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THE TOP TALENT
TO YOUR COMPANY
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A POSITIVE REPUTATION

Safe, dependable work drives
utility locating company's growth
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Midwestern-based utility locating company puts focus on training the right way and ensuring safety as the company continues to grow.

By Giles Lambertson

ON THE COVER:

Baker Utility Partners director of operations Rick Jacobs uses a utility locator (Vivax-Metrotech) at a residential job site near Arcadia, Indiana, prior to an excavation. Baker Utility Partners, based in Arcadia, is owned by Dan Baker, Steve Baker and Aaron Reitz and has 15 employees. It primarily services Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma, with private utility locating, ground penetrating radar, concrete radar, utility mapping and training/consulting. (Photo courtesy of Baker Utility Partners)

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Playing It Safe

**TRAINING, BEING OBSERVANT AND BEING SMART
ALL PLAY A BIG PART IN ENSURING YOUR CREWS
ARE BEING SAFE ON JOB SITES**

BY CORY DELLENBACH, EDITOR

Wouldn't it be nice if there were a way to eliminate the potential for mistakes or accidents on a job site completely? I'm not here to tell you there is a way, because there isn't. No matter what you or your crew do, there will always be a potential for anything to happen.

There are ways, however, that you can greatly reduce the risk of having a costly error or deadly mistake on a job.

IT STARTS WITH TRAINING

This one should be common sense, but the best way to reduce any chance of mistakes from happening is a properly trained crew. And that starts with the owner of the company all the way down to the laborer on the job site.

The crews working need to make sure they know how to operate each piece of equipment safely. Vacuum excavation trucks, trenchers and directional drills are all dangerous if you have a crew member who doesn't know what he or she is doing. That is when the accidents and mistakes will happen.

And it's not just that big equipment either. You need crew training on utility locating equipment, also. How will that drill operator know if there are electrical lines or other obstacles in their way without a trained utility locating professional?

If that line isn't marked correctly and the drill or another piece of digging equipment hits a line, it would be catastrophic — destroying equipment, buildings, neighborhoods and worse, causing deaths.

No contractor would ever want to have that on their resume, so invest in any training opportunity you can for your crews and make sure they know what they are doing before they even touch that equipment.

NEVER STOP BEING OBSERVANT

Even after training, crew members should never stop being observant. Just think of all the times you've ran across buried utilities that weren't supposed to be there. Keep an eye on where you are digging and be ready to stop at a moment's notice if something goes wrong.

Part of being observant could also include talking to property owners and finding out if they know of any surprises you might run into while drilling, trenching or digging. Maybe they know of something that was installed underground years ago that wouldn't be located typically.

JUST BE SMART

And the final thing you can do to cut back on costly errors or deadly mistakes is to just be smart, to make it blunt. If something doesn't seem right or if you have a "gut" feeling that something could go wrong, trust it.

You've been in this industry long enough to know the dangers of it and what to look out for. The project can usually wait a day for an extra set of utility locates, have utilities exposed, or to allow your crews to not have to rush through it if it means they return home to their families at the end of the day.

YOUR JOB SITES

What are some ways you've made your job sites safer for your crews? I'd like to hear your ideas and possibly share those with our readers. Call 715-350-8436 or email me at editor@digdifferent.com.

Enjoy this issue! ▼



VACUUM EXCAVATION TRUCKS, TRENCHERS AND DIRECTIONAL DRILLS ARE ALL DANGEROUS IF YOU HAVE A CREW MEMBER WHO DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HE OR SHE IS DOING. THAT IS WHEN THE ACCIDENTS AND MISTAKES WILL HAPPEN.

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OPPORTUNITY

New Money Getting Funneled Toward Infrastructure

With the signing of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, and further legislation still in the works, there is going to be plenty of opportunity in the future for contractors. Whether you focus on water and wastewater systems or specialize in laying conduit for broadband expansion, more federal dollars being directed at infrastructure means more work.

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DRILLING TALES

Contractor Discusses Interesting HDD Job

Southern Directional of Alabaster, Alabama, was featured in the March issue. In this online exclusive, read more about one of the most interesting directional drilling jobs it has ever tackled — a 500-foot-long job requiring two separate bores for installation of a conduit line between two buildings.

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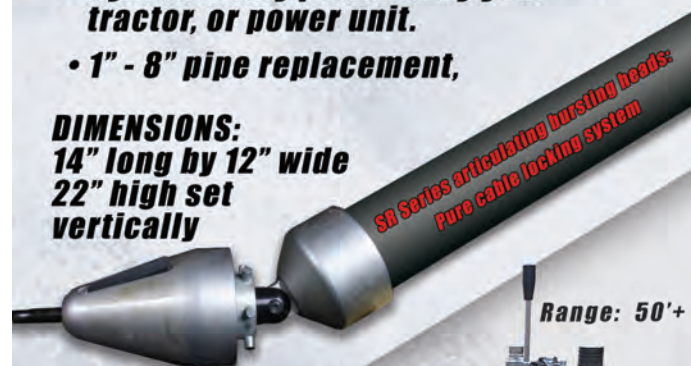
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A POSITIVE REPUTATION

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ENSURING SAFETY AS THE COMPANY CONTINUES TO GROW

STORY: GILES LAMBERTSON

Before there is digging, there is locating. Because of the endless proliferation of underground pipelines and cable-carrying conduit, anyone in the U.S. today preparing to break ground with an excavator or a spade first probes the ground with an electromagnetic device. Better safe than sorry.

