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Bryce Elliott
Jet/vac Operator
Equix Integrity

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Over the past decade, Equix Integrity has grown from a cross-bore inspection firm with a local vision into a diversified company providing services across the country.

By Ken Wysocky

ON THE COVER:

Bryce Elliott, jet/vac operator for Equix Integrity, retracts the hose on a 2023 KAISER AquaStar during a job in Houston. Equix Integrity is one of six businesses that stand under the umbrella of Equix Inc., a nationwide construction services corporation focused on utility and infrastructure projects. (Photography by Jon Shapley)

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The Backbone of Service

BEING A SERVICE COMPANY TO OTHER SERVICE COMPANIES COMES WITH MORE UPS THAN DOWNS IF YOU ARE WILLING TO WORK AT THE PARTNERSHIP

BY CORY DELLENBACH, EDITOR

In the words of Henry Ford, “Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress and working together is success.”

In the world of underground construction and utility management, the concept of service extends far beyond the traditional understanding. It’s not just about providing solutions to end users or consumers; it’s also about supporting the very backbone of the industry — fellow service companies that keep operations running smoothly day in and day out.

We often celebrate the innovative projects and groundbreaking technologies that drive our industry forward. However, it’s just as important to know that service companies play a vital role in supporting the infrastructure and operations of other service providers.

BEING DEPENDABLE

What does it mean to be a service company to other service companies? It means being the dependable partner that ensures equipment is maintained and operational, that supplies are delivered on time and in full, and that expertise is readily available to tackle any challenge that arises. It’s about being a trusted ally in the trenches, supporting your fellow professionals as they work to deliver essential services.

Equix Integrity, profiled in this issue, is one of those types of companies that offers services to other utility companies. As you’ll read in the profile, Equix Integrity provides cross-bore inspection services primarily to horizontal directional drilling contractors and natural gas utilities. It’s an important service to offer, ensuring that an HDD contractor doesn’t drill through another utility.

Being a service company to other service companies requires a unique set of skills and attributes. It requires adaptability, as the needs of your clients are constantly evolving in response to changing market conditions. It

requires reliability as your partners depend on you to deliver consistent quality and performance, even in the face of adversity. And perhaps most importantly, it requires a genuine commitment to collaboration and partnership, recognizing that your success is linked to the success of those you serve.

FORMING A RELATIONSHIP

One of the most rewarding aspects of being a service company to other service companies is the opportunity to form long-lasting relationships within the industry. Whether it’s collaborating on a complex project or providing ongoing support and maintenance services, these partnerships are built on a foundation of trust, mutual respect and shared goals. Together, you are stronger, more resilient and better equipped to overcome the challenges that lie ahead.

Equix Integrity has directional drill partners that they know will reach out to them for every job and those drillers know they can depend on them. That partnership can help secure bigger jobs for both service companies as well by offering more services than just one of them can provide.

Yes, there can be challenges in the partnership. It requires a deep understanding of needs and priorities, as well as a willingness to go above and beyond to exceed expectations. It requires a dedication to customer service, ensuring that every interaction leaves a positive and lasting impression.

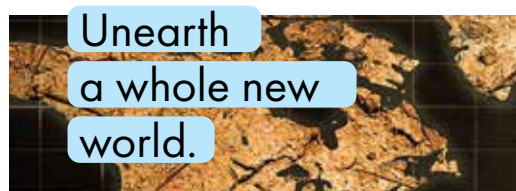
YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

This spirit of collaboration and partnership is what defines this industry. How does your company form relationships with other service companies? Let me know by emailing me at editor@digdifferent.com.

Enjoy this issue! ▼



ONE OF THE MOST REWARDING ASPECTS OF BEING A SERVICE COMPANY TO OTHER SERVICE COMPANIES IS THE **OPPORTUNITY TO FORM LONG-LASTING RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE INDUSTRY.**



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CHANGING JOB MARKET

How to Stay Relevant

The average wages for trade workers is increasing, according to Associated General Contractors. That could be good news for job seekers, but the tight labor market can make this difficult for businesses. This online article offers tips for navigating the new employment market.

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Keeping your mind on the task at hand makes you safer and more productive, but there are many things that can distract you at work. This online article offers ideas to help you eliminate distractions so you can focus and get the job done safely.

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Navigating the Lending Environment

INSIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR CONTRACTORS FACING RISING EQUIPMENT PRICES AND INTEREST RATES AND HOW TO KEEP CASH FLOW HEALTHY

BY JOAN KOEHNE

Have you priced out new equipment lately? Talk about sticker shock. Equipment prices jumped during the pandemic — sometimes 30% to 40% — and remain high. Interest rates climbed also. Loan rates previously at 5% increased to as much as 9.75% in 2023, says Jim Thomas, owner of Key Commercial Corporation, a St. Louis, Missouri-based commercial equipment finance and leasing organization that serves mom and pop businesses with five trucks or fewer.

When interest rates are high, borrowing money becomes more expensive, and businesses find it more difficult to obtain financing. Although the future of interest rates remains uncertain, the Federal Reserve forecasted three rate decreases in 2024. Kevin McGinn, senior vice president of Commercial Credit Group, says that successful organizations have learned to adapt to the higher cost of doing business in the past few years.

“Interest rates may come down, but I wouldn’t count on it,” he says. “I wouldn’t plan your business model based on those forecasts, either.”

Commercial Credit Group is a Charlotte, North Carolina-based organization providing commercial equipment financing for construction, manufacturing, transportation and waste companies.

“Equipment prices are sticky,” McGinn continues. “They don’t come down as fast as they go up. It’s something that everyone has to deal with.”

McGinn and Thomas recommend the following lending strategies for contractors considering the purchase of a truck or large equipment soon.

DETERMINE WHAT YOU CAN AFFORD

Because of the higher cost of borrowing money, McGinn encourages contractors to only buy the equipment that they absolutely need.

Likewise, Thomas encourages contractors to purchase equipment that’s suited for the job.

“Buy equipment that’s going to hold up, that will do the job and serve you for the four or five years you’re going to finance it for,” Thomas says.

He advises contractors to think about cash flow when purchasing equipment.

