

# On the **JOB**<sup>TM</sup>

**REMOTE  
SERVICE  
TECHNOLOGY**  
DIAGNOSTIC TEST SAVES  
TIME AND MONEY



## **HIGHWAY 11 EXPANSION**

TECHNOLOGY, PRECISION & COLLABORATION

### **THE RIGHT WAY**

3<sup>RD</sup> GENERATION FAMILY BUSINESS THRIVES

### **ON THE PLUS SIDE**

CONTRACTOR UPGRADES U.S. POSTAL SERVICE FACILITIES



[thompsoncontractor.com](http://thompsoncontractor.com)

# The Cat Rental Store

## CUSTOMER PORTAL MAKES YOU A BETTER MANAGER

The [thompsonrents.com](http://thompsonrents.com) customer portal makes it easy to manage and monitor your rental equipment, so you can find the information you need whenever you need it, using both desktop and mobile devices. You can work smarter by keeping track of your whole fleet with a single, user friendly interface.

On the website and mobile app, you can easily manage all your equipment rentals and operations, and digitally interact with our dealership.

You have more control over your account with the online and mobile portal that contains the following details and information for quick reference:

- Active and upcoming rentals
- Jobsite data
- Invoices, rates and contract details
- Telematics
- Equipment status

Along with accessing these documents, you can use the portal to perform a variety of tasks, including requesting a quote, browsing rental equipment, and finding and contacting your nearest Cat dealer. You can also request on-site service for your equipment, transfer equipment between jobs and extend your rental contracts.

## Benefits

- Track your equipment and maintain open avenues of communication
- Manage your account digitally instead of filing and storing paper contracts
- Search for and find help without making a trip or a phone call
- Access your account at any time, day or night, and immediately locate the information you need

The portal includes online telematics features from Cat® Product Link to provide even more insight into your fleet's operations. The GPS device on each machine monitors its location, fuel level and time utilization. This data enables you to increase productivity by ensuring your equipment assets are being efficiently deployed.

Find the equipment you need through our online inventory. Browse [thompsonrents.com](http://thompsonrents.com) to jump-start your next project.

***To learn more about utilizing the [thompsonrents.com](http://thompsonrents.com) customer portal to enhance the productivity and efficiency of your rental assets, contact your rental store representative or a member of the management team.***



[www.thompsonrents.com](http://www.thompsonrents.com)

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# ON THE PLUS SIDE

## CONTRACTOR UPGRADES U.S. POSTAL SERVICE FACILITIES

**T**ony Romanish had nothing to lose in 1989 when he started a business building patios and outdoor walls near his home in the Skylands region of Greenwood Lake, New York.

“I was at the tail end of a divorce, and owed so much money, and it felt like there was no way out,” he recalls. “And the economy was bad. So, my whole mindset when launching this company was that if I start with nothing and end up with nothing, then I’ve lost absolutely nothing.”

Ultimately, the gamble paid off. After five years building patios and exterior walls for residential and commercial properties, things took a fortuitous turn when Romanish was asked to take on a small job for the United States Postal Service (USPS).

“I got hooked up with the post office for what basically started out as a one-day backhoe rental,” he remembers.

That job, which involved digging footings in Ramsey, N.J., marked the beginning of a partnership which has lasted for more than three decades. By partnering with Lighton

Electric, a federal job order contracting (JOC) company in Lakewood, New Jersey, Walls & Patios Plus found a niche and a steady stream of USPS civil work.

Starting with small-scale projects like sidewalk repairs and pothole patches, Walls & Patios Plus progressed to more complex undertakings. Today, they are heavily involved in the USPS’s initiative to establish electric vehicle (EV) charging stations for delivery trucks.

The significance of these projects is immense, given the USPS’s stated plan to utilize 250,000 EVs nationwide. Crews from Walls & Patios Plus are currently converting a parking lot at a mid-sized distribution center in Edison, N.J. into an EV charging facility capable of housing and charging about 400 EVs.

“Starting on the inside, we helped modify the building so carriers from various towns can come here, sort their mail, load their EVs and go back to their towns and deliver to their routes,” he says. “Then the carriers come back here at night, charge the vehicles, and start all over again in the morning.”

“It’s a very smart move by the USPS. They’re really making a significant investment in their infrastructure. We see it firsthand, because postal work is really all we do anymore.”