"We are in the safety business," says Aaron Reitz, one of three owners of Baker Utility Partners and vice president of business development. "We keep safety in the forefront of what we do. Our job is to keep ourselves and our customers safe."

Unsafe digging runs the risk of ripping into a fiber optic communication or electrical power line and disrupting every customer the line serves. Or interrupting the flow of drinking water to homes or of sewage to a treatment plant. Or sparking an explosion in a natural gas line or an environmental spill from a petroleum transmission line.

None of the above is good and all of it is avoidable. Baker Utility Partners is a company dedicated to the task of avoiding underground conflicts. Steve Baker,

another co-owner and a 45-year veteran of the location industry, says safety in the field is the company's highest priority.

"It's very busy underground," he says, noting that 75,000 miles of publicly owned natural gas lines are buried in Indiana amid an array of other kinds of lines. "So, two things have been really important to me: safety and quality. That's been my mantra the entire time. We're talking about saving people's lives, first and foremost."

It is true that anyone can call the 811 service before digging to identify underground hazards. But that service is limited in application. Only publicly owned infrastructure is located, with responding utilities marking only their own lines. A comprehensive search is not made, in other words, and hazards still may lie in the path of a dig.

COVERING A WIDE AREA

In-the-field locating consultants of Baker Utility Partners cover a lot of ground. Headquartered in Arcadia, Indiana, the company has personnel stationed

across a wide swath of the central U.S. Besides Indiana, Baker techs can be found working in Illinois, Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma.

“Actually we work anywhere and everywhere,” says company co-owner and president Dan Baker. “Ninety percent of our work is in Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma, but we’re also periodically working in Ohio, Wisconsin, Kentucky and Texas.”

All the states are a company focus, in any event — although 40% of Baker Utility jobs are in Indiana — and the company’s reputation has attracted clients from coast to coast. What is the reputation that lands far-flung jobs? “I believe that it’s the real partnership that you get with us,” the president says. “We work hard to ensure that all of a client’s needs are met and at a fair price.”

Price is a calling card — the actual dollar amount, that is, but also the assurance that comes with it. “We stick to our pricing. We give an estimate and we stick to it. We’ve found in our industry that too many folks will give a price and then step it up as work progresses, turning in change orders and increasing the price if different equipment is used.”

“It does come down to reputation,” Reitz adds. “We become the provider of services for a lot of companies that know our reputation and want that level of quality work and communication and professionalism of people in the field.” Those Baker Utility Partners professionals — 15 of them — are scattered across several states and operate from pickups laden with locator equipment.

Specifically, the in-field locator consultants rely on specialized equipment such as Vivax-Metrotech electromagnetic locating instruments, and ground-penetrating-radar devices manufactured by Sensors & Software. For concrete penetration, they pull out GSSI radar units.

“We bring a lot of tools to a location,” Reitz says. “We generally do a layered approach — electromagnetic locators, say, then ground penetrating radar. Most of the time our techs have the standard set of tools right with them. We bring what will be needed to get a job done and all for one price. That’s different than some companies, who roll out this or that tool and then charge additional per hour if another service is needed.”

“WE BECOME THE PROVIDER OF SERVICES FOR A LOT OF COMPANIES THAT KNOW OUR REPUTATION AND WANT THAT LEVEL OF QUALITY WORK AND COMMUNICATION AND PROFESSIONALISM OF PEOPLE IN THE FIELD.”

Aaron Reitz

Baker Utility Partners co-owner and president Dan Baker uses an LMX ground penetrating radar utility locating tool (Sensors & Software) on a job site, one of many tools the company employs to locate utilities for customers.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BAKER UTILITY PARTNERS





Dan Baker uses a StructureScan Mini XT concrete radar inspection tool (GSSI) to locate utilities inside a storage facility.

The range of calls to which Baker responds is surprisingly broad. There are the reassurance calls made by contractors who know there are lines in the ground somewhere and want to know exactly the location of the buried infrastructure. Such locating assignments can be wrapped up in two hours or less, Dan Baker says.

At the other end of the spectrum are projects that have run as long as three years. Dan Baker cites a factory construction site that involved soil sampling in connection with old infrastructure. Then there are the open areas where wind-turbine towers are going up.

"Before companies ever lay out their wind farms, we go out and meet with landowners about underground infrastructure and conduct passive scans for miles and miles," the president says. "Those are some of the most challenging projects. There are no roads to follow. We work across open pastures, trying to identify what cross-country utilities might be there."

UNDERGROUND DETECTIVES

The upshot of all the out-of-sight searching is readily interpreted information for a customer. What was found in a search is displayed in a digital image. Different kinds of utility lines are color-coded for easy differentiation. That visual and data-rich information is given to a customer as well as downloaded into the Baker Utility Partners network for future reference.

The mystery of "what's down there?" is thus solved. Sometimes the solution doesn't come easily. Soil types can play havoc with GPR devices, with clay



From left, Dan Baker, Aaron Reitz and Rick Jacobs look over plans on a project site.

generally being the least penetrable. Unfortunately for the company, much of the Midwest region is underlain with clay. Dan Baker notes that a device that can peer 20 feet into the sandy soil of, say, Florida, can only penetrate 4 or 5 feet in Indiana.