“Let’s say [a contractor] has a contract to pump 20 septic tanks for a mobile home park. He knows how much that’s going to generate, and he needs a truck. Now he knows what he can afford to spend, and that’s what he’s looking to purchase,” Thomas says.

NEGOTIATING LOAN TERMS

In recent years, McGinn says he has seen contractors lock in longer terms. Instead of a five-year term, they might finance a truck or other equipment purchase for six or seven years.

“That’s one way to keep their monthly payments down,” McGinn says. But if a lender accepts longer terms, sometimes the lender requests more collateral in return.

Key Commercial Corporation offers 36-, 48- or 60-month financing. Thomas advises contractors to forecast how long the equipment will be in service when negotiating interest rates. A truck with 30,000 engine hours, a gas engine and high-maintenance moving parts might not last for 60 months.



IMAGE BY LEXAMER ON FREEPK

MAINTAINING EQUIPMENT

One way to avoid purchasing new trucks and equipment is to keep your current equipment operational by maintaining it well.

“A lot of companies buy equipment more often than they need to because they don’t maintain their existing fleet. They just let it run down,” McGinn says. “It’s true that it does cost more to maintain equipment, but in the long run, it’s a less expensive tradeoff.”

Investing in older, used equipment instead of new equipment also saves money. Thomas works with lenders who are quick to finance used equipment.

“My best rates come from a bank in Indiana, and they have no fear of older trucks,” he says. “They’re interested in the kind of business, the kind of bank account the customer has, and his personal credit.”

PERSONAL AND BUSINESS FINANCES

To improve the ability to secure a loan, McGinn advises clients to get their finances in order. Contractors with accurate financial statements have more leverage when negotiating the terms of a loan. Lenders typically ask borrowers to complete a credit application and provide several financial documents, including personal tax returns.

Because personal and business finances are so closely related, Thomas advises clients to attend to their personal financial obligations.

“The best advice I can give to someone starting a business is to take care of your personal credit,” he says.

BE PROACTIVE

Good equipment, new or used, is harder to find than it was five years ago. “The supply chain, especially on chassis, is still an issue,” McGinn says.

With equipment being scarce, if contractors wait too long to start working with a lender, the equipment may be gone by the time they secure financing.

“If it took me a week to get someone financed, the dealer probably sold it to someone else,” Thomas says. “I had that happen a lot in the last year or so.”

“The earlier you start on the financing side, the better,” McGinn adds.

**“EQUIPMENT
PRICES ARE STICKY.
THEY DON’T COME
DOWN AS FAST AS
THEY GO UP.”**

Kevin McGinn

RAISE CUSTOMER RATES RESPONSIBLY

To account for rising expenses, contractors may decide to raise their rates. Although consumers are familiar with today's higher prices for goods and services, contractors still need to be careful about raising prices. They don't want to lose customers or sales. McGinn advises contractors to be upfront with clients, phase-in price increases gradually, and maintain quality of products and services. People will pay more for quality.

"As long as you're providing the service, those price increases are a lot easier to pass along," McGinn says. "If your service is just adequate, and you go to one of your customers and say you're bumping up the price, it gives them more incentive to start looking elsewhere."

Before bidding on a long-term project, contractors should carefully assess the current and future economy and the cost of doing business, he adds.

"You can't rely on old models you may have used when forecasting your revenues and expenses," McGinn says. "You have to adjust those percentages. What's equipment debt going to cost? What's fuel going to cost? All of those items need to be re-evaluated."

KEEPING CASH FLOW HIGH

High interest rates can put a strain on a contractor's cash flow and affect the timing of adding or replacing trucks or large equipment to the fleet. But by following these business finance recommendations, contractors can still expand their fleet, replace equipment and increase output while keeping cash flow high. ▼

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The team at Equix Integrity includes, from left, Andrew Undicelli, vice president; Joaquin Aguilar, operator; Mario Chavez, Houston-area manager; Luis Aguilar, operator; Israel Covarrubias, project manager; Bryce Elliott, jet/vac operator; and Juan Bocanegra, operator. The company's fleet includes AquaStar water recycling vac trucks from KAISER PREMIER.



