-11 with a short undercarriage and a PC1250LC-11 with a long undercarriage – allowing users to match the excavator to their particular applications.

"The higher horsepower delivers additional power to the pumps, which helps the excavator handle the high-demand segments of a cycle more effectively," said Kurt Moncini, Komatsu Senior Product Marketing Manager, Tracked Products. "We also made some changes to reduce hydraulic pressure loss for improved efficiency. During tough applications, the machines keep their digging force longer. Operators who have run the Dash-8 model, should notice a significant increase in performance."

Companies involved in large, high-volume excavating jobs should choose the short undercarriage PC1250-11, which has a shorter boom that's thicker at the arch. "This short-boom configuration allows customers to use a bigger bucket," explained Moncini. "It's primarily made for one application – high-production truck loading. Fifty-ton to 70-ton-class trucks are an ideal match, but the PC1250-11 is also more than capable of loading up to 100-ton trucks."

### Versatile LC configuration

In addition to mass excavation and truck loading, the PC1250LC-11 long-undercarriage configuration excels in deep sewer and water trenching, general construction and mining/quarry applications. It features a standard 29-foot, 10-inch boom and arm options of 11'2", 14'9" and 18'8".

"The long undercarriage model provides greater versatility because its arm options and longer boom enable larger digging envelopes with greater reach and digging depths," said Moncini. "The ability to handle objects such as manholes and box culverts is outstanding, too. This is a great, larger-size, multi-purpose excavator.

"Komatsu's Business Solutions Group can help identify the right configuration and machine specifications to best suit customers' operations," added Moncini. "Whichever they choose, either excavator will meet their needs and do so more productively and efficiently, which increases profitability." ■



**Kurt Moncini,**  
Komatsu Senior  
Product Marketing  
Manager,  
Tracked Products

### Quick Specs for Komatsu's PC1250 Excavators

Model	Net Horsepower	Operating Weight	Boom Length
PC1250-11	758 hp	259,960-265,900 lb	25 ft, 7 in
PC1250LC-11	758 hp	269,300-275,240 lb	29 ft, 10 in

Komatsu's new PC1250-11 short-undercarriage, mass-excavation excavator (shown below), as well as the PC1250LC-11 long undercarriage model, deliver greater production while maintaining the same fuel efficiency as their their Dash-8 predecessors.



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*John Bennington  
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# VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER

## Feedback leads to increased power, lift capacity and more in new XT-5 Series track feller bunchers

Lift capacity and power are major contributors to production in the woods, and Komatsu's XT-5 Series of track feller bunchers deliver both with a more powerful Tier 4 Final engine and greater lifting ability for enhanced logging performance. Komatsu also improved reliability and durability with the introduction of a new rugged undercarriage that significantly extends service life.

Four models – XT430-5 (non-leveling), XT435L-5, XT445L-5 and XT465L-5 – with operating weights ranging from 66,359 to 74,516 pounds are available. Compared to their predecessor XT-3 models, the contemporary XT-5s have a 310-peak-hp, Cummins engine that provides increased horsepower and torque and lowers fuel consumption by as much as 10 percent, thanks to advanced engine and hydraulic system control designs.

Lift capacities at full-reach have jumped 75 percent on the XT430-5, XT435L-5 and XT445L-5, and 16 percent on the XT465L-5. The latter now readily operates the Quadco (a Komatsu-owned company) 24-inch cutting-capacity, high-speed disc saw heads.

### Responding to customers

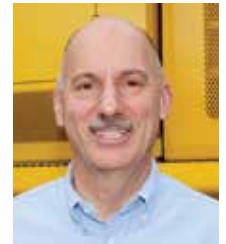
"We have been systematically gathering and analyzing voice-of-the-customer input to define our next generation of feller bunchers," said Steve Yolitz, Manager, Marketing Forestry, Komatsu America. "The XT-5 Series represents the culmination of translating this input into feller bunchers that truly meet the needs of today's demanding loggers."

Larger-capacity, hydraulic piston pumps for the implement, attachment and disc saw operate at 500 rpm lower speed, while providing high flow. Each pump has

pressurized suction inlets to reduce cavitation risk. Boom, arm and rear hydraulic tubes and hoses have robust forestry-specific guarding that improves protection and sheds debris.

The undercarriage's rugged 8.5-inch track chain link has a thicker and stronger bushing strap to resist "twist," as well as a high-density track roller and idler bushing material that extends wear cycles. All final drives feature a triple-labyrinth, floating-seal housing to protect the seal against mud packing. Other undercarriage improvements further extend service life.

Komatsu relocated the state-of-the-art forestry cab to the left of the boom for industry commonality. Design changes give superior lines-of-sight to each track. Standard rearview and optional right-side-view monitoring systems further enhance the operator's view. Eleven LED lights provide superior visibility for night operations. ■



Steve Yolitz,  
Manager,  
Marketing Forestry,  
Komatsu America

Komatsu's new XT-5 Series of track feller bunchers delivers increased power, lift capacity, reliability and durability as well as KOMTRAX® telematics system technology. Four models are available.