And sometimes — Reitz stresses that it's an exception — a pipe or conduit simply refuses to reveal itself to electromagnetic or GPR devices. In those cases, a partnering company is called to bring a hydrovac rig and gingerly explore the site. When delays of any kind occur, contractors can get antsy. Dan Baker says he occasionally hears the grumbling. "I understand it. We get calls for help with pub-

"WE ARE PARTNERING EVERY DAY — WITH OUR CLIENTS, OUR EMPLOYEES, AND AMONG OURSELVES AS BUSINESS OWNERS AND STEWARDS OF THE COMPANY. EVERY DAY WE THINK ABOUT OUR PARTNERS. THAT'S WHO WE ARE WORKING WITH AND FOR."

Aaron Reitz

lic utilities that have not been located by 811. We help them as much as we can to reduce a contractor's downtime."

All this underground detective work by the technicians requires expertise, of course, but it is not rocket science, Dan Baker says. "Locating a line is not that difficult. What is difficult is knowing what you are looking for and then identifying it when it's located." That ability comes from training and experience.

"Most of our employees have some experience when we hire them," Reitz says. "For the first couple of months, what we show new employees is our way of doing the job. We have our specific process to make sure it's done right. Some of them come from public work where they have relied on a printed



The Baker Utility Partners leadership team includes, from left, Rick Jacobs, director of operations; Aaron Reitz, co-owner and vice president of business development; Steve Baker, co-owner and vice president of training and consulting; and Dan Baker, co-owner and president.

Baker Utility Partners Arcadia, Indiana

OWNERS: Dan Baker, Steve Baker, Aaron Reitz

EMPLOYEES: 15

FOUNDED: 2011

SERVICES: Private utility locating, ground penetrating radar, concrete radar, utility mapping, training/consulting

SERVICE AREA: Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma (and other states)

WEBSITE: www.bakerutilitypartners.com



diagram to know what's down there. That's not always the case for us. We require more critical thinking to deduce what's there."

The techs also complete what the company calls its Health and Safety Program. That training meets or surpasses OSHA standards. Techs are instructed in CPR and other procedures needed in the event of an accident and generally are trained to respond to a crisis on a job site.

Steve Baker, the senior member of the team, trains people at a whole other level. As vice president of training and consulting, he has a contract with the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission to show companies where they went wrong and damaged underground utilities. He also frequently is a speaker at state and national industry conferences.

The sum of Baker Utility Partners' experience is called upon to help clients find what they need to find. Reitz says the company's success is tied to the word "Partners" in the company name. "That means a lot to us. We are partnering every day — with our clients, our employees, and among ourselves as business owners and stewards of the company. Every day we think about our partners. That's who we are working with and for." ▼

A Foundation of Success

Three partners, two generations of experience, and a whole lot of contacts in the industry. That adds up to success, which is what Baker Utility Partners experienced very quickly after it opened its doors in 2011.

The company's foundation clearly is the career of Steve Baker, who co-founded one of the first underground utility locator services in the country in 1973 — SM&P Utility Resources. The Indiana native built it into a national company, then sold it and stayed on as president before retiring and becoming a consultant in 1997.

His son Dan grew up in the business, earned a degree from Indiana University and joined SM&P about the time his father retired. The younger Baker subsequently gained operational and leadership experience at SM&P and elsewhere and "fell in love with the industry." In 2011, he and his father had a chat and Baker Utility Partners was born with Dan as president.

The third partner, Aaron Reitz, was the wild card in the company leadership in terms of experience. His expertise is in banking, not electromagnetic imaging. With a Wharton School of Business degree, Reitz came on as an investor and financial adviser. Business development is his charge.

The new firm immediately was in demand as a consultant, bringing a wealth of management and hands-on experience to any locating task. However, the company consults less now in favor of winning and fulfilling locating contracts.

"I spent a lot of years traveling around the country and getting to know people," Dan Baker says of the years before the company launched. Because many of those in his network were up and down the center of the country — from Wisconsin to Texas — Baker Utility Partners opened its doors as a regional company.

Growth has been steady, Dan Baker says. "We have had consistent growth every year. We don't want to grow so rapidly that we can't establish long-term relationships with our clients." He expects the growth to continue because of what he sees as enormous potential throughout the Midwest.

How about other regions, where the company already has some presence? "First, we want to build out where we are. But as other options arise in other markets, we'll consider expansion if we can find the right people in those markets to work with us."

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Attracting the Top Talent

CASH IS KING. BUT THERE ARE MORE WAYS TO SWEETEN THE POT TO LAND YOUR NEXT STAR TECHNICIAN.

BY JEREMY ESKENAZI

Hiring in the utility construction industry has been challenging for a long time. Even through the pandemic, many companies were looking to add employees and having a hard time finding qualified candidates who would make for a good fit.

As you start looking for the next great worker to further your company's goals, deciding how hard you can compete for talent is important. While there are trends making candidate relationship-building easier — such as offering a more flexible work schedule for some roles — money is still a primary driver for candidates.

Salary has traditionally been king. And this king is powerful because it compounds year over year on your list of expenses. Not every company can spend more now, but every company wants to attract and retain the best talent for its team. This is where the candidate experience and your employer brand can be a strategic differentiator from other companies looking to hire.