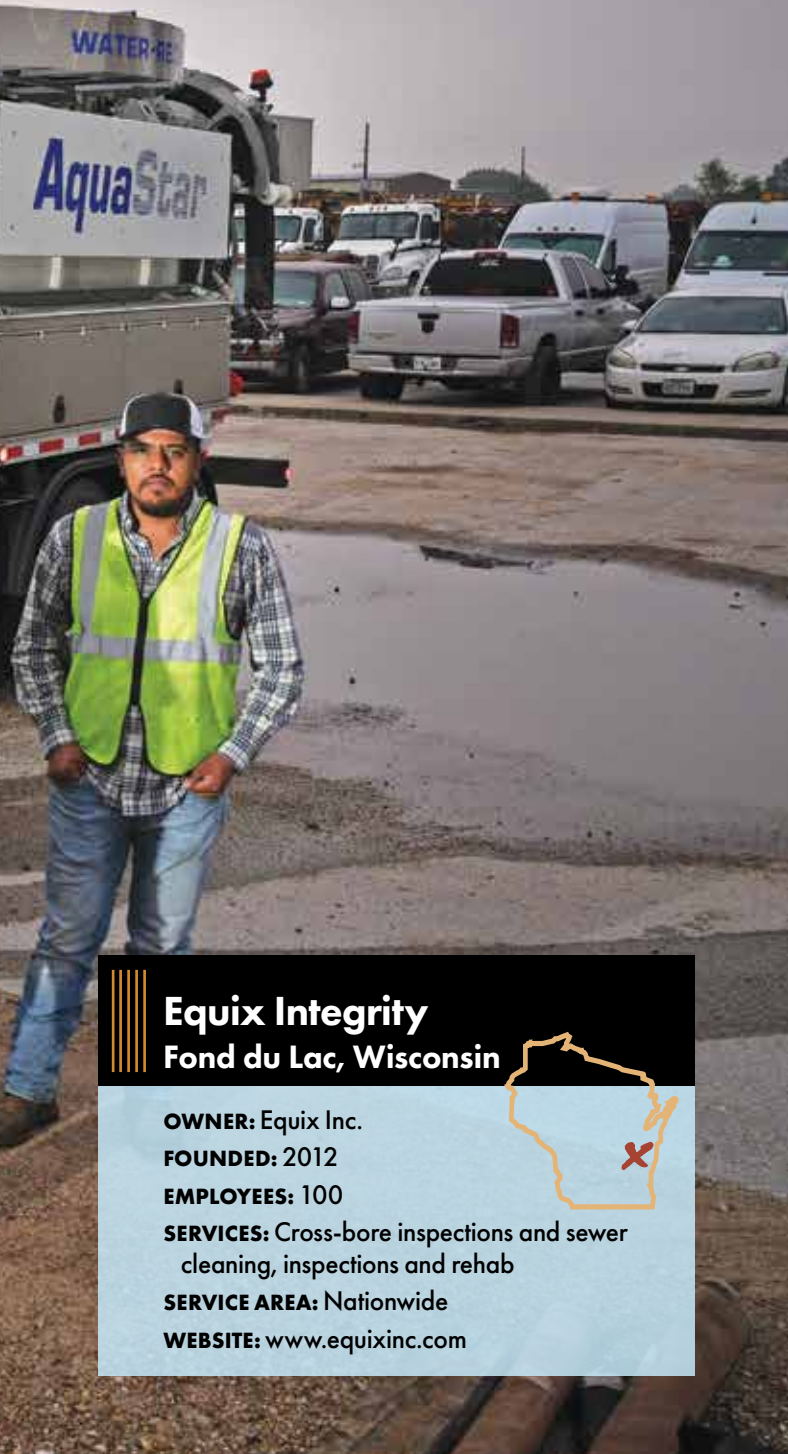
GROWTH EXPLOSION

OVER THE PAST DECADE, EQUIX INTEGRITY HAS GROWN FROM A CROSS-BORE INSPECTION FIRM WITH A LOCAL VISION INTO A DIVERSIFIED COMPANY PROVIDING SERVICES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

STORY: KEN WYSOCKY PHOTOS: JON SHAPLEY

"A LOT OF OUR SUCCESS COMES FROM RESPONSIBLE GROWTH AND THAT'S A BIG CONSIDERATION NO MATTER HOW BIG YOU ARE. IT'S IMPORTANT TO NOT GET IN OVER YOUR HEAD FROM THE BEGINNING."

Andrew Undicelli



Equix Integrity
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

OWNER: Equix Inc.

FOUNDED: 2012

EMPLOYEES: 100

SERVICES: Cross-bore inspections and sewer cleaning, inspections and rehab

SERVICE AREA: Nationwide

WEBSITE: www.equixinc.com



E

Equix Integrity was once a one-facility operation. It now works regularly in 15 different states.

Equix Integrity is one of six businesses that stand under the umbrella of Equix Inc., headquartered in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, a nationwide construction services corporation focused on utility and infrastructure projects. Equix Integrity was established in 2012 in Bloomington, Minnesota, to provide cross-bore inspection services primarily to horizontal directional drilling contractors and natural gas utilities, says Andrew Undicelli, vice president.

Since 2012, the company has established six more facilities in Ohio, Colorado, Florida, Texas, Maryland and Connecticut — the latter two via acquisitions. It also now employs about 100 people and has invested millions of dollars in equipment.

The company has also expanded its services into complementary offerings. On any given day, Equix Integrity crews fan out from their locations to do not only cross-bore inspections but also clean, inspect and rehab sewer lines for municipalities, construction firms, state transportation departments and pipe lining contractors.

The growth is a result of capitalizing on an increasing need for a specialized service, coupled with a strategic expansion plan, an emphasis on diversified service and continual investments in advanced technology.

"The company is very committed to growth in all its business units," Undicelli says. "So we recognized that adding additional services that lined up with existing service offerings would increase our opportunities and overall potential.

"Another advantage is our ability to take on larger projects as a turnkey contractor, something that many of our customers find beneficial. As we continue growing our business, we will continue to look to add new technology and service offerings to expand our reach and our appeal to potential new customers."

EMPHASIS ON CROSS BORES

Equix Integrity's initial foray into cross-bore inspections was spurred by an ever-growing need for the service amid growing awareness of the dangers they present. Cross bores occur when contractors accidentally drill through natural gas or lateral lines during trenchless installations.

This can lead to clogs and decrease the integrity of punctured lines, not to mention create an extremely dangerous condition for contractors who unknowingly rupture gas lines with drain cleaning equipment. Because of poorly done or outdated sewer line mapping, cross bores are more common than one might think. The Cross Bore Safety Association reports that the average rate of cross bores is 0.4 for every mile of sewer line.

Equix Integrity performs several different kinds of cross-bore inspections. Pre-construction inspections center on televising sewer lines to find existing cross bores and mapping the locations of laterals so that HDD crews can avoid puncturing pipelines. These inspections determine the depths and locations of laterals so that HDD contractors can plan accordingly, Undicelli says.

Post-construction inspections focus on inspecting mains and laterals to be sure that no cross bores occurred during gas-line installations, Undicelli explains.



Ryan Albanese, left, an Equix Integrity crew leader, and Bryce Elliott, jet/vac operator, prepare to clear and inspect a sewer line using a 2023 KAISER AquaStar.

“WE RECOGNIZED THAT ADDING ADDITIONAL SERVICES THAT LINED UP WITH EXISTING SERVICE OFFERINGS WOULD INCREASE OUR OPPORTUNITIES AND OVERALL POTENTIAL.”

Andrew Undicelli

Cross-bore inspections remain the backbone of the company’s business, generating about 50% of its revenue.

“There are thousands of miles of [gas] lines being installed every year and the awareness of the dangers of cross bores has increased dramatically in the last 10 years or so,” Undicelli says.

SUCCESS BEGETS SUCCESS

In 2016, Equix Integrity opened locations in Ohio and Colorado and then entered the sewer cleaning industry by acquiring two companies — one in Connecticut and one in Maryland — that inspected, cleaned and rehabbed sewer lines.