## ENGAGING MINE OPERATORS

### Brian Yureskes, Director of Sales and Global Accounts, says direct conversations benefit mining customers



Brian Yureskes, Director of Sales and Global Accounts, Komatsu Mining

*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.*

It was almost a foregone conclusion that Brian Yureskes would land in his current role as Director of Sales and Global Accounts, Komatsu Mining. He started with Komatsu six years ago in product marketing for construction equipment and became Director of Training and Publications at the company's Customer Center in Cartersville, Ga. Then, in 2015 the opportunity to move into mining presented itself, and Yureskes took it.

"My first job out of college was in operations management for a mining company," recalled Yureskes, who graduated from the Colorado School of Mines in 2005 with a mining engineering degree. He recently completed his MBA at Bradley University in Peoria, Ill. "When I came to Komatsu, I was indifferent as to whether I worked in construction or mining, but, with my background, it made sense that I would eventually migrate to the mining side."

Three years ago, he took the role of a Business Development Lead, working closely with a single mining customer. Last year, Komatsu Mining expanded his duties, putting him in charge of global efforts.

"I have always found mining enjoyable," he shared. "Playing in the dirt with trucks seems like such a natural fit."

Yureskes and his wife, Katherine, have two children and like to stay active. He enjoys weightlifting, mountain biking, basketball and playing some golf now and then. "I don't like to sit still," he said.

**QUESTION:** Customer engagement is a key element of Komatsu's commitment to helping them run more productively, and it gains valuable feedback for machinery improvement. What role does it play for Komatsu Mining?

**ANSWER:** We are engaging both current and potential customers by going into the field more often in order to better understand their operations, requirements and what they expect from us. We want them to know how Komatsu can meet their needs with a variety of innovative and technologically advanced trucks that move massive amounts of materials, as well as with the support to ensure that they do so in the most efficient manner possible. These direct conversations also provide valuable feedback as we look to the future.

This year is the 10th anniversary of our Autonomous Haulage System, or AHS. During the past decade, the system has moved around 2 billion tons of material. Mines that are not utilizing AHS vehicles are seeking information about the benefits, which are outstanding. In the past, there may have been some reluctance on our part to talk about these advantages beyond our AHS customer base. We are more actively spreading the word to customers through various means, such as inviting them to our proving grounds where we field test the trucks.

**QUESTION:** The Peoria Manufacturing Operation (PMO) focuses on mining trucks. What specific products are produced there?

**ANSWER:** We manufacture seven of the largest electric-drive mining trucks in the world, ranging from the 200-ton-capacity 730E to the 400-ton 980E, as well as autonomous



Brian Yureskes, Director of Sales and Global Accounts, Komatsu Mining, says customer engagement provides valuable feedback that can have a direct impact on new products.

versions of some models. Every Komatsu mining truck ordered worldwide is built and shipped from the PMO. In addition, all global engineering support, research and development, parts and testing for the products manufactured are handled it here. That's unique compared to other Komatsu manufacturing operations in North America.

**QUESTION: What is the state of the mining industry?**

**ANSWER:** There has been some overall volatility lately. After a down period, all the markets experienced a surge, then stabilized a bit. Trends look positive going forward, and analysts are predicting growth for mining during the next five years. Komatsu is taking a proactive approach to further expand its footprint in the mining sector.

**QUESTION: Do you encourage customers to visit the PMO?**

**ANSWER:** Absolutely. It's a fantastic experience for people to see how these massive haulers are manufactured. If the timing is right,



Komatsu's Peoria Manufacturing Operation produces seven of the largest electric-drive mining trucks in the world, ranging from the 200-ton-capacity 730E to the 400-ton 980E, as well as autonomous versions of some models.

visitors may even watch their own trucks being built. We also view it as a great opportunity to showcase the quality that Komatsu builds into its products and the world-class support behind them. ■

# OPTIMIZING JOBSITES

## Partnership for aerial mapping provides resources to reduce costs, increase efficiency



Jason Anetsberger,  
Komatsu Senior  
Product Manager

With drones becoming an increasingly common worksite tool, Komatsu has identified aerial mapping and analytics as key components of its SMARTCONSTRUCTION initiative – a range of integrated hardware and software solutions designed to offer an end-to-end workflow for each phase of construction. In addition to its long-standing relationship with Skycatch, Komatsu recently boosted those capabilities by partnering with Propeller Aero, a global leader in cloud visualization and analytics solutions.

“A Komatsu SMARTCONSTRUCTION jobsite, by definition, is technology enhanced and production optimized,” said Jason Anetsberger,

Komatsu Senior Product Manager. “Adding Propeller Aero as a key partner gives our North American distributors and customers exceptional capabilities to achieve this standard for aerial mapping. Propeller combines simple, yet powerful analysis tools with fast and accurate site visualization.”

Komatsu spent several years testing various commercial drone mapping and analytics options. In Propeller, it found an exceptionally robust product, well-suited to meet the needs of modern construction operations. Propeller balances ease of use with survey accuracy and reliability.