It's important to remember that people don't come to work just for money. Everyone wants to feel valued and find the work interesting and challenging.

There are a few ways to minimize the amount of extra cash you need to help candidates consider your company over others.

THE COST OF HIRING

Understanding one-time costs versus compounding costs is a good starting point. If you can give someone an upfront, one-time cash bonus, it will save your company money year over year compared to a larger starting salary. When you get into their second year of employment, having to raise salary by a percentage compounds the cost and can add much more to your operating costs than a one-time payment. Even hourly employees in lower-earning roles who are in high demand may be swayed by a cash bonus upfront.

As you approach your budget and talent needs for the future you may find you have less flexibility to offer bigger salaries to help you win the talent war. While everything has some cost, there are alternative areas you can invest in that cost much less and will not steadily rise like a salary does. Here are eight of them:

1. Offering flexibility — Whether it is the start and end time of the workday or a compressed work week — think four days at 10 hours per day, giving long weekends — these are coveted offerings. If the job allows for flexibility, it's worth considering.

2. Covering perks — There are tons of creative offerings that matter to employees and are often available at a small cost. A few examples are: subsidies for public transit or commuting, extra uniforms paid for by the company, meal services at work, free or discounted laundry service, gym or lifestyle club memberships or discounts.

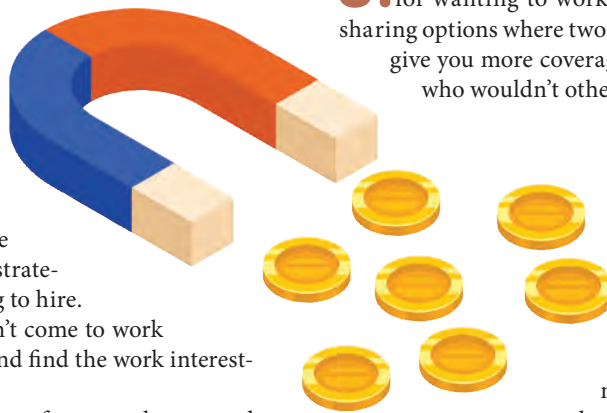
3. Job sharing or part-time work — Many people have their own reasons for wanting to work less than full time. Offering part-time or job-sharing options where two people perform what was once a full-time job can give you more coverage in talent and attract some amazing candidates who wouldn't otherwise be interested.

4. Having good managers — A positive workplace culture is a competitive advantage. If you invest in managers who care about their teams and prioritize teaching and coaching employees, you will be able to attract, develop and, importantly, retain top talent. It's been proven many times that people work for people, not companies, so make sure your managers are good listeners, care about their people and can show empathy.

5. Offering hiring bonus/signing bonus — A bonus can help you counter another offer and be equally attractive up front as many bonuses can be paid within the first three months and can have a condition of repayment if the employee leaves before a set amount of time. For hourly workers, a few hundred dollars up front can make a big difference in whether they decide if they want to join your organization. Because these are one-time costs, they don't compound like salary does.




6. Starting benefits coverage earlier — The traditional model for health-care coverage has been to delay offering benefits for 90 days to get through a probation period. Offering insurance coverage immediately becomes a great employee incentive. A company could also offer to reimburse existing health costs or pay for the previous employer's benefits until the transition occurs.

7. Reimbursing education costs — Another great noncompounding benefit is education subsidies. Skills change quickly and the investment in learning benefits both the employee and the company in the long term. For instance, offer to pay the costs of a technician seeking more training on tools from a manufacturer or industry certifications that improve a worker's career path.



Sonde locating reinvented with the vLoc3-Cam



The vLoc3-Cam Sonde Locators advanced filtering and omnidirectional antenna technology makes sonde locating fast, easy, and accurate. Follow the arrow  to the rear locate point  then continue to the sonde .

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8. Having modern work tools — Sure, you want to have the best technology for your office workers, newer computers, GPS tracking, etc. But what about offering to pay for your employees' mobile phones? Offering a broad range to choose from or solid reimbursement plans for employees to have the latest and greatest is a draw.

CREATIVITY COUNTS

Remember, money does reign as king. If you offer 30% less salary than your competitor, even this list will not help you win the talent war. However, if you offer 30% more salary, your balance sheet might start to look a little funny and it will be difficult to sustain making above-market salary offers for many roles. The market is competitive and being creative with the advantages you can afford will help show candidates you care about their experience and that you understand what matters to them in a comprehensive employment package.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeremy Eskenazi is a human resources trainer, author of RecruitConsult! Leadership, and founder of the consulting firm Riviera Advisors. Contact him at www.rivieraadvisors.com. ▼

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BY CRAIG MANDLI

Electronic Utility Locators

RIDGID SeekTech ST-305R Transmitter

The RIDGID SeekTech ST-305R Transmitter is a compact yet powerful multifrequency transmitter. It can be used with any SeekTech or NaviTrack receiver to find buried conductors such as pipes, cables, and wires. With its battery shoe, it can be powered by a lithium ion 18-volt rechargeable battery or six alkaline or NiMH C-cell batteries. It delivers up to 5 watts of power and transmits two frequencies simultaneously to allow optimal frequency selection. Audio feedback also confirms a good circuit before beginning a trace.



