

SEPTEMBER 2018



Tractor Times



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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dan Stracener

**Komatsu's
innovation
goes beyond
intelligence**



Dear Valued Customer:

This year marks the five-year anniversary of Komatsu's *intelligent* Machine Control debut. The first-of-its-kind technology set the bar for integrated GPS dozing, and Komatsu has since delivered a second generation of its original D61i dozers. It has also added several other models, offering customers a broad range of products to move dirt from rough cut to finish grade on a wide variety of jobsites.

Operators can do the same with Komatsu's *intelligent* Machine Control excavators. Four models are part of the family, including the second-generation PC210LCi-11. All are excellent for digging trenches and basements, building ponds, handling mass excavation work and a host of other applications. Read more about the excavators and dozers inside this issue of your TEC Tractor Times magazine.

We have said it before, but it's worth repeating – we are proud to represent such an innovative manufacturer. Komatsu's technology is at the forefront of the construction industry, and they are committed to staying ahead of the competition. That's why Komatsu is not content to rest on its laurels. The organization is always looking for new ways to give customers increased value.

Superior support is one way Komatsu does that. When the company rolled out its Tier 4 machines, it also established Komatsu CARE. This program provides complimentary scheduled service for the first three years or 2,000 hours, with highly skilled distributor technicians performing all of the work. Recently, Komatsu celebrated the 100,000th service completed under this unique plan. See more about that milestone inside.

Komatsu CARE is available on *intelligent* Machine Control and standard equipment, such as the recently introduced WA480-8 wheel loader. This machine is a terrific option for construction and small quarry applications. Several great features stand out, including a new bucket design that boosts productivity by nearly 7 percent.

As always, if there's anything we can do for you, please call or stop by one of our branch locations.

Sincerely,



Dan Stracener
President



Tractor Times

TEC1943.com

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MAGNUM CONTRACTING, LLC

Atlanta-based firm uses technology to fly above the competition



Brad Cox,
President and CEO

Brad Cox, President and CEO of Magnum Contracting, LLC, grew up his family's farm in rural Indiana. After finishing high school, he moved to Atlanta and began working for a local construction contractor. By the turn of the century, Cox had the confidence to branch out on his own.

"I would put every bullet point down the side of the truck that I could," joked Cox. "From grading backyards to changing doorknobs, I did whatever it took to pay the bills. One thing led to another, and the business started to grow."

Still new to the construction industry, Cox applied the work ethic he learned growing up in Indiana to his business.

"I would treat customers in the same fashion that my grandfather taught me on the farm," recalled Cox. "If you tell someone you're

going to do something, you do it. By combining heart, passion and commitment, I was able to find success."

In 2002, Cox founded Magnum Contracting in Kennesaw, Ga., and began focusing on grading and utility work. By 2009, his firm had expanded significantly. However, the recession taught Cox a lesson he will always remember.

"I was a dirt guy, a tractor-loving farm kid who stumbled into some success," stated Cox. "After the recession, I realized I needed to be a business guy, otherwise I wouldn't have a company to run. I introduced a strict budget and began implementing industry-leading technology as a way to manage the firm."

Today, Magnum Contracting has nearly 100 employees and operates throughout the northern Atlanta suburbs. Its work is split between mass grading, ranging from 100,000 to 500,000 cubic yards of material, and underground utility installation for residential developments.

Technology on the jobsite

The introduction of the Komatsu *intelligent* Machine Control equipment in the last half-decade has played a significant role in keeping Cox's firm competitive in the industry.

"The iMC machines create tremendous production efficiency," explained Cox. "Their grading precision is on another level. They can also provide consistent and easily trackable data that help us keep in line with our budget."

The firm is currently working on a 35-acre housing development in Kennesaw for Century Communities called Ridgeview Heights. The site consists of 100 homes and two ponds. Magnum Contracting will install

Operator Scott Crump uses a PC400LC-10 to fill in a service trench. "The machine has great power and maneuverability," said Crump. "The cab also allows you to see what you're doing for 360 degrees."





▶ VIDEO

This Komatsu PC490LCi-11 places dirt from the Ridgeview Heights development into two Komatsu HM400-5 haul trucks. “The *intelligent* Machine Control technology in the PC490 allows me to directly cut to grade,” said Operator Matthew Fortenberry. “It makes the job go much faster.”



the underground utilities, remove more than 150,000 cubic yards of Georgia clay and create terraced platforms for the properties.

To help with the project, Cox recently introduced two drones to complement his *intelligent* Machine Control equipment. With a full-time drone operator, the company has gained valuable insight that helps reduce expenses and increase efficiency.

“We use the drones to supply the best and most reliable data for our operators,” noted John Downing, GPS Manager. “The drones provide a variety of information such as how much pipe we’ve laid, how much water has been put in and existing soil conditions.”

Daily jobsite flyovers provide Downing with up-to-the-minute data to create a topographical 3-D map of the terrain. He can then use that information to adjust the models fed into the *intelligent* Machine Control equipment.

“We’re able to make corrections before we have a work crew scratching their heads,” explained Downing. “We caught an issue with the entrance elevation that we would have otherwise missed. It’s easy to make small adjustments before they can become larger impacts.”

The integrated technology also reduces jobsite hazards, something Cox takes seriously.

“There’s a huge safety aspect that we can start to build into our models,” said Cox. “If there are any underground utilities running through our excavation path, we can box them out. The operator cannot physically dig there. I can also keep our ditch person out of the ditch until he is ready to install pipes. We can eliminate a lot of the risks associated with having people near machines.”

With 11 pieces of *intelligent* Machine Control equipment in his fleet, Cox hopes to find new ways to integrate technology in his jobsites.

Through thick and thin

When Cox founded Magnum Contracting, he turned to Tractor & Equipment Company (TEC) because the people there treated him like family. Willing to take a chance on a young entrepreneur, TEC helped Cox acquire his first piece of equipment, a Komatsu PC138.

“At the time I didn’t have anything other than a handshake and promise that I would pay them back,” remembered Cox. “They believed in and backed me.”

When the economy took a downturn and Magnum was in a tough spot, TEC was again there for Cox. As a result, he remains loyal to the company that stuck with him through economic peaks and valleys. Today, he repeatedly turns to TEC for new Komatsu equipment.

Continued . . .

Magnum Contracting relies on Komatsu

... continued

President and CEO Brad Cox (left) relies on TEC Kennesaw Service Manager Terry Pulley to keep his 60 Komatsu machines running. "Terry does a fantastic job," said Cox. "I know I can rely on him for anything."



"TEC is fantastic," stated Cox. "I am Komatsu because of the people who are Komatsu. It's that simple. It's about relationships; I consider the people at TEC to be part of our family. The combination of their sales, service and pricing; Komatsu Financial making it work for us from a financing and cash-flow structure; and the engineering from Komatsu make a great package. I wouldn't work with anybody else."