In 2021, the company opened another location in Texas because of the promising business opportunities there. The work in Texas includes cross-bore inspections for a natural gas utility and televising and cleaning lines for various cities across the state and for smaller “mud” districts, Undicelli explains.

KEYS TO GROWTH

One critical factor in the company’s growth has been constant investments in advanced technology. For example, Equix Integrity has invested millions of dollars in AquaStar water recycling combination vacuum trucks from KAISER PREMIER, as well as Camel Max Series 1200 wastewater recycling vac trucks from Super Products.

Most of the trucks feature 12-cubic-yard debris tanks and water pumps that generate 80 to 120 gpm at 2,500 psi.

The company also owns jetting trucks from US Jetting with water pumps that generate flow and pressure of 65 gpm at 2,000 psi and 500- or 1,000-gallon water tanks.

A continuous water supply

Imagine a combination vacuum truck that never has to leave a job site for water tank refills.

That might sound like a pipe dream for some contractors, but it’s a reality every day for Equix Integrity thanks to three AquaStar water recycling vac trucks from KAISER PREMIER. The company bought its first AquaStar truck in 2019.

Why invest in water recycling trucks? Two primary reasons: increasingly limited access to water from fire hydrants and large productivity gains, says Andrew Undicelli, vice president.

“It’s getting harder and harder to obtain access to fire hydrants to fill our trucks’ water tanks,” he explains. “With so many older waterlines, municipalities are getting more and more protective about letting contractors hook up to hydrants. But with the AquaStars, we fill up in the morning and don’t stop working for the rest of the day. That results in a considerable productivity increase compared to the downtime caused by breaking down a job site, driving away to get a water refill, then coming back and setting up the job site again.”

While water recycling technology for vac trucks is relatively new in the United States, Undicelli says the company had no problem with

investing in the KAISER trucks because the technology was developed decades ago and they have “worked out the kinks.”

Another benefit: The AquaStars are equipped with only one vacuum tube that works in conjunction with nearly 56 feet of suction hose that’s conveniently stored by wrapping around the top of the tank. That’s more efficient than hauling six to eight vacuum tubes, plus the tubes have pinch-points that can cause injuries, Undicelli notes.

“Also, vac-tube extensions tend to get stolen because they’re made of aluminum,” he adds.

The AquaStars feature KAISER KDU water pumps (up to 2,900 psi at up to 132 gpm); a telescoping combined jetting and suction boom with 180-degree swivel drive; 985 feet of 1-inch-diameter jetting hose; a 1,850 cfm KAISER liquid-ring vacuum pump; a 12.8-cubic-yard, stainless steel debris tank; and a highly automated operating system, including a touchscreen control panel and remote-control capability.

Undicelli estimates that each AquaStar truck recycles between 500,000 and 600,000 gallons of water annually, a “green” benefit that the company uses to market its vac truck services.



Andrew Undicelli, left, vice president, and Mario Chavez, Houston-area manager

To rehab manholes the company invested in grout trucks built out by CUES with test-and-seal packers from Logiball.

Equix Integrity also owns three manhole rehab systems, one from AP/M Permaform that includes a grout pump from ChemGrout, another one from Imer and a Quadex Lining System from Vortex that also includes a Chem-Grout pump.

Rounding out the fleet of equipment are several easement camera systems from CUES, mounted on either Kawasaki (Hitachi Construction Machinery Group) or Kubota all-terrain vehicles.

How does the company afford such capital-heavy investments? The answer underscores another factor in the company's growth: strong financial backing from the ownership growth, Undicelli says.

"Other companies may have business opportunities, but they don't always have the financial resources to capitalize on them," he says, noting that a camera truck and a recycling vac truck, combined with a fully trained crew, requires about a million-dollar investment.

MORE SUCCESS FACTORS

To attract and retain employees, Equix Integrity offers competitive pay and benefits such as paid time off, paid holidays and 401(k) retirement plans. The company also offers additional incentive plans. Undicelli says the company understands the competitive job market and does everything it can to show existing and potential employees how valuable they are to the company's success.

On-the-job safety has also played a big role in the company's success, Undicelli notes.

"It's one of our stronger selling points when we talk to potential customers," he says. "I take a lot of pride in the fact that safety and operations work hand-in-hand with each other at this company. Health, safety and environment and operations are in lockstep with everything we do. Safety is our first and most important core value. From the very top of our organization to a new hire, we hold safety above everything else — no exceptions."

LOOKING AHEAD

Are there any takeaways from the company's success story that can benefit smaller contractors that don't have a multimillion-dollar corporation backing them up? Undicelli says that in many respects, Equix is similar to many other contractors because it started out small, too. *(continued)*



Elliott uses a Milwaukee Tool grease gun on a truck on a job in Houston.



The company performs pre- and post-construction inspections to map existing cross bores and locations of laterals. Here Albanese works in the CCTV inspection van (CUES).

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Bryce Elliott operates the control panel on a 2023 KAISER AquaStar truck.

“A lot of our success comes from responsible growth and that’s a big consideration no matter how big you are,” he notes. “It’s important to not get in over your head from the beginning — don’t bite off more than you can chew.”

Undicelli expects more growth for the company in the coming years. Some of it could come through expanding the company’s geographic footprint, especially by leveraging relationships with existing customers that have operations in other areas around the country. More acquisitions are also possible, too, he says.

“Everything is on the table at this point,” Undicelli says. “Our foot is always on the gas pedal. This industry definitely is poised for further growth. We’ve very optimistic about the future.” ▼

“OTHER COMPANIES MAY HAVE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES, BUT THEY **DON’T ALWAYS HAVE THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO CAPITALIZE ON THEM.**”

Andrew Undicelli

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The Danger of Complacency

DON'T LET THE LITTLE THINGS SLIP IN THE NAME OF SAVING TIME AND MONEY

BY RONNIE FREEMAN

What is complacency in the workplace? It can be defined as self-satisfaction, especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies.

Complacency is extremely dangerous in the workplace. We get so used to things being done the same way that we do not always look at the hazards in our surroundings. One of the dangers of being complacent is becoming so accustomed to being around hazards that they no longer seem to pose a threat to our safety. Many workers are aware of the risks they are exposing themselves to but have accepted the risk and don't feel threatened by the risks. This is a dangerous mindset and a reason for many workplace injuries.