800-474-3443; www.ridgid.com

Subsite Electronics UtiliGuard 2

The Subsite Electronics UtiliGuard 2 is a multifrequency utility locator that takes the features of the original UtiliGuard and adds a user interface, integrated data capture and GPS positioning. The user interface has simplified graphics that are easier and faster to interpret. Operators will notice a change in screen layout when directly over a utility locate, providing positive confirmation. Screen graphics deliver increased operator confidence, locate consistency and operational performance. It automatically captures data without altering the operator's normal workflow. This data can be used to verify performance and demonstrate quality and process compliance in the field. Supervisors can also track performance, compare it with benchmarks and enable actionable outcomes to be implemented. This reporting and auditing capability helps increase quality, reduce cable strikes and increase productivity across multiple crews.



800-846-2713; www.subsite.com

Hydroexcavation Equipment

Dynablast HV420

Custom Dynablast HV420 hydrovac water heaters produce 420,000 Btus with an output temperature of 175 degrees F at 5 gpm, making them suitable for colder climates and improved digging in clay-filled areas. All models come with ETL certification for safety, which also includes certification on the coil for higher efficiency and heat transfer, a stainless steel target plate for increased coil life and momentary override control. They include an Interpump Group T 2040 water pump package providing 10.5 gpm at 2,900 psi and 1,750 rpm, as well as a hydraulic package with Sunfab 34 cc motor. All components are custom-mounted in a 24-by-24-inch cabinet.

905-867-4642; www.dynablast.ca



Easy-Kleen Pressure Systems Wildcat Heaters

Wildcat Heaters high-pressure, oil-fired hot-water/steam heaters and hydraulic pump systems from Easy-Kleen Pressure Systems are designed for reliability and efficiency and are installation-ready for vacuum trucks and hydroexcavators. A full range of heater options includes dry steam, redundancy packages, Schedule 80 and 160 stainless steel or A53 boiler pipe, fine-tuned temperature and flow-control systems. All coils are manufactured in-house, with CRN boiler-approved coils now available. Heaters can be designed for mounting in a cabinet or supplied



as a completed cabinet unit. They are CSA and ETL approved. Hydraulic pumping systems are available.

800-315-5533; www.easykleen.com

Enz USA Hydro X

The Hydro X nozzle from Enz USA is available in 3/8-inch NPT or 1/2-inch connecting threads, and it can function at up to 5,000 psi with flow as low as 8 gpm. It combines a powerful, oscillating water jet with a high removal rate of debris. A tungsten carbide front jet ensures a longer life than ceramic jets can offer. For quick and easy maintenance, a repair kit is available. Due to the nozzle's simplicity, repairs can be made quickly and efficiently in the field with little downtime. For the operator's safety, a plastic cover provides protection against harsh and sensitive environments.

888-369-8721; www.enz.com



GapVax HV33

Designed to safely transport water and debris in urban areas, the GapVax HV33 is shorter, smaller and more compact than its predecessor. It is 30 feet long overall on a medium-duty chassis and includes a 600-gallon water tank, 6-cubic-yard debris body, 6- or 8-inch top-mounted telescoping boom with a 14- to 17.5-foot reach, 4,000 cfm power and an inverted, full-opening tailgate.

888-442-7829; www.gapvax.com



Presvac Systems Hydrovac

The Presvac Systems Hydrovac is designed for versatility and cold-weather operation with optional full compliance with U.S. Department of Transportation specifications for collection or transportation of hazardous materials. The high-vacuum blower allows extraction of all types of soils, gravel, rock, clay, water and silt material, with knockout features in the debris tank minimizing carryover. Modular filtration configured to blower size provides blower protection and minimal maintenance, according to the maker. It comes with a heavy-duty, 8-inch boom that extends up to 25 feet with six-way hydraulic power and wireless controls for all boom functions, a soft-start water pump, vacuum breaker and truck engine speed.

800-387-7763; www.presvac.com



RAMVAC by Sewer Equipment HX-12

The HX-12 hydroexcavator from RAMVAC by Sewer Equipment has a 12-yard debris tank and a heated, secured equipment locker that contains the entire water system, including water tanks, for cold weather application and tool security. This machine touts a directional discharge system with the ability to offload debris back into the excavation site when done, without the mess of dumping the tank. This system also allows operators to blow any obstructions out of the dig hose and get back to work. It includes a long-range wireless remote, NEMA 4 electrical system, an 800,000 Btu water heater and a three-stage cyclonic filtration system. The standard 4,400 cfm blower will match the performance of larger blower machines, while delivering fuel economy, with the ability to go up to 5,400 cfm. The series offers debris capacities from 3 to 15 cubic yards while maintaining a short overall footprint.

877-735-4640; www.ram-vac.com



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www.natvac.com | 800.253.5500

Rival Hydrovac T10

The T10 from Rival Hydrovac is a larger version of the initial Rival T7 unit, which has become a suitable choice for many urban contractors who are aware of the trending weight restrictions on these types of trucks and realize the need to bring these trucks into compliance when driving on roads to disposal. It operates in the same manner as the T7, as it is fully hydraulic, eliminating the need for a transfer case, and aside from engaging one PTO, the entire truck is operated from the remote and rear panel. This unit features the same "pressure off" feature as the smaller units and has essentially the same controls.