Cox utilizes more than 60 Komatsu machines, including HM300-3s, HM300-5 and HM400-5 haul trucks, WA320 wheel loaders, D51PXi and D61PXi dozers as well as excavators from PC35s to the PC490. Several Hamm rollers round out the fleet.

The D51PXi and D61PXi dozers are great for grading," said Cox. "I appreciate their maneuverability, power, visibility and the iMC technology that sets us apart. The introduction of the PC490LCi has also been invaluable because our dozers no longer need to follow an excavator to finish grade."

Future outlook

With Atlanta's growing population and aging utility system, Cox believes Magnum Contracting is well-positioned for continued expansion in the utility sector. He envisions further growth for the company and expansion into other markets.

"We are currently working to earn our general contractors license," said Cox. "While we don't plan to build structures, there are a lot of heavy civil projects that require additional DOT and general-contractor licensing. Ideally, we want to create a blend of residential, commercial, industrial and public self-perform work."

While Cox is happy with the evolution of the company, at the end of the day he looks back to his Midwestern roots and wants the best for his employees.

"I've seen this business through all the years of blood, sweat and tears," explained Cox. "My goal for everybody who walks through our door and signs on to be a part of the Magnum Contracting family is a lifetime partnership. It's exciting to see how everyone here has bought into that dream and helped lead us to new heights." ■



▶ VIDEO

The Magnum Contracting management team consists of (L-R) VP of Construction Kevin Morton, President and CEO Brad Cox, Project Manager Matthew Hemphill and GPS Manager John Downing. They work with TEC for their equipment needs.

The Komatsu WA320 moves heavy objects, like this concrete pipe, across a jobsite quickly and easily.





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SJ&L GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Family-owned, Huntsville, Ala., firm celebrates 15 years in construction industry

In 1965, Charles Eakes started working for one of the largest road builders in Huntsville, Ala. On weekends, he would often bring his son, Jacky, along and teach him the ropes of the industry. As Jacky grew up, he maintained an interest in his father's profession and eventually landed a position with the same contractor after he graduated from high school.

"I was out there on Saturdays with him," remembered Jacky. "As long as I can remember, I've been a part of the construction industry. I've worked just about every job and worn every hat there is."

Fifteen years ago, Jacky left that business to open his own company in order to spend more time with his family. Fittingly, he named it SJ&L General Contractor after his sons, Steven, Jon and Luke. Today, Jacky and his brother-in-law,

Josh Chandler, serve as Vice Presidents. They employ many of their family members as well.

"When you are in business with family, there's a trust and confidence that everybody is doing the best they can to be as productive as possible," explained Josh. "I know everyone is just as invested as Jacky or me and wants to succeed as much as we do."

The duo accounts for more than 50 years of experience in the construction industry and their knowledge base has helped SJ&L General Contractor forge a strong reputation for quality throughout the area.

"When we finish a job, customers know it's done correctly," noted Jacky. "A majority of our contracts are public bid – DOT jobs, work for Huntsville and Madison or the airport. We take on other things as well within roughly a 75-mile radius of Huntsville."

SJ&L General Contractor has grown from eight employees to more than 150 during peak season and specializes in full site development.

"We'll do any clearing and demolition to prep a site," explained Josh. "Then we'll take care of the excavation, install the utilities and storm drains and grade everything. We'll finish off the curbs, gutters and sidewalks then sub out any asphalt paving. We can take care of anything below ground."

Bringing back baseball

SJ&L is heavily involved with the infrastructure redevelopment for Huntsville and Madison as the cities grow at an exponential pace. Currently, public-bid contracts comprise 80 percent of the company's calendar, while the remaining 20 percent is split between private and commercial activities throughout northern Alabama and southern Tennessee.



(Below) SJ&L General Contractor's Jacky Eakes (right) is with his father, Charles, at a jobsite in Huntsville, Ala., where an operator uses a Komatsu PC290LC-11 excavator to load an HM300-5 articulated truck. Jacky and his brother-in-law, Josh Chandler, (inset) serve as Vice Presidents of the company.





Running the latest *intelligent* Machine Control addition to its fleet, an SJ&L General Contractor operator uses a D61PXi-24 crawler dozer to cut to grade with GPS precision. “You eliminate time wasted on masts, posts and staking,” said Vice President Jacky Eakes.

Projects range from \$500,000 to \$10 million and involve 50,000 to 500,000 cubic yards of excavated material. The firm usually has 12 to 16 jobs in various stages of development at one time and completes 35 to 40 assignments annually. Currently, SJ&L General Contractor is transforming a former mall into a mixed-use community called MidCity Huntsville that will feature residential, office and retail space.

“MidCity is a typical job for us and an area where we excel,” said Jacky. “It requires 450,000 yards of excavation as well as utilities, sewer and drainage and other standard underground work. We should be done in the next couple of months.”

The company is also involved with three endeavors totaling \$11 million dollars and requiring 335,000 cubic yards of excavation to prepare the region for the return of a Triple-A baseball team by 2020.

“The projects are going to help boost the local economy,” noted Jacky. “We’re grading the site for the stadium and excavating the parking lot and surrounding area. We’re also adding new entrance and exit ramps to the interstate that will ease game-day congestion. We’re excited to be a small part of baseball history in Alabama.”

Other notable assignments include several Walmart supercenters and large retail sites. For Josh, looking back on past jobs keeps him excited.

“There’s a satisfaction that comes with starting something and then going back to it a few weeks, months or years later and seeing what you’ve accomplished,” explained Josh. “It’s interesting to watch the area evolve and know we’ve been a part of that.”

Komatsus save time

In the last five years, SJ&L has turned to GPS technology to improve efficiency and productivity. It began by outfitting the company’s crawler dozers with aftermarket systems, but quickly shifted to purchasing Komatsu equipment with integrated *intelligent* Machine Control technology.

“It’s the way to go,” shared Jacky. “You eliminate time wasted on masts, posts and staking. Everything is all there and ready.”

When SJ&L took its first step into *intelligent* Machine Control technology with the purchase of a Komatsu D61PXi-23 crawler dozer, it turned to Tractor & Equipment Company (TEC) Sales Rep Steve League. Since opening SJ&L, Jacky has worked closely with Steve and TEC for his equipment needs.

“Steve’s not just a salesman, he’s a friend,” stated Jacky. “He’s been a big part of our success. I know I can trust Steve when he tells me something.”

“When he told us about the GPS dozer, we knew we wanted one,” he added. “The machine

Continued . . .

Less staking and surveying required

... continued



Several members of the Eakes and Chandler families work for SJ&L General Contractor and have been an important part of the firm's success throughout the last 15 years.

(L-R) SJ&L General Contractor Vice Presidents Josh Chandler and Jacky Eakes count on TEC Sales Rep Steve League for their equipment needs.



SJ&L's Luke Eakes moves dirt onto a pile using a Komatsu PC200LC-8 excavator at a Huntsville, Ala., jobsite.



has been great so far and saves time with less staking and surveying. The controls are very operator-friendly; it's a quick learning curve."