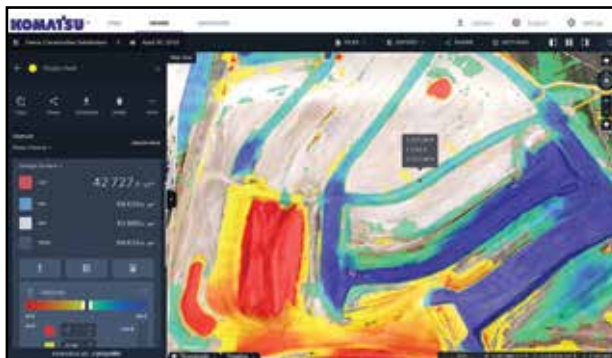
### Powerful data at your fingertips

Propeller’s processing machinery quickly crunches drone images and delivers the results as a cloud-based, 3-D model to a desktop or tablet. From there, powerful collaboration and analysis tools let users perform height, volume and slope calculations as well as monitor if a project is on-track.

The technology platform created by Propeller supports multiple coordinate systems, including local site calibrations. This allows personnel to capture up-to-date data expressed in the specific geospatial coordinate already in use on that jobsite. Local grid support is crucial for ensuring that drone-captured maps and models match up with plans and previous surveys.

“Worksite managers are starting to see the real business value of accurate, up-to-date drone data,” said John Frost, Vice President of Business Development at Propeller Aero. “That’s why we’re building tools and workflows designed for experts and non-experts alike. It’s all about empowering users with information to reduce costs, improve safety and make the most efficient use of resources.” ■

Komatsu is now partnering with Propeller Aero – a leader in cloud visualization and analytics solutions – to provide customers with simple, yet powerful tools that offer accurate site visualization. Propeller balances ease of use with survey accuracy and reliability.





# NEW ENGINE OIL

## Komatsu designed its CK-4 Genuine Engine Oil for better wear protection in all conditions

Lubricants are the lifeblood of any machine, helping them run at peak performance, according to Bruce Gosen, Senior Product Manager, Komatsu Parts Marketing. “They protect against wear, so it’s essential to have the best oil possible for extended engine life,” said Gosen.

Komatsu makes its new EO15W40-LA (CK-4) from semi-synthetic base oil rather than from conventional base oils. “That provides better protection, especially in severe conditions, compared to most other 15W-40 engine oils in the marketplace,” said Gosen. “It also has several benefits that contribute to better fuel economy compared to the CJ-4, which this new product replaces.

Specific benefits of the new oil:

- It has outstanding resistance to oxidation and deposit formation, helping engines maintain their original horsepower and fuel-efficiency ratings.
- The new oil quickly sheds air bubbles, enabling equipment to operate on extreme grades where air can be drawn into the oil-pump suction line and compromise engine health and performance.
- It was designed to protect even the hottest components in off-road engines such as turbocharger bearings, piston rings, top lands and more.
- The oil was formulated to maintain its viscosity, even under extreme oil-drain conditions. EO15W40-LA has a low-ash formula that has been enhanced to meet CK-4 specifications. In addition to Tier 4 equipment, it is backward-compatible for use in Tier 3 and older machinery.

The new engine oil can be used in any brand of equipment that requires 15W-40, CK-4, CJ-4, CI-4 or ECF-3 oil.

“While not required by the American Petroleum Institute, we field tested EO15W40-LA in order to confirm its performance and benefits in large, off-road equipment,” said Gosen.

“We encourage anyone who wants excellent performance throughout the life cycle of their machinery to choose Komatsu Genuine Oils like our CK-4, which is one in a line of competitively priced products that are available through our distributors.” ■



**Bruce Gosen,**  
Senior Product  
Manager, Komatsu  
Parts Marketing



Komatsu’s EO15W40-LA (CK-4) Genuine Engine Oil reduces wear and helps maintain original fuel economy. It is approved for use in all engines that require CK-4 and is backward-compatible for use in Tier 3 and older machines.





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## MORE INDUSTRY NEWS

# New video highlights optimal use of backup alarms

Canadian scientific research organization, IRSST, recently released a video intended to ensure the optimal use of backup alarms under realistic working conditions. Among the recommendations in the video are placing the backup alarm at the vehicle's rear, at a height of 3 to 6.5 feet above the ground and where it can easily be seen and heard by workers.

Other suggestions include setting the volume just above the level of ambient noise; limiting reversing speed to a maximum of 7.5 mph, allowing workers in the vicinity of the vehicle at least two seconds of reaction time; and using broadband alarms if several vehicles will be reversing at the same time, minimizing the

risks associated with poor ability to locate sound sources.

"The best way to prevent accidents involving reversing vehicles is still to limit reversing as much as possible and to control the number of pedestrians in the vehicle-reversing areas by implementing effective traffic plans," said Hugues Nélisse, Lead Study Author and IRSST Researcher. "Given that backup alarms are still a widely used means of warning people near vehicles that there's a hazard, we have to use them as effectively as possible to ensure safety." ■

Scan the QR code or go to <http://www.irsst.qc.ca/en/publications-tools/video/i/100389/n/backup-alarms-an-optimum-safety> to watch the video.



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- ▲ Large parts inventory
- ▲ Rental fleet availability
- ▲ Financial expertise
- ▲ Extraordinary product support

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