403-550-7997; www.rivalhydrovac.com



Super Products Mud Dog

The Mud Dog vacuum excavator from Super Products provides a safe and efficient alternative to traditional digging. It is designed for operator convenience and consistent performance even in the harshest environments. Units come standard as hydroexcavators with an optional air excavation package, which allows an operator to always choose the best application, water or air, for the job. It is available with 12- or 16-yard debris capacity and has a 1,500- to 2,000-gallon water tank capacity. Each model comes standard with tilt-ejection unloading, and a rear-mounted boom that reaches 27 feet, has 335-degree rotation and can move in a 45-degree upward and 25-degree downward pivot. This allows for versatility within dig areas so that units do not need to be constantly readjusted into position.

800-837-9711; www.superproductsllc.com



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Tornado Global Hydrovacs F4 ECOLITE

The F4 ECOLITE from Tornado Global Hydrovacs has a 12-cubic-yard mud tank and holds 1,550 gallons of freshwater. The unit is more than 7,000 pounds lighter than the company's older models and offers more than double the payload. The boom has a 342-degree rotation and 26-foot reach. The smaller F3 ECOLITE is a 10-cubic-yard, 1,250-gallon tandem-axle unit that more than doubles older payload capacities. It features an 8-inch boom and 3,800 cfm blower.

877-340-8141; www.tornadotrucks.com



TRUVAC by Vactor Paradigm

Designed for utility, municipal and contractor customers involved in the installation, maintenance and repair of underground water, sewer, gas, elec-

tric and telecommunications lines, the Paradigm subcompact vacuum excavator from TRUVAC by Vector can dig holes with water or air; vacuum, contain and dispose of drill mud; power pneumatic, hydraulic or electrical tools; and provide transport and storage of replacement parts, equipment and tools. The truck's Park-n-Dig design minimizes time between job site arrival and excavation, including the ability to dig up to 6 feet without additional pipe and hose. The air compressor powers utility tools such as jackhammers and tampers. The truck offers tool storage space, including a long-handle toolbox. The truck can tow up to 20,000 pounds.

800-627-3171; www.truvac.com

Vac-Con X-Cavator

The X-Cavator hydrovac from Vac-Con includes a cold-weather enclosure for the water systems and control panel, as well as an interior area for operator seating and workspace. Unit filtration is based off of the Titan combination machine, with a single-cyclone design and final cartridge-style filter. The redesigned boom is lightweight and flexible, rotating 310 degrees around the unit and moving plus 45 degrees and negative 22 degrees vertically. The durable rubber hose material can withstand harsh environments, according to the maker, and has a reach of 26 feet.

904-284-4200; www.vac-con.com

Vermeer MV Solutions Mini-Combo

Mini-Combo vacuum excavators from Vermeer MV Solutions deliver a versatile combination of components and options that facilitate hydro jetting and excavation work in a single machine. They are available in three models — the 573 SDT, 873 SDT and 1273 SDT — that range from a 300- to 400-gallon water tank capacity and 500 to 1,200 gallons in waste tank capacity. All three models are engineered with a pump rated at 1,500 psi at 15 gpm and a powertrain featuring a 74 hp engine. This powerful engine and pump combination enable these machines to clean lateral lines up to 12 inches in diameter and 300 feet in length. They can be outfitted with a mechanically operated strong arm or hydraulic boom.

352-728-2222; www.vermeermvs.com

Leak Detection Equipment

MyTana Locate and Leak Detection Package

MyTana's Locate and Leak Detection Package helps pros save time finding leaks in utility lines. The LD40 leak detector works like a stethoscope to detect hissing, trickle or seeping sounds, while filtering out background noises. It can detect through any surface and has an easy-to-understand, real-time visual response meter, enabling operators to listen and watch for leaks. Five frequency bands help users home in on hard-to-find leaks, so it is suitable for use on vertical line leaks, slab leaks and irrigation leaks. The package also includes MyTana's RL8873 locator and RT8872 transmitter, which locate most buried utility lines.

800-328-8170; www.mytana.com



Mapping

CUES GraniteNet WebInspect

GraniteNet WebInspect from CUES is a browser-based inspection app designed to perform inspections and collect information about municipal assets, such as manholes (including MACP v7 Level 1), hydrants, lift stations, grease traps, light poles and signage. It performs and tracks tasks such as valve turning, smoke tests, brush cutting and snow plowing, collecting GPS points, water quality samples and flow tests, and assessing sewer backups. Virtually any type of asset assessment or task can be quickly deployed, with or without existing GIS maps. There's no software to install on any user devices. All that's needed is an internet connection and virtually any device with a browser, such as a mobile phone or a tablet.

800-327-7791; www.cuesinc.com



Vivax-Metrotech VMMap Utility Mapping App

The VMMap Utility Mapping App from Vivax-Metrotech records data from the field, which is instantly available online via the VMMap Cloud web portal, or can be shared using the email function in the app. Location data is obtained from the mobile phone, or an external GPS device of your choice. Depth readings, GPS coordinates, the distance between locates and more are captured as data logs and can be saved as xls, txt, shp and kml extension files. The image capture feature allows the user to attach a JPEG format image to the surveys. This is useful to add points of interest or a snapshot of the completed survey. The app generates maps in real time, giving confidence to the field technician that the data being collected is accurate.