SJ&L has since purchased three new D61PXi-24 crawler dozers, which are equipped with load-control performance that automatically minimizes track slip. It relies on the 168-horsepower dozers to take a site from rough cut to final grade. SJ&L also utilizes Komatsu PC200, PC210 and PC290LC-11 excavators to dig and load four Komatsu HM300-5 articulated trucks.

The firm turns to Komatsu Financial when renting and purchasing equipment from TEC. Tier-4 Final machines come standard with Komatsu CARE, which provides complimentary service for the first 2,000 hours or three years. TEC's Huntsville branch tracks the hours through KOMTRAX, a remote-monitoring system, and contacts Jacky when a machine is due for service.

"When a machine hits a certain number of hours, a TEC technician calls to schedule a convenient time for service," explained Jacky. "Thanks to KOMTRAX, the technician already knows where the machine's located."

"KOMTRAX is great because if we have a problem, we can talk to TEC Shop Foreman Tim Kohlenberg and he'll tell us how to address it," mentioned Josh. "We've built an excellent relationship with TEC's shop, but fortunately haven't needed to use it much. The Komatsu equipment is the best in our fleet and doesn't break down."

The future is bright

As technology businesses relocate to the Huntsville area, SJ&L expects to continue growing. The company embraces the challenge of hiring more employees and taking on larger projects.

"We'd love to do more," said Jacky. "We want to make sure that we're hiring the right people, which will enable us to add volume. Every year there are more opportunities in Huntsville.

"Family is our future," Jacky continued. "I'm glad I get to work with them and know we will all be successful." ■

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"Komatsu's i-machines definitely make my operators better at what they do. I mean, we haven't been using this technology for the past twenty years, so it's pretty new. But this tech makes it easier to do our job—makes it so that my operators can work more efficiently, and we get a better finished product."



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CUSTOMER EVENT



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FULL SHOWCASE

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

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

"The Demo Days event is a great opportunity for customers to see the facility and operate a wide range of Komatsu products," explained Director of Training and Publications Bill Chimley. "Customers can get first-hand experience with the newest *intelligent* Machine Control capabilities as well as a variety of our other equipment with experienced staff readily available to answer any questions."

New excavator included

The event showcased the full lineup of *intelligent* Machine Control dozers and

Continued . . .



Jeremy Austin (left) and Randy Kiker of Logan Construction



Bill Chimley,
Komatsu Director
of Training and
Publications



(L-R) Johnny Miller,
Jericho Davis and
Jeff Ikard from Ikard
Excavation

▶ VIDEO



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

Twenty-six machines available for demo

... continued



(L-R) Kim, Connor and Kyle Crowell of Crowell Grading and Pipe, Inc.



(L-R) Danny Cochran, Ben Walker and Jimmy Slayton of Cherokee County

(L-R) Josh West of Reinforced Wall Systems with Richard Shore and Scott Deitz of TEC



excavators, including the new PC390LCi-11 excavator. In total, 26 machines were available for customers to operate, including wheel loaders, haul trucks, excavators, dozers and a motor grader.

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

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



Morris Puckett (left) and Zach Coffman of Coffman Grading & Utility

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



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TAX LAW SPURS OPTIMISM

Lower rates and faster write-offs could provide major boost to contractors

Tax reform took firm hold this year, affecting both individuals and businesses, including major changes for some in the construction industry as Congress passed and President Trump signed H.R. 1, The Tax Cut and Jobs Act, last December. This legislation, in most cases, increased take-home pay, lowered corporate tax rates and included provisions designed to increase expensing limits.

The signature piece of the legislation may be a reduced corporate tax rate, which was slashed from 35 to 21 percent and was made permanent. Personal-services corporations are also now taxed at 21 percent.

Pass-through businesses – those that are structured to allow owners to include profits on their personal tax returns such as partnerships, S Corporations or sole proprietorships and are taxed at the individual's marginal income tax rate – received significant savings, too. A section was added to the tax code (199A) that provides a 20-percent deduction on such

income through 2025. Limitations do apply such as phase-outs at certain income levels.

“Lowering the tax rate provides substantial savings that allow us to keep more capital to invest in new equipment and pay off machinery that we have financed sooner,” said Don Satoski, President/Co-owner of Landmark Materials, LLC, of Union Mills, Ind. “Those are excellent benefits for us.”

Service businesses, including architecture and engineering firms, are eligible for a deduction, but are excluded from receiving the 20-percent deduction above \$157,000 for individuals and \$315,000 for married filing jointly. Phase-outs apply as does the expiration after 2025.

Section 179 doubled, made permanent

The Tax Cut and Jobs Act affects business expensing in a variety of ways, such as

Continued . . .

Editor's note:

This article is based on data from Associated General Contractors of America and is for informational purposes only. It does not reflect all changes under the tax law. You should seek advice from a professional tax adviser on how the legislation affects you and/or your business.



The Tax Cut and Jobs Act affects business expensing in a variety of ways, such as temporary full expensing for property currently eligible for bonus depreciation for five years. This applies to property placed in service after September 27, 2017, including new and used equipment.

Demand for construction services likely to expand

... continued

temporary full expensing for property currently eligible for bonus depreciation for five years. That applies to property placed in service after September 27, 2017, including new and used equipment.

“The tax plan is great for us, especially on equipment purchases,” shared David Bussman, Vice President of MGL, Inc., a utility contractor based in Cullman, Ala. “Combine that with the zero-percent financing on the machines we bought last fall, and the savings are significant.”

Section 179 Expensing – which allows taxpayers to deduct the cost of certain property types as an expense rather than being capitalized and depreciated – was permanently increased from \$500,000 to \$1 million with a \$2.5 million phase-out and is indexed to inflation. The definition of property now includes roofs as well as HVAC, fire protection, alarm and security systems added to non-residential buildings already placed in service.

Employee take-home pay rises

While the final legislation reduced nearly all tax rates for individual and married filers alike, there are still seven brackets. Two remain the same, including the lowest at 10 percent; however, the amount subject to that rate increased from \$0-9,325 to \$0-9,524 for single filers and from \$1-18,650 to \$0-19,049 for married filing jointly. Previously, income above

\$9,325 and \$18,650 would have been subject to a 15-percent rate. The 35-percent bracket also increases the amount subject to it.

All other previous tax brackets were lowered, including the top rate, which went from 39.6 percent to 37 percent. The biggest change was to the previous 28 percent rate, which dropped to 24 percent. The 15-percent and 25-percent brackets were each reduced by 3 percent to 12 and 22 percent respectively. The 33-percent rate decreased to 32 percent.

A Business Insider analysis showed the average annual pay for construction laborers is \$37,890, which made their previous federal tax \$3,645. Under the new bill, it estimates a reduction to \$2,916, for a savings of nearly 20 percent.