There is a reason complacency is called the "silent killer." At the workplace the name fits. When our minds are not on the task at hand and the hazards that exist, we can drift into thinking about other things. This is when the real danger can emerge. It just takes a split second, in many cases with little to no time to react.

When crews become complacent, it can lead to job-site accidents resulting in injuries and in worst-case scenarios, death. Remembering basic safety requirements like hardhats, gloves and more are ways contractors can self-monitor.



Part of human nature is that we become "creatures of habit" and we get comfortable doing the same thing day in and day out. We perform the same job tasks over and over, and when nothing bad happens, we begin to believe we are in a good place and think nothing of the hazards we have exposed ourselves to.

OVERCOMING COMPLACENCY

How do you fight the creep of complacency? Here are some things to think about:

- Get back to how safely you once worked at a time when you recognized the hazards around you, prior to complacency setting in. That time when you always wore your personal protective equipment and always followed the safety policies in place to protect you.
- Ask co-workers if there are areas in which you may be complacent when it comes to working safely. You might be surprised by the responses you get.
- Refuse to take the easy way out, which is often the case when you get into a hurry or feel the pressure to get the job done. Safety policies are in place for a reason. Follow them for your protection.
- Fight the desire to rationalize why you should cut corners, which can leave you open to hazards. Saving costs or time are usual rationalizations that may sound like good ideas in the moment but are not worth the risks in the end.
- Be willing to take the extra steps to make being safe a habit that will keep you from becoming complacent in the first place. Once it becomes a habit you are less likely to become complacent when a hazard exists.

STAY VIGILANT

We all must fight complacency at different times whether it is at work or some other areas in our lives. The best way to combat complacency is to self-monitor and see if there are areas where you can improve, especially when it comes to workplace safety. The good news is complacency can be overcome. With enough effort you'll always be working in a safe environment.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ronnie Freeman is safety director for Mount Pleasant Waterworks and Safety Committee chair for the Water Environmental Association of South Carolina. ▼

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1

1. Cat Pumps Model 3560 for hydroexcavating

The Cat Pumps Model 3560 has been the choice of OEMs and truck fabricators for over 20 years. Enhanced durability makes it perfect for mobile and industrial applications, including hydroexcavating, jetting and washdown. Every detail has been optimized to produce a reliable pump with excellent service life. The solid block 316 stainless steel discharge manifold safeguards against high-pressure spikes, cavitation and flaking. Meticulously designed components like solid ceramic plungers, higher-quality seals and machined 316 stainless steel valves and seats keep pumps running longer. The 3560 is dual-rated for 25 gpm at 3,000 psi or 20 gpm at 4,000 psi and can be driven by a belt, PTO shaft or a hydraulic motor with a bell housing and flexible couple assembly. Inside and out, the company's pumps are built to keep working under the most demanding conditions. See why professionals worldwide have trusted Cat Pumps for over half a century. **763-780-5440; www.catpumps.com**



2

2. John Deere 950 P-Tier and 1050 P-Tier dozers

John Deere's 950 P-Tier and 1050 P-Tier dozers, previously in the market as the 950K and 1050K, are the next generation of models to join the increasing lineup of John Deere P-Tier dozers. The new 1050 P-Tier dozer features a revamped JD14 (13.6 L) engine which replaces the 13.5 L engine in the 1050K. It also has a redesigned hood and front-end design. Now equipped with standard LEDs, operator efficiency has been significantly improved during night-time or low-light operations. The Operator Presence System ensures that an operator is present in the seat of the cab, with the seat belt fastened, before the park brake can be released. **800-503-3373; www.johndeere.com**



3

3. BAM! Bad Ass Mats safety mats

Avoid costly damage to your job sites with BAM! Bad Ass Mats. The mats are made from four-season, durable high-vis green HMWPE mate-

This Issue's Feature:

Compact wheel loader designed for simple, efficient operation

BY CRAIG MANDLI

There is still a large segment of the construction market that values simplicity and reliability in machinery. The **444 G-Tier Wheel Loader** from **John Deere** provides that reliability without the extras that they would find in more advanced machines. The versatility and ruggedness of the 444 G-Tier are similar to the previously introduced 544 and 644 G-Tier machines, but at a lower operating weight and smaller size.

"Our customers are always seeking the perfect solutions to meet their needs, and the introduction of the 444 G-Tier was a direct response to the demand for reliable and more economical options within our lineup of wheel loaders," says Drew Miller, global product manager, wheel loaders, John Deere.

The 444 G-Tier can be equipped with high lift, expanding the reach of the machine. An optional debris package, which comes equipped with a centrifugal air precleaner and an auto-reversing fan, helps reduce downtime by enabling the operator to stay up and running on the job without pausing to remove job site debris. Protective transmission and bottom guards are specifically designed to fend off debris and ensure the machine's longevity.

Maintenance features include a stacked cooling package, with the hinged door for cleanout, which can be set to automatically reverse at regular intervals. Ground-level access on the machine's left side makes refills of major fluids, fuel and DEF straightforward and simple. The loader also boasts clear visibility for both transmission and hydraulic sight gauges,



444 G-Tier Wheel Loader from John Deere

enhancing access to important components when needed. There is dedicated right-side access to the machine's engine, after-treatment systems and the cooling system.

Comfort features include a cab crafted with ergonomic considerations, adjustable controls, added floor storage space and a joystick with integrated forward, neutral and reverse controls. For those seeking an added touch of comfort, optional air-ride suspension seat and ride control features help elevate the operator experience on the job. It can also be equipped with a range of attachment options, from snow blades to grapples, ensuring adaptability across different tasks and applications. Lastly, the in-cab adjustable boom settings help streamline operations, especially when performing repetitive tasks.

"This model not only comes in at an attractive price point, but it was also designed to perform and deliver the same durability and power customers expect from a John Deere machine," says Miller.