800-446-3392; www.vxmt.com



Surveying

INTEQ Distributors iDig

The iDig system from INTEQ Distributors is a product for excavator contractors digging to grade and/or slope. The system goes on any size excavator or backhoe, providing real-time depth/slope information as the operator digs. One system can be installed on multiple excavators. Sensors are wireless and are charged via solar. It can be used with any tilt bucket, and some rotators. Simply input the depth/slope and watch the grade lights on the LED light-bar mounted in the cab while digging. Once the green light illuminates, grade has been reached. Its use means there is no need for a grade-checker, and no downtime to check grade. It prevents over-digging, so there is less need for backfill. Owner/operators don't have to get off the machine to check the grade.

405-789-9900; www.inteqdistributors.com



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BY CRAIG MANDLI

Utility Locating and Surveying



Suction excavator saves time, money on job site

PROBLEM

Recently Ox OnSite operating out of Jacksonville, Florida, was exposing buried infrastructure at a plant where the nearest disposal facility was over an hour away. This isn't generally a problem when locating underground utilities unless you need to dig quantities well over the storage capacity of your equipment, and this particular project had over 100 cubic yards to move.

SOLUTION

They used the **MTS Dino 4.5 Advanced Suction Excavator** from **Ox Equipment**. With more and more regions across the U.S. mandating that nondestructive excavation and utility daylighting be done without the use of water, digging dry and suction excavation is becoming more popular. ▼

RESULT

This big job was completed days ahead of schedule because the excavated materials were dry and able to be stored on site and reused as backfill. This allowed Ox OnSite to maximize productivity and save its client thousands of dollars. 888-290-4044; www.ox-equipment.com ▼

GOT A STORY THAT'S DOWN AND DIRTY?

Dig Different welcomes news about your tough excavation, pipe bursting, trenching, boring or tunneling job for the Down & Dirty column.

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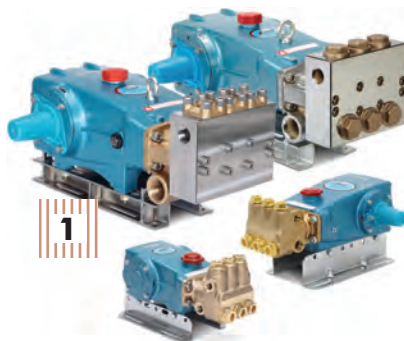


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THE LATEST: Products



1. Cat Pumps hydroexcavating pumps

Over 50 years of high-pressure pump manufacturing experience has earned Cat Pumps a reputation of producing the high-quality, long-lasting pumps in the markets it serves. With its dedication to zero-defect manufacturing, ease of service, and availability from stock, Cat Pumps designs and builds high-pressure pumps and systems to suit the demanding environments of the hydroexcavation industry. Popular models include Model 56 with 5.5 gpm at 3,500 psi; Model 56HS with 8 gpm at 3,000 psi; Model 660 with 10 gpm at 3,000 psi; and Model 3560 with 20 gpm at 4,000 psi, or 25 gpm at 3,000 psi. **763-780-5440; www.catpumps.com**



2. Ditch Witch JT28 directional drill

The JT28 directional drill from Ditch Witch is an upgraded replacement for the JT25 drill. The JT28 maintains its midsize footprint while providing more power, improving performance and requiring fewer maintenance checks. The drill features a rotational drive system with 4,200 ft-lbs of torque and 28,000 pounds of thrust and pullback, which provides the strength necessary for installation projects up to 12 inches in diameter and at lengths of up to 550 feet. The drill is powered by a 130 hp, Tier 4 Cummins diesel engine which makes it effective across a variety of job sites, from pipe and cable installation to larger utilities like water, gas and sewer. **580-336-4402; www.ditchwitch.com** ▼

This Issue's Feature:

Wireless headsets enhance job site safety

BY CRAIG MANDLI

Communication is an essential component of a crew's safety and productivity on a job site. Noisy environments add potential for missed instructions and/or warnings being given. **Setcom's latest wireless system, the LiberatorMAX,** brings easy and reliable wireless communications that work crews can count on.

LiberatorMAX operates without the requirement of a base station — meaning there is no need for crews to worry about a base accidentally being left on a job site. In addition, the system has the capability of up to eight full-duplex users to be connected hands-free. Eight available talk groups within the system give larger crews much needed flexibility, bringing a new level of possibilities to crew communication.

"We listened to the needs of our customers for a versatile, multi-user intercom system," says James Roberts, president at Setcom. "The result was the development of a system that can handle multiple users with the added feature of talk group channels."

Unlike traditional two-way radios, LiberatorMAX features full-duplex communication, so there are no buttons to press. Operators can keep both hands on the equipment they are operating while communicating seamlessly with the system. It also protects hearing from harmful noise levels by 23 dB while working around loud machinery. The headsets will eliminate the need for shouting and hand signals, improving productivity and making job completion faster.

The system fits across numerous high-noise applications where headsets can be beneficial. Applications include excavation, hydroexcavation, construction site, pipeline inspection, directional drilling, utility line pulling, aerial bucket trucks, crane operations and rigging crews. It will work for anything from a small crew of two working a directional drilling machine to a larger pipeline utility project where there can be multiple teams working together on the job site.