Along with rate changes, the standard deduction nearly doubled to \$12,000 for individuals and \$24,000 for those married filing jointly. Previously it was \$6,350 and \$12,700. The new standard deduction and tax rates are temporary and expire at the end of 2025.

Firms hiring

Now is a good time for workers seeking employment in the construction industry. Seventy-five percent of construction companies plan to expand their payrolls in 2018, according to results of an Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) survey, *Expecting Growth to Continue: The 2018 Construction Industry Hiring and Business Outlook*.

“Construction firms appear to be very optimistic about 2018 as they expect demand for all types of construction services to expand,” said Stephen E. Sandherr, AGC’s Chief Executive Officer, upon release of the survey results. “This optimism is likely based on current economic conditions, an increasingly business-friendly regulatory environment and expectations that the Trump administration will boost infrastructure investments.”

There is hope that the tax law will help with the latter as it kept a provision for Private Activity Bonds, which will assist with financing transportation infrastructure as well as low-income housing and other public construction and public-private partnership projects, according to AGC. ■

Construction workers saw a boost in take-home pay, because the law reduced most tax rates and increased amounts subject to new and unchanged percentages. A Business Insider analysis showed laborers’ average federal tax owed would drop by nearly 20 percent.



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GUEST OPINION

BUILD A HEAD OF 'STEAM'

Adding the arts to technical skills can generate more productivity, innovation

In 1871, engineer James Watt patented a steam engine that produced continuous rotary motion. Steam engines both figuratively and literally drove the Industrial Revolution and introduced the expression “build a head of steam.”

When critical pressure is applied to pistons, things happen. Construction-sector professionals and organizations must strive to achieve the same momentum by building a head of STEAM – that is, by adding the “A” to STEM, the already-developed skill levels of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

That “A” is knowledge of and skill in the arts. The combination may seem odd to those who have a technology-focused education. But, by embracing the broad and exploratory STEAM mindset and engaging both sides of our individual and collective brains, we can generate more personal and organizational productivity, innovation and enhanced service for clients, customers and stakeholders.

Promotes better connections

A STEAM perspective provides a clearer understanding of how almost everything connects with everything else to the extent that science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics help us comprehend the increasingly complex world in which we live. The “everything is connected to everything” realization enables individuals and organizations to be more aware of the consequences of actions and empowers us to recognize many and varied opportunities.

Studies show that homogeneous teams – made up of those only STEM-skilled or only arts-oriented – tend to experience high communication effectiveness and require little time to make decisions. Unfortunately, they

may produce results that are low in creativity or innovation. In contrast, heterogeneous teams comprised of both STEM and arts members take longer to make decisions but may arrive at more creative and innovative results.

If you're deeply into STEM by virtue of interest or vocation, on a whim, enroll in a one-day drawing class or sign up for ballroom dancing lessons. Urge deeply arts-focused colleagues to read some science and engineering articles, audit an engineering class or visit an automobile manufacturing plant. To those in leadership or management positions, help your personnel understand STEAM and how embracing it could benefit them, their employers and those they serve. Ask colleagues to share their art or STEM passions at “brown bag” lunch sessions. You and others will be surprised and inspired by the variety of talents in your midst. ■

Stuart G. Walesh, independent consultant, teacher and writer says that embracing a science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics mindset along with engaging both sides of the brain generates more productivity and innovation.



**Stuart G. Walesh,
PhD, PE**

*Stuart G. Walesh is an independent consultant, teacher and writer who has worked in engineering, government and academia. This viewpoint is adapted from his book **Introduction to Creativity and Innovation for Engineers**. An edited version also appeared in *Engineering News-Record's* magazine in December 2017.*



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'INTELLIGENT' ANNIVERSARY

Komatsu marks five years of saving customers time, money with integrated machine-control technology

To say that Komatsu is observing the five-year anniversary of *intelligent* Machine Control is slightly misleading. While the first dozer made its debut in 2013, the genesis of its factory-integrated GPS equipment goes back much further.

“Research and development started many years earlier,” shared Jason Anetsberger, Senior Product Manager, SMARTCONSTRUCTION and *intelligent* Machine Control. “Komatsu uses the

Continued . . .



Jason Anetsberger,
Komatsu Senior
Product Manager,
SMARTCONSTRUCTION
and *intelligent*
Machine Control



Mike Salyers,
Komatsu Senior
Product Manager,
SMARTCONSTRUCTION



Ron Schwieters,
Komatsu Product
Manager, *intelligent*
Machine Control



Komatsu's *intelligent* Machine Control excavators feature semi-automatic operation that goes beyond traditional indicate-only systems. Once target elevation is reached, the system limits the machine from digging deeper, eliminating overexcavation and the need for expensive fill material.



Quick acceptance results in repeat customers

... continued

PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) model for continuous improvement to ensure that each machine it brings to market will meet customer expectations for productivity and support. From an *intelligent* Machine Control standpoint, that included having technology solutions experts (TSEs) at each distributor to educate customers on how to set up and implement the technology.”

No masts or cables

The first model was the D61i-23 – since replaced with a second-generation D61i-24 – which ushered in fully automatic blade control from rough cut to finish grade.

Because it’s integrated into the machine, *intelligent* Machine Control eliminates the masts and cables associated with traditional aftermarket systems, so operators gain production time that was previously lost in setting up and tearing down at the beginning and end of each day.

“Eliminating the need for operators to climb on the machine or blade to mount components is a big plus, too,” said Mike Salyers, Senior Product Manager, SMARTCONSTRUCTION. “The bottom line is that customers are moving dirt faster, more efficiently and at lower costs.”

Komatsu introduced *intelligent* Machine Control five years ago with the original D61i dozers. Today, that model is in its second generation, the D61EXi-24, pictured here.



Komatsu quickly augmented its *intelligent* Machine Control lineup. In 2014, it brought the D39i and D51i dozers to market. It has since added D65i, D85i and D155AXi models. Additionally, more than 100 TSEs are in the field to provide customers with a wide spectrum of support options.

Excavators introduced

Early 2014 saw the introduction of the world's first *intelligent* Machine Control excavator, the PC210LCi-10. PC360LCi-11s and PC490LCi-11s followed soon after, along with a PC210LCi-11 to replace the original. Komatsu recently launched the PC390LCi-11. Each features semi-automatic operation that goes beyond traditional indicate-only systems. Once target elevation is reached, the machine limits the operator from digging deeper, eliminating overexcavation and the need for expensive fill material.

"Our data indicate that *intelligent* Machine Control has been a resounding success," said Ron Schwieters, Product Manager, *intelligent* Machine Control. "As more and more customers saw the positive results, the word spread. Five years ago if you mentioned machine control, Komatsu was likely left out of the conversation. Now, we are at the forefront. This technology has changed the industry."

Today, there are more than 2,000 *intelligent* Machine Control dozers and excavators combined that are moving earth across North America. Anetsberger noted that a large percentage of users were new to GPS technology before they tried one of Komatsu's integrated machines.