800-503-3373; www.deere.com



4



5

rial with a built-in UV protector to guard against fading and cracking. 3/8-inch thick and rated at 160,000 pounds with pressure ratings of 373 pounds per square inch, and 53,700 pounds per square foot, they have a temperature rating of minus 103 degrees F to 258 degrees F. The 4-by-8-foot sheets weigh 56 pounds and come with eight large hand holes for easy handling, even with gloves. A dual-sided tread pattern provides safe traction for both equipment and pedestrians. Mats don't absorb moisture and chemicals and can be simply hosed off. 262-877-4700; www.bamgroundpro.com

4. FleetWatcher small tools and attachment tracking

FleetWatcher introduced the newest telematics functionality for its construction telematics platform — small tools and attachment tracking. Using the FleetWatcher app, users can search for an individual asset, see a group of assets on a specific project, or look at all assets in a certain class. This new functionality shows customers where the assets are, the last time someone was near them, what job they are on, if they have moved, and more. Armed with the item's last location, customers can use the scanning tool to see if it was accidentally left on the job site, preventing loss, and allowing fast retrieval. Better visibility and loss prevention improve overall operations and cost efficiencies. Implementation is fast and easy, using durable asset tags with Bluetooth technology along with the app. 317-257-8740; www.fleetwatcher.com

5. DEVELON HB-Series hydraulic breakers

DEVELON is expanding its attachment offering and launching its HB-Series hydraulic breakers — the HB06H and HB15FH — in North America. The breakers are engineered for high-performance, long-lasting durability and easy maintenance in the most punishing demolition, mining and quarry, and general construction applications. The HB06H and HB15FH are compatible with the DX62R-7 and DX63-7 mini excavators, the DX140LC-7 and DX140LCR-7 crawler excavators and the DX140W-7 wheel excavator. 770-837-2200; na.develon-ce.com/en ▼

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Ensuring Excellence in the Field

EMPLOYERS AND OTHERS IN THE INDUSTRY SHOULD ALL BE INVOLVED WHEN IT COMES TO TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION FOR HYDROEXCAVATION PROFESSIONALS

BY CHAD DECKER

The hydroexcavation sector is a rapidly expanding and popular method of excavation. The ability to offer more accurate, secure and minimally intrusive excavation solutions than conventional methods is responsible for this rise. Likewise, the need has grown for qualified experts who can operate cutting-edge hydroexcavation equipment and handle the difficulties these projects bring.

It is critical to acknowledge the value and need of specific training and certification in this profession. They can ensure that operators understand safety procedures and regulatory compliance in addition to the technical facets of their job.

This emphasis on thorough training and certification programs underscores the hydroexcavation community's dedication to quality and proactive professional growth, which is essential for upholding high standards of competence and safety in the sector.

UNDERSTANDING REQUIREMENTS

In the hydroexcavation industry, a commercial driver's license with tanker endorsements is usually one of the first prerequisites that must be met. These credentials represent a thorough grasp of intricate technology and the safe transfer of materials, which is essential for hydroexcavation specialists' daily work. They are not merely formalities; securing these certificates requires extensive training and testing, demonstrating a commitment to competence and safety.

The role of certifications extends beyond individual competency, serving as a cornerstone for industry-wide safety and regulatory compliance. They ensure all operators possess a minimum degree of expertise and proficiency, which is crucial in reducing the hazards connected to hydroexcavation operations. This methodical approach to certification strengthens the industry's commitment to operational excellence and public safety by elevating safety measures and promoting a culture of continuous improvement and adherence to laws.

COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS

In-depth training courses for the hydroexcavation sector include vital topics unique to the task, such as crystalline silica awareness, which informs employees about the risks associated with silica dust and how to reduce their exposure.

Training in electrical safety, which focuses on averting mishaps when operating near live electrical sources, is similarly important.

These courses emphasize how important it is for professionals to keep learning new things in order to progress in their jobs. Employees may ensure they remain valued assets in this ever expanding profession by improving their skill sets and remaining up to date on the newest safety procedures and technology breakthroughs.

THE PATH TO CERTIFICATION

Hydroexcavation experts must complete a thorough certification process that begins with a foundational grasp of the sector and progresses toward specific knowledge and abilities.

Typically, aspiring operators start with basic safety and equipment handling classes before moving on to more specialized instruction including

hydroexcavation methods and job-specific safety procedures. Exams are frequently administered by industry groups and certification agencies to assess candidates' theoretical knowledge and practical abilities.

Professionals who complete their program successfully are required to recertify via ongoing education and training, which keeps them abreast of the most recent developments in technology, safety procedures and industry standards.

SAFETY FIRST

In hydroexcavation, safety training is essential for ensuring that personnel operate equipment properly and reduce dangers. Crucial courses include OSHA 10 and 30, which focus on detecting and minimizing workplace hazards, and fall protection training, which teaches how to lessen the risks connected with working at heights. These training sessions emphasize the significance of adopting a safety-first mindset and provide staff members with the knowledge and abilities required to maintain stringent safety regulations on all projects. This fundamental safety training is essential for fostering a safety culture in the business and is beneficial to both novice and seasoned workers.

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY

The efficacy of learning in hydroexcavation is improved by using technology into instruction. In order to prepare operators for complicated circumstances, simulations and virtual reality give hands-on training without the hazards of the actual world. Continuous learning is made possible by the flexibility offered by online courses. More realistic virtual reality simulations and flexible learning environments, as well as more individualized training plans and enhanced skill development for hydroexcavation methods and safety procedures, might be future developments.

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

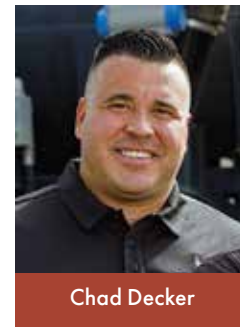
Employers are essential to their workers' professional growth, especially in specialized industries like hydroexcavation.

Companies that actively support training and certification initiatives help to raise industry standards while also improving labor skill sets. This assistance can come in a number of forms, such as financing certificates or granting access to training courses. One example is my California-based company, Devco, which offers a unique program targeting military personnel transitioning into civilian life. This SkillBridge program covers the costs of training and certification, equipping veterans to become proficient hydroexcavation operators.