The headsets provide up to 15 hours of continuous talk time on a full charge. In addition, Setcom has added motion sensor technology into the headsets that sends the headset into sleep mode after 15 minutes if accidentally left on after a job. The headset gets up to 1,500 feet of line-of-sight range in ideal conditions.

"I am very proud of our team for the commitment and effort they put into the development of the LiberatorMAX System," Roberts says.

650-965-8020; www.setcomcorp.com

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Happenings

CALENDAR

May 26

NUCA Washington Summit, virtual only. Visit nuca.com/summit.

June 8, 9, 15, 16

Electric Utility Fleet Managers Conference (EUFMC), virtual only. Visit www.eufmc.com.

June 13-16

Rapid Excavation & Tunneling Conference (RETC), Caesar's Palace, Las Vegas. Visit www.retc.org.

June 22-23

Wastewater Equipment (WEQ) Fair, York Fairgrounds, York, Pennsylvania. Visit www.weqfair.com.

June 29-July 2

Water & Wastewater Equipment Treatment & Transport (WWETT) Show, Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis. Visit www.wwettshow.com.

Sept. 28-30

International Construction & Utility Equipment Exposition (ICUEE), Kentucky Exposition Center, Louisville, Kentucky. Visit www.icuee.com.

Dig Different welcomes your contributions to our Happenings column. To recognize members of your team, please send notices of new hires, promotions, service milestones, certifications or achievements. We also invite your national, state or local associations and organizations to post notices, news items and learning opportunities. Send contributions to editor@digdifferent.com. ▼



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Vermeer enters distribution agreement with BRON

Vermeer signed a distribution agreement with BRON that gives the manufacturer of utility track plows and plow attachments the rights to sell its products through Vermeer industrial dealers worldwide. The agreement establishes Vermeer dealerships as the exclusive distributor for two of BRON's tracked utility plows in the 200 hp (149 kW) and 300 hp (224 kW) class, and provides them the ability to sell the line of BRON utility plow attachments.

W.E. Rawson adds Joiner as marketing services manager

Jennifer Joiner has joined W.E. Rawson's group of companies Applied Felts, Maxliner and Ferratex Solutions as marketing services manager. In this new role, her responsibilities will be market development, new product promotion and maintaining a positive experience with current and prospective customers. She brings over 13 years' experience in CIPP for the water and wastewater pipeline rehabilitation industry. She has a bachelor's degree in accounting with a minor in business management and is a licensed commercial and residential general contractor.



Jennifer Joiner

ALLU Group names new distributor

ALLU Group announced Stowers Machinery as its newest distributor for its lines of ALLU Transformer and ALLU Crusher attachments. Stowers will provide sales and service for ALLU products in Tennessee.

Headquartered in Knoxville, Stowers Machinery has grown to encompass six locations, employing more than 400 personnel and serving a broad spectrum of industries.

HammerHead Trenchless announces leadership transition

Jeff Gabrielse has been named managing director of HammerHead Trenchless, assuming leadership of the HammerHead brand within the newly formed Rehabilitation and Replacement division of The Toro Co. Gabrielse will be overseeing the HammerHead R&R business, continuing its focus on delivering innovative trenchless equipment and solutions for the water, wastewater and gas markets.



Jeff Gabrielse

American Augers and Trenchor sold through the Ditch Witch Division

Ditch Witch Division now offers full product lines, parts and service for both the American Augers and Trenchor brands. Dealership and factory personnel have been working together to prepare for distribution of these two brands through the worldwide Ditch Witch dealer channel. The manufacturing of Ditch Witch products will remain in Perry, Oklahoma, and American Augers and Trenchor products will continue to be built in West Salem, Ohio.

Lauren Atwell elected NUCA board chairman

The National Utility Contractors Association's board of directors inducted Lauren Atwell as its new chairman on Feb. 6 at its annual meeting in Naples, Florida. Chairman Atwell is the chief operating officer at Petticoat-Schmitt Civil Contractors, located in Jacksonville, Florida. He has been part of the regional construction company's executive team since 2014. Petticoat-Schmitt specializes in clearing and grading for underground utility, roadway, and water and wastewater treatment plant construction.



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Vac-Con manufactures its 9,000th unit

Vac-Con announced it manufactured its 9,000th truck build since its founding in 1986. The 9,000th build milestone came just before the close of 2020 and is a source of pride for the approximately 300 employee-owners at the operation. In honor of the accomplishment, a custom T9K — or Truck 9,000 — logo was created and will be used throughout 2021 on various employee and marketing pieces.

Mecalac added five dealers in 2020

Mecalac welcomed five North American dealers to its network in 2020. The new dealers expand Mecalac's coverage across the eastern U.S., as well as provide a foothold for the company on the West Coast and in several key Canadian markets. The new dealers are Pennsylvania-based Wood's CRW, Illinois-based Hall Equipment, Florida-based Trekker Group, California-based Scott Equipment and Canadian company Gear Equipment.

CASE dealer expands into Arizona

CASE Construction Equipment dealer Sonsray Machinery is expanding into Arizona with new full-line CASE sales, rental and service operations in Phoenix and Tucson. The expansion further establishes Sonsray as the largest CASE dealer on the West Coast with 15 locations in five states: California, Washington, Oregon, Nevada and Arizona. ▼



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