"Skeptical is a good way to describe some of them," Anetsberger reported. "After they operated one and experienced its accuracy, production and simplicity, acceptance came quickly. Throughout the years, many became repeat customers. They bought one piece of *intelligent* Machine Control equipment, saw the time and material savings and added more. I think this evidence speaks volumes to the value that *intelligent* Machine Control provides business owners and operators on a daily basis." ■

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029

NEW PRODUCT



Discover more

THE RIGHT FIT

New wheel loader for specialized needs offers improved production and fuel efficiency

To do a job right, an operator needs the correct equipment. For a certain set of customers, that machine is the Komatsu WA480-8 wheel loader.

“The WA480 fills a need for a select group of users,” said Komatsu Product Marketing Manager Craig McGinnis. “For them, the WA470 isn’t big enough, but the WA500 is too much. The WA500 is approximately 20 percent larger than the WA470 when it comes to horsepower, tipping and other metrics, while the WA480 is closer to 8 percent bigger, providing a much better fit.”

The 56,262-pound WA480-8 wheel loader replaces its Dash-6, Tier 3 predecessor and sports a 299-horsepower Tier 4 Final engine that delivers as much as 20 percent greater fuel efficiency. Komatsu’s dual-mode Engine Power Select System lets operators choose between two standard options: E-Mode for greater fuel efficiency during general loading or P-Mode when they require maximum power output for hard digging operations or uphill climbing. The E-Mode Light option, which is selectable from the monitor, further reduces fuel consumption.

The WA480-8 is equipped with a steering wheel, but customers can opt to replace it with Komatsu’s Advanced Joystick Steering System (AJSS), which allows operators to handle steering and directional travel through wrist and finger control.

Buckets of efficiency

Komatsu further enhanced the productivity of the WA480-8 by adding an auto-dig function that enables the machine to automatically lift the boom and curl the bucket when in a pile – a feature that was previously offered only on the larger WA500 and WA600 models. The WA480-8

also includes a redesigned bucket that is available in 6.0- or 6.5-cubic yard capacities.

“We reconfigured the curves in both the front and back of the bucket to increase productivity by as much as 7 percent compared to the previous model,” detailed McGinnis. “The design enables material to flow into the bucket easily and also helps with load retention to prevent material from spilling over the sides.”

In-cab experience

In addition to enhanced engine performance and overall design, the WA480-8 delivers upgrades that improve the operator experience. The cab boasts a low-noise design, an Electronic Pilot Control air-suspension seat, an auxiliary jack, a pair of 12-volt outlets and two 7-inch, high-resolution, color monitors. One displays machine diagnostics and menus while the other is for the rearview camera. ■



Craig McGinnis,
Komatsu Product
Marketing Manager

The new Komatsu WA480-8 has a 299-horsepower, Tier 4 Final engine that boosts fuel efficiency up to 20 percent and a redesigned bucket that increases productivity by as much as 7 percent.



ANTICIPATING YOUR NEEDS

Visits with customers give perspective for addressing future parts and service requirements



Paul Moore, Vice President,
Parts Sales & Marketing

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

Paul Moore joined Komatsu in 2006 as a Remanufacturing Product Manager and became the Vice President, Parts Sales & Marketing in 2015. His career path to that point included two continents and several jobs in the heavy-equipment field, including in the defense industry. He started as an apprentice technician in his native United Kingdom in 1984. Six years later, he joined a global agricultural-equipment manufacturer and then moved to the United States with that company in 2000, before coming on board with Komatsu.

“Growing up on a farm, I have been around equipment my entire life,” said Moore. “If you’re a ‘big iron’ person like me, then construction and mining are the best industries to work in. Komatsu is a global leader in both, so I really enjoy being a part of a company that’s setting the bar in terms of equipment and the support behind it.”

Moore said parts and service have become increasingly important. “Customers base their equipment-buying decisions, in large part, on how a manufacturer and its distributors meet their after-sale needs. We are committed to being the best in the industry in that regard.”

Moore is married and has two children. In his free time, he enjoys motorcycle riding and spending time with his family.

QUESTION: Parts and service support is critical to equipment users. Is Komatsu doing anything new in this area?

ANSWER: During the past two years, Komatsu focused heavily on customer engagement, being side-by-side with them at jobsites. We want to know what’s working, what isn’t and how Komatsu can improve its capabilities and resources, so we can anticipate their needs and proactively talk to them about solutions. We are now extending this initiative to focus on customers’ needs when they are interacting at distributors’ parts counters and over the phone. Our goal is to make sure Komatsu machine owners have the right parts, the first time and every time.

QUESTION: What information have you discovered in these customer visits?

ANSWER: Customers told us what they really need from Komatsu, things we can do to improve our support levels and ensure their machines continue to be productive, with as little downtime as possible. They also expect parts to be on-hand when needed. Are we always perfect? No, but customers understand that we always strive for continuous improvement, so we can show how we add value to their operations. That’s our mission.

QUESTION: What are some examples of how Komatsu is working to better support customers?

ANSWER: One is our General Construction Undercarriage, which was introduced for certain mid-size PC200-300 class excavators a couple of years ago and will expand to include dozers. It offers a competitively priced Komatsu undercarriage option that is guaranteed to fit



Komatsu focuses on customer engagement to better understand owners' operations. "We want to know what's working, what isn't and how Komatsu can improve its capabilities and resources," said Paul Moore, Vice President, Parts Sales & Marketing. "Our goal is to make sure Komatsu machine owners have the right parts, the first time and every time."

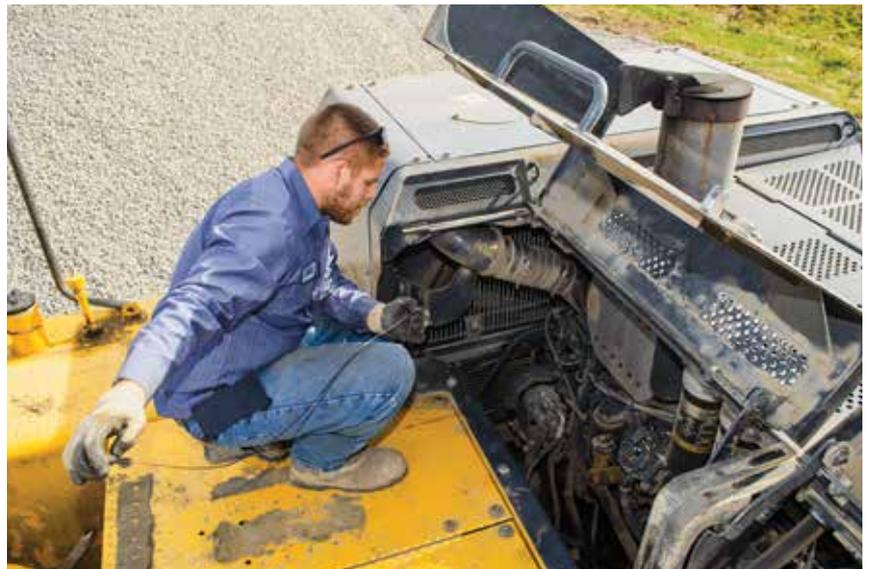
the customer's machine. It's all supported by an industry-best, four-year/5,000-hour assurance program. Another example is the new Komatsu Genuine Oil. Equipment technology continues to expand and so does the need for upgraded maintenance items to keep machines running at peak performance.