Such initiatives underscore a commitment to excellence and safety in the field, demonstrating how companies can invest in the professional development of future and current operators. By supporting their professional development, these initiatives not only help to retain a highly qualified staff but also greatly increase employee retention.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chad Decker is the chief operating officer for California-based service company DEVCO Development & Engineering. To reach Chad, email editor@digdifferent.com. ▼



Chad Decker

THE LATEST:

News

Summit Truck Equipment acquires Rival Hydrovac

Rival Hydrovac and G Force Signs and Graphics have been acquired by Summit Truck Equipment effective Feb 1. The location will be the same at 7690 Edgar Industrial Court, Red Deer, Alberta, with the same staff. The company will continue to be in full operation during the transition.



Hitachi Construction Machinery opens new regional headquarters

Hitachi Construction Machinery Americas opened a sustainable headquarters in Newnan, Georgia. Since taking the lead for the brand's construction and mining equipment in

the Americas, the company has more than tripled its employee count. Encompassing 88,128 square feet of office space and 27,686 square feet dedicated to conference, ConSite command center and training space, the headquarters has been designed to enhance creativity and inspire future growth. In addition to the new regional headquarters facility, Hitachi is also creating operating bases for parts remanufacturing and expansion of the rental business that will also provide the customer with additional support and options.

Volvo Construction Equipment to expand Collegiate Dream Team Program

Volvo Construction Equipment announced its partnership with the nonprofit Dream On 3 to become the national sponsor of the organization's Collegiate Dream Team program. The two organizations have teamed

up to bring the fast-growing Dream On 3 program to communities across the U.S. and Canada. For over 10 years, DO3 has granted sports-tied wishes for individuals with life-altering conditions, including mental health challenges and intellectual disabilities. The Collegiate Dream Team program, established in 2020, allows student leaders to rally behind an individual within their community living with a life-altering medical condition by making their sports dream a reality, within the framework of their school's athletic culture. DO3's exclusive curriculum-based program is designed to help students grow personally and professionally while giving them the opportunity to make a meaningful impact in their community. ▼



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Air Excavation Equipment

Pacific Tek AIR KING

The AIR KING air and hydroexcavation trailer from Pacific Tek is available with a 500- or 800-gallon-capacity debris tank made of carbon steel and sandblasted then powder-coated inside and out. It employs a 185 cfm compressor with 100 psi output connected to an air wand allowing the operators to return the spoils collected in the debris tank to the ground. The system also has a pressure washer system (4 gpm at 3,500 psi) in case the operators want to hydroexcavate for faster or deeper digs. A simple three-way valve selector switch is situated on the curbside of the trailer for easy toggling from vac to air to hydroexcavator functions. The trailer itself is made of carbon steel and is sandblasted then powder coated like the debris tank. Options include a telescoping vacuum hose boom, reverse flow feature, LED work lamps, spare tire and mount and a tool storage box.

800-884-5551; www.pacific-tek.com



Education/Training/Testing

Cherne Aqua-Loc Hydrostatic Test Pump

Aqua-Loc Hydrostatic Test Pumps from Cherne are designed to pressure test new potable waterlines. The test pressures can be set from 100 to 550 psi. The pumps have a Honda or Briggs engine with low oil shut-off, integral manifolds which eliminate leak points, pressure regulators for easy adjustment, brass inline strainer/filters for easy cleaning and clear hoses for flow verification. The pumps can be run dry and can handle up to 10 percent chlorine solutions. The test pumps are available in three variations.

800-843-7584; www.oatey.com



Electronic Utility Locators

RIDGID SeekTech R-24LE

The RIDGID SeekTech SR-24LE is a precision utility locating receiver with integrated GPS and Bluetooth Low Energy technology for easy integration with smartphones, tablets and high-precision GPS instruments for real-time location coordination via the RIDGIDtrax App. Its omnidirectional antennae capture the complete signal field, making it easy to acquire the signal and trace its path. The receiver maps the utility's position and direction on its display for an intuitive locating experience. Audio and visual warnings notify the operator if the shape of the signal field is being distorted so action can be taken to avoid mismarking the utility's position. Equipped with the 18-volt battery adapter, it is ready to be powered with a RIDGID 18-volt battery (not included) for long-lasting power in the field. It also has a foldable mast for easy transport and storage.

800-474-3443; www.ridgid.com



Subsite Electronics UtiliGuard 2 RTK

The UtiliGuard 2 RTK receiver from Subsite Electronics was designed as a simple, easy-to-operate utility locating tool for operators locating, mapping and capturing underground utilities. It utilizes survey-grade technology and features dual-band antennae to provide operators with reliable positioning data with centimeter-grade accuracy. Its precision helps when locating abandoned and untracked utilities that are difficult to pinpoint. By quickly verifying the utilities installed,



operators efficiently tailor bids to match a job site needs, as well as gain insight into the underground infrastructure to avoid cross bores during future projects. The receiver provides locate crews with integrated data capture, GPS positioning and an intuitive user interface to improve work quality and maximize locate awareness. By downloading the MyUtiliGuard application, operators simplify and streamline how they capture, map and share data.

800-846-2713; www.subsite.com

Vivax-Metrotech vLoc3-Pro

The vLoc3-Pro utility locator from Vivax-Metrotech includes omnidirectional antennae that detect distortion on the utility and show distortion level on the color display. Along with classic locate screens, it offers locate screens of Vector Locate for non-walkover locating, Transverse Graph showing peak and null simultaneously, Plan View showing the orientation of the cable at any angle, and a graphical sonde screen with guidance arrows leading to the sonde location. The user-configurable locator has eight passive modes, SD mode (showing the direction of outgoing current) and a range of configurable frequencies from 16 Hz to 200 kHz. Audio and mechanical vibration alerts can be configured by the user to provide warnings for shallow depth, overload, overhead cables and excessive swinging.

800-446-3392; www.vxmt.com



Hydroexcavation Equipment

Ditch Witch Warlock W12

The Warlock W12 from Ditch Witch is a PTO-driven vacuum excavator that offers dual 600-gallon saddle tanks and a 12-cubic-yard debris tank, bringing increased capacity and performance to the job site. Available with a 5,000 cfm blower and 27 inches Hg of vacuum power, it helps operators take on bigger jobs and maximize job site uptime.

580-336-4402; www.ditchwitch.com



Dynablast Pratisoli KTX Series

The Pratisoli KTX Series water pump, distributed by Dynablast, is designed for hydroexcavation. The KTX24A offers 13.5 gpm at 3,625 psi and 1,450 rpm and the KTX28A offers 18.4 gpm at 2,900 psi and 1,450 rpm. It has run dry seals with a Kevlar Graphite rope, a 420 stainless steel manifold for protection from cavitation, and a self-lubricating design so that no oiler kit or weekly oiling is required. Its symmetrical crankcase makes it easy to reverse shaft the pump. Internal fins on the aluminum crankcase provide cooling to lower oil temperature. A tapered roller bearing improves lateral loading. The two-bore ceramic plungers are thicker ceramic on the water end to prevent thermal shock.

905-867-4642; www.dynablast.ca



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



HotJet USA Vac'n Jet Series

The HotJet USA Vac'n Jet Series of vacuum trailer jettors are compact and specially engineered to haul equipment and the spoils load, perform hydroexcavation and clean valve boxes, storm drains and drain/sewer lines. They feature hot and/or cold water operation with a choice of engine options ranging from 23 to 70 hp and gas or diesel operation. They are equipped with premium triplex pumps, a 500-gallon spoils tank, up to 440-gallon water tanks, Gardner Denver vac/blowers, a 4-ton hydraulic dump and a dual filter centri-clean filter system. They can also be custom engineered and designed to meet specifications.



800-624-8186; www.hotjetusa.com

Rival Hydrovac T7 Tandem and T10

The T7 Tandem from Rival Hydrovac was designed primarily to be loaded with debris and drive within legislated road limits with most types of debris on board. The unit comes standard with a scale that reads real-time weights in the cab and on the wireless remote. The T10 is built with the same features and operating system, but with larger capacities and components. It is for both utility and industrial work and is available in three chassis layouts to meet weight restrictions in a given area. An air compressor option allows for excavating with air when required, while a truck-mounted coring system allows for removal of hard surfaces prior to nondestructive excavating.



403-550-7997; www.rivalhydrovac.com

Super Products Mud Dog 700

Mud Dog 700 vacuum excavators from Super Products are designed to meet the challenges of compact, urban projects as well as large-scale excavation projects. They offer a compact footprint for excavation in urban environments while maximizing payload and maintaining the power and precision that larger units offer. The unit features a 7-yard debris body and 600-gallon water tank. This model comes standard as a dump body with an electric vibrator offering a 50-degree dump angle with the capability of dumping into a 48-inch container. Additionally, it is equipped with a rear-mounted, extendable, 8-inch-diameter boom that reaches 18 feet, has 270-degree rotation and pivots 10 degrees downward, which minimizes job site restoration and eliminates traffic congestion near roads.



800-837-9711; www.superproducts.com

TRUVAC Paradigm

The Paradigm subcompact vacuum excavator from TRUVAC is designed for safe and efficient digging around utilities. Its compact, low-profile and tough non-CDL design allows for easy maneuverability, making it a suitable choice for any excavation job. With its quick setup design, operators can begin operations with just a flip of a switch using the Park-N-Dig feature.



815-672-3171; 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 on 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 minus 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

Safety/Personal Protection Equipment

CrewPlex

CrewPlex is a hands-free communication solution to help crews overcome the challenges of continuous communication in environments where noise, distance and task complexity can affect safety and productivity. It enables connectivity with crew, supervisors and support personnel using one system. Users can speak and listen in real-time without delay, voice triggering or pushing a button. Clear audio quality provides better communication in all environments, especially on sites where noise levels can exceed 100 dB. Available connectivity to two-way radio systems keeps work groups in touch with a supervisor and extends communication.



334-321-1400; www.crewplex.com

Eartec Lazer Pro

The Lazer Pro wireless communication system from Eartec is a breakthrough alternative to traditional full earcup headsets. Boasting Bluetooth connectivity, this lightweight accessory features a slimline back band that can be worn comfortably for an entire work shift, even with a hard hat. It receives incoming signals via vibration through the user's temple. This bone conduction capability leaves users' ears free. It connects wirelessly to Eartec's E-Pak radio, linking up to 32 users in full duplex, providing simultaneous talk operation within a half-mile range. This system enables hands-free communication for an entire crew, enhancing on-site logistics, operations, as well as training and safety protocols.



800-399-5994; www.eartec.com

Mr. Manhole Cookie Cutter System

Mr. Manhole Cookie Cutter System involves drilling a small hole above the utility, using the cutter to remove a 74-inch round asphalt or concrete piece of pavement. This keeps workers 56% below OSHA limits. The removed "cookie" is then lifted out, and a protective cage is placed for vacuum excavating. This method exposes the utility for repair while preserving the road base. The result is a smooth, clean repair aligning with the road's original design. This approach revolutionizes road and utility repairs, making the process quicker and more efficient.



833-242-2221; www.mrmanhole.com ▼

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Success Stories: **UTILITY LOCATING AND SURVEYING, SAFETY AND EDUCATION**

BY CRAIG MANDLI



Core saw minimizes street restoration work

PROBLEM

Several Florida cities were facing issues related to the maintenance of street integrity during utility location and excavation projects. Traditional methods, like cut-off saws and jackhammers, led to significant street restoration work, causing inconvenience to the public and impacting the long-term quality of streets.

SOLUTION

The engineering and surveying firm McKim & Creed tackled this problem by turning to the **Vermeer CS418B core saw** for their subsurface utility engineering services. The CS418B, a self-contained trailered core saw, allowed the team to perform hard surface potholing more efficiently without additional equipment or setup time. The core saw created precise, easily restorable holes in the asphalt or concrete, providing access for vacuum excavation of the underlying utilities.

RESULT

McKim & Creed, using the Vermeer CS418B core saw, were able to locate utilities under the hard surface efficiently, leaving minimal impact on the streets. The restoration work was completed in a single shift, and within a few weeks, it was hard to tell where the streets had been cored. This method was well-received by utility companies and municipalities, leading to further expansion of McKim & Creed's operations.

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