In the near future, we will introduce a new online parts-ordering system that will integrate KOMTRAX data, manuals, factory campaign notices and much more information to assist with machine management activities and improve the customer's experience.

QUESTION: Earlier you mentioned being proactive. Why is that so important?

ANSWER: Think of it in terms of your own health. If you wait until you are sick to go to the doctor, recovery may take longer and cost more time and money. A regular checkup may identify a potential issue that can be addressed and taken care of quickly. Monitoring the health of the equipment, taking oil samples and performing daily walk arounds as well as having regular machine inspections by the Komatsu distributor's PSSR for example, are vital to its performance. If something shows up, it may or may not need immediate attention. If not, the owner can plan to have it fixed as soon as possible.

We also offer several parts-related programs such as Firm Future Order and zero-percent parts and service financing. Solutions such as these

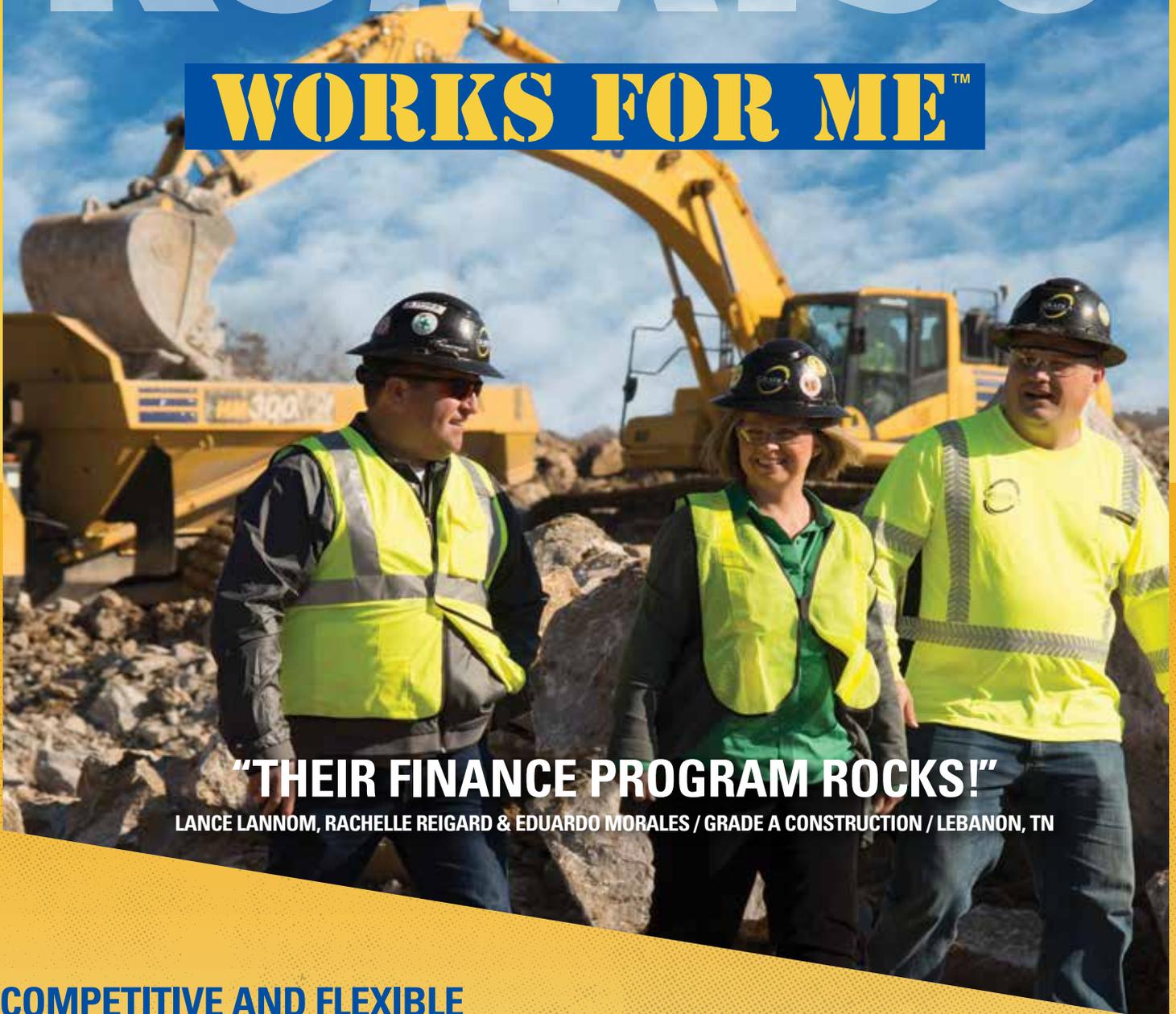


Monitoring a machine's health with oil sampling, daily checks and other proactive steps is essential to its performance, according to Paul Moore, Vice President, Parts Sales & Marketing. "Think of it in terms of your own health. A regular checkup may identify a potential issue that can be addressed and taken care of quickly," said Moore.

help owners save thousands of dollars, plan for downtime, guarantee parts and technician availability and allow repair payments on a schedule that works for them. The idea is to preplan the machine maintenance and let customers lock in pricing, guarantee parts availability and schedule the work at a convenient time. We encourage customers to contact their Komatsu distributor for more information. ■

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CUSTOMIZED MACHINES

Modification packages for waste-handling machines add durability and make maintenance easier

Machines that work in waste-service applications like landfills, transfer stations and scrap yards encounter unique hazards every day. To keep those machines performing at optimum levels, Komatsu's Marketing Engineering Group developed specialized waste packages.

"That type of equipment requires specific modifications in order to meet job requirements," said Komatsu Marketing Engineering Group Manager Sue Schinkel. "We visited with customers to learn what they wanted and then created and implemented packages to incorporate all of those elements for each machine model."

The research led to a design that maintains accessibility and improves durability.

"Customers want machines that can stand up to their environments, yet are still easy to maintain," explained Schinkel. "The waste packages offer enhanced protection to vital components without sacrificing accessibility to service areas or machine performance."

The Marketing Engineering Group handles the full life cycle of the waste packages. This level of involvement allows the group to respond to customer feedback quickly.

"The packages are created specifically for each model by our engineers – we decide which elements are needed, design the features, develop marketing literature and continue to track performance in the field," noted Schinkel. "This is not an aftermarket add-on kit. Design, development and testing are in accordance with Komatsu engineering standards. The waste package is integrated into the base machine design, resulting in a purpose-built machine."

Dozing growth

Komatsu offers four waste packages for wheel loaders, three for excavators, and the

demand for dozer packages is growing. Komatsu currently outfits the D65-18 and D85-18 models and expects to release a waste package for the D155AX-8 in late 2018.

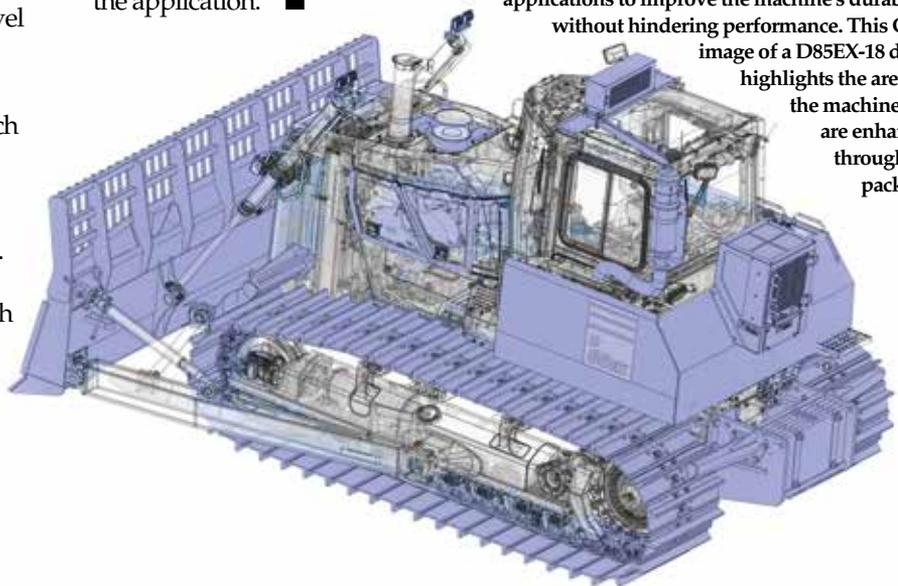
"The popularity of dozers is growing among our waste-service customers," stated Schinkel. "The package includes striker bars near the front and rear of the tracks to help clear debris, additional gap sealing to minimize the amount of material that gets into the engine compartment and a tank guard to protect the fuel and hydraulic tank."

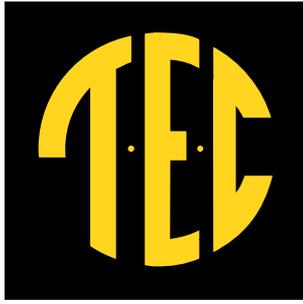
While Schinkel says it is impossible to completely seal a machine, the packages are designed to extend the equipment's longevity and ensure that customers experience the full benefits of a Komatsu dozer. "The waste packages include many enhancements, but the most important thing is that it's a Komatsu dozer. We want to make sure it performs the way it was intended to – no matter the application." ■



Sue Schinkel,
Komatsu Marketing
Engineering Group
Manager

Waste packages are available for machines that work in landfill and other waste-service applications to improve the machine's durability without hindering performance. This CAD image of a D85EX-18 dozer highlights the areas of the machine that are enhanced through the package.





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MORE UNDERCARRIAGE OPTIONS

Komatsu General Construction product line to add new dozer replacement offering

Nearly three years ago, Komatsu introduced its competitively priced General Construction Undercarriage (GC), designed to reduce replacement costs on PC200 and PC300 excavators. The lineup will expand to dozers in 2018, with Genuine Undercarriage product replacements for D51, D61 and D65 models.

The initial excavator product release was specific to track-link assemblies. The dozer offerings will consist of conventional-style link assemblies, according to Komatsu Senior Product Manager Jim Funk, who pointed out that the GC product line fills a void for customers who prefer quality products and great support, but are looking at all options due to the status of their machine's life cycle or their business.

"Typically, a dozer's undercarriage is replaced more often than other tracked machines because of the nature of the work it does," said Funk. "Throughout the course of its life, a dozer's undercarriage will account for nearly half of owning and operating costs. We strive to provide effective and reliable undercarriage products that meet customer needs and machine situations of all types. With the continued expansion of the GC options, we are showing once again that we listen to our customers by providing products that fit their needs as well as their owning and operating targets."

Expanded lineup built to fit and last

All GC products are designed and manufactured by one of Komatsu's

three undercarriage factory, research and development facilities. "They are built to our specific quality standards," said Funk. "The heat-treat process and hardness levels are the same as with any new undercarriage. That means the GC components are interchangeable with non-GC parts, giving customers peace of mind they will be a proper fit and have the same durability as their original undercarriage. We back it with the best assurance coverage in the industry.

"We encourage anyone who is looking at undercarriage replacement options to contact their distributor or Komatsu about a GC undercarriage," Funk added. "It's a great choice at a competitive price." ■



Jim Funk,
Komatsu Senior
Product Manager –
Undercarriage

The Komatsu General Construction Undercarriage for dozers will provide another high-quality, competitively priced alternative for replacement options. They will be available for D51, D61 and D65 models.





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KOMATSU CARE

Technicians complete 100,000th complimentary maintenance visit to customer's jobsite

When Komatsu's first Tier 4 construction-size machines rolled off the assembly lines in 2011, they came with Komatsu CARE, a pioneering, complimentary maintenance program providing service for the first three years or 2,000 hours of operation. This spring, the program marked its 100,000th service interval, performed on a PC228USLC-10 excavator owned by J. Fletcher Creamer & Son.

The program includes scheduled factory maintenance, oil sampling of each lubricated reservoir, a 50-point inspection at every service and up to two complimentary Komatsu Diesel Particulate Filter exchanges in the first 9,000 hours for qualified machines. Having the experts at Komatsu perform this maintenance has benefits well beyond free service.

"Komatsu CARE demonstrates our commitment to meeting customers' needs. It's the most comprehensive offering in the marketplace, and we are extremely proud of

this milestone," said Mike Hayes, Director of Service Marketing & Distributor Development for Komatsu.

More than complimentary service

"This program is an asset to us because we know that our distributor is taking care of our Tier 4 equipment," said Michael Schuhlein, Equipment Manager at J. Fletcher Creamer & Son. "With Komatsu servicing those machines, it frees us up to work on other maintenance. It makes us more efficient.

"We have 58 machines, and most of them are covered by Komatsu CARE or were under it," continued Schuhlein. "Having the experts from Komatsu in our garage keeps them familiar with our equipment, and it helps our service technicians learn and stay on top of the latest technology. Also, when a machine receives proper service at the recommended maintenance intervals, it ensures that it will reach the full potential of its life cycle." ■



Mike Hayes,
Director of Service
Marketing &
Distributor
Development,
Komatsu



Komatsu Director of Service Marketing & Distributor Development Mike Hayes (third from left) and Komatsu representatives present J. Fletcher Creamer & Son, Inc., with a certificate marking the 100,000th Komatsu CARE service interval that was performed on its Komatsu PC228USLC-10 excavator.

CONSTRUCTION WAGES RISING

AGC analysis indicates firms paying more, but labor market remains tight



Stephen E. Sandherr,
AGC CEO

An Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) analysis showed construction wages on the rise, which appears to be attracting workers to return to the industry. The organization cautioned, however, that labor conditions still remain extremely tight.

“Many firms are boosting pay and taking other steps to compete for a relatively small pool of available, qualified workers to hire,” said Stephen E. Sandherr, AGC’s Chief Executive Officer. “While these measures appear to be luring construction workers back to the job market, firms report they would hire additional workers if they could find enough qualified candidates.”

Highest levels in past decade

The most recent data, in April, showed construction employment totaled 7,174,000, a gain of 17,000 for the month and 257,000, or 3.7 percent, throughout the last 12 months. Construction employment is at the highest level since June 2008. Association officials note that the year-over-year growth rate in industry jobs was more than triple

the 1.1 percent rise in the total nonfarm payroll employment.

Hourly wages in the industry averaged \$29.63 in April, an increase of 3.5 percent from a year earlier. That put the average hourly earnings in construction 10.4 percent higher than the average for all nonfarm private-sector jobs, which rose 2.6 percent in the past year to \$26.84, Sandherr added.

Construction officials urged federal, state and local leaders to take steps to make it easier for schools, construction firms and local associations to develop and offer construction-focused programs to recruit and prepare future workers. They noted that such measures would signal greater numbers of students that there are multiple paths to success in life.

“It is time to start showing young adults that high-paying careers in construction should be on the list of professions to consider,” Sandherr said. “Too many students amass a mountain of college debt just to earn mediocre wages working in a fluorescent-lit cube farm.” ■

A recent analysis by Associated General Contractors of America showed hourly earnings in the construction industry averaged \$29.63, an increase of 3.5 percent from a year earlier. That’s attracting some workers back to the industry, but the market remains tight.



MORE INDUSTRY NEWS

Survey shows banks opening up commercial lending

A recent Federal Reserve Board survey showed banks loosening lending policies for commercial projects. According to Construction Dive, a significant number of bank officers responding to the questionnaire said that their institutions had eased standards, in part, because of aggressive competition from other banks and nonbank lenders.

Eric Lemont, Real Estate Partner at Sullivan & Worcester in Boston, told Construction Dive last year that uncertainty around new high volatility commercial real estate (HVCRE) transaction requirements was one of the reasons. Construction loans fall under HVCRE rules, which require the lender to put aside 50 percent extra cash reserves, creating greater exposure for the lender. ■

Study reports mobile technology improves projects

Mobile technology enhances contractors' ability to collect and distribute timely and accurate jobsite data, according to a new Dodge Data & Analytics and B2W Software study. Respondents said better access to project data trends was the

top benefit to mobile connectivity. Significant numbers said it improves communication; helps with budget and scheduling, fleet management, maintenance, efficiency and uptime; and increases productivity. ■

Komatsu plans North American headquarters move

Komatsu America announced plans to move its North American headquarters to Chicago in 2020. The firm is currently located in the city's northwest suburb of Rolling Meadows. The new site at Triangle Plaza, 8770 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., will feature an open floor plan designed to foster more collaboration and cross-functional team communication that drives customer-first solutions and services.

"There's something for everyone in this move," said Rod Schrader, Chairman and CEO of Komatsu America Corp. "Current employees will enjoy the building amenities and convenience to major transportation, the new floor plan supports the company's efforts to break down team and work-stream silos and the move helps Komatsu remain attractive to prospective employees living in the city and studying nearby." ■

U.S. airports flying ahead with new construction

U.S. airports are getting an upgrade, with more than \$70 billion in spending expected for aviation infrastructure during the next three years. An Architectural Record article by Erin Hudson reported that current renovations primarily focus on terminals where passengers' impressions of a city are made. The upgrades include work on amenities such as restaurants and retail options at more than 50 airports.

"These major airports have squeezed as much blood out of a stone as possible," said T.J. Shulz, President of the Airport Consultants Council in the article "U.S. Sees Rise in Airport Construction." "Airport authorities and designers have done all they can do to account for differing airline service trends and new technologies coming into play, and now they're in a position where they either refurbish or rebuild." ■

EIA: Wind to blow past hydro in renewable energy production

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) expects wind to surpass hydroelectric in domestic, renewable-energy production this year. EIA predicts hydropower will fall to 6.5 percent from 7.4 percent of the nation's overall energy output in 2018. Wind generated 6.3 percent last year, and EIA anticipates it will rise to 6.9 percent by 2019. Weather will play a big role in what the final numbers look like at the end of 2018.

"Because few new hydro plants are expected to come online in the next two years, hydroelectric generation in 2018 and 2019 will largely depend on precipitation and water runoff," EIA said in its analysis. "Although changes in weather patterns also affect wind generation, the forecast for wind-power output is more dependent on the capacity and timing of new wind turbines coming online." ■

ARTBA, others pleased with high court's ruling on Clean Water Act regulations

Industry organizations such as the American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) hailed a unanimous Supreme Court decision, which held that federal district courts were the proper venue for challenging Clean Water Act (CWA) regulations such as the 2015 "Waters of the United States" rule. The Court had been asked to decide whether federal district or appellate courts should hear complaints arising under the CWA.

ARTBA and industry allies asserted that CWA regulatory challenges should be defended at the federal district level, which is closer to where the regulation impacts local projects and landowners. The Environmental Protection Agency claimed that requiring such disputes to start in district court is inefficient and wastes judicial resources, and that cases should begin in federal appellate courts. ■

Grant funds available for rural water infrastructure

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced \$4 billion in grant funding to help upgrade and rebuild rural water infrastructure across 24 states, including Alabama. Eligible communities and water districts can apply online to maintain, modernize or build water and wastewater systems at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rd-apply> or through one of the USDA Rural Development's state or field offices.

Rural communities with 10,000 or fewer residents are eligible for the funding, which is provided through the Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant program. It can be used to finance drinking water, storm-water drainage and waste-disposal systems.

"USDA is committed to being a strong partner to rural communities in building their futures," said Anne Hazlett, Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development at the USDA. "All people – regardless of their zip code – need modern, reliable infrastructure to thrive. We have found that when we address this need, many other challenges in rural places become much more manageable."

In fiscal year 2018, Congress provided a historic level of funding for water and wastewater infrastructure. The 2018 Omnibus spending bill includes \$5.2 billion for USDA loans and grants, up from \$1.2 billion the previous year. The bill also directs the Agriculture Secretary to make investments in rural communities with the greatest infrastructure needs. ■

SIDE TRACKS



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