### **The right machine for the job**

A key factor in the success of Walls and Patios Plus has been its reliance on Cat® equipment. On a number of occasions, the contractor has been tasked with interior demolition—a job that requires using machines with zero emissions. Romanish found the right machine for the job through his Cat dealer, H.O. Penn.

The innovative Cat 300.9D VPS with HPU300 Mini Excavator delivers versatility in a compact size with a choice of diesel or electric power. This machine has zero emissions when used in electric mode, and also creates low noise, superior power and control. Its ability to fit through a narrow doorway makes it an excellent machine for indoor demolition work.

“We literally had to go inside a bathroom to do some work, and the nice thing about these minis is that they fold up and will fit through a 30-inch doorway,” Romanish says.

“We had to remove about 2,200 cubic yards of concrete, and without the mini it would have been impossible. I couldn’t do it with electric jackhammers, and air jackhammers were not permitted in the building. So it was either saw cut it with electric and pulling out pieces, but that is very time consuming. The nice thing about that machine is it will run all day long with no problems, and it’s very quiet.

“We don’t know from one day to the next what the postal service will have,” Romanish continues. “But it makes us more



viable to the postal service because they know we have the technologies to conform to their requirements. This is why we’re constantly upgrading our equipment, because now they require that everything be Tier 4.”

### **Safety first**

There’s a common misconception that it’s easy to work around a post office, Romanish says. But in fact, the postal service strives to avoid property damage and injuries, while still getting the mail delivered on time.

“They want no incidents,” he says. “Safety is their main priority. We have frequent meetings with the USPS about safety concerns and safety issues to ensure that nobody gets hurt. If you were here at 10 o’clock this morning, the whole parking lot was full of cars and mail trucks. Everybody thinks it’s easy to work around a post office, but it’s one of the

*(Continued on page 6)*





hardest things you'll ever do because you have to work around their schedule. We can't hinder them whatsoever."

Caterpillar's continuous innovation has also played a vital role. The newer Cat machines are laden with advanced technologies that provide significant advantages.

"The backup cameras and grade control are nice features," Romanish says. "They not only enhance efficiency, but also make the machines easier to operate for less experienced workers. One of my operators is a young guy who was learning the business and struggled with the manual controls on our old D3 Dozer. I put him on our new D1 and he had no trouble. It's practically like you can operate it with your fingertips—it's awesome."

### **Attachments cut time in half**

Walls & Patios crews utilize a variety of attachments, such as augers, a hammer, box blade, vibratory compactor and a broom for cleanup.

On the Edison distribution center job, crews are installing 600 bollards and 58 bases for lights. A three-foot auger drills holes

for the light bases, while a 12-inch auger drills the holes for the bollards.

"By drilling them, it'll cut the time in half as opposed to digging," Romanish says. "Two guys can do all of these holes, and we estimate doing 25 to 30 a day. Plus, we use an extra guy as a laborer to help keep everything clean. It just saves a lot of time.

Working in sweltering conditions this summer with high humidity and temperatures hovering in the mid-90s, the air-conditioned, enclosed cabs of Romanish's Cat machines make for a more comfortable and productive operating environment.

"I think the biggest thing that Caterpillar builds into their equipment which nobody else can even come close to is the operator comfort," Romanish says. "Caterpillar does a really good job to ensure that operators are comfortable. When they design these machines, they consider how ergonomically proper they can position the controls. You can run an eight-hour shift in a Cat machine and remain very alert to your surroundings."

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—TONY ROMANISH, OWNER  
WALLS & PATIOS PLUS



### Dealer support aids growth

The reliability and efficiency of Cat machines backed by support from his Cat dealer were critical during the pandemic, when the postal service ramped up infrastructure projects. Romanish recounts a challenging period when they had to rely on rented equipment from other brands.

“We had nothing but problems with the machinery—it kept breaking down and we had to wait two weeks for parts,” he recalls. “On the other hand, I know when I own a piece of Cat equipment, I’ll have the part the same day or the next morning.”

“If we do have a problem with a machine, H.O. Penn’s service department gets right on it—I can’t say enough good things about their parts department,” Romanish adds. “When it comes to financing, I don’t think we’ve waited more than 48 hours to have any

financing approved by Cat Financial. And when we trade something in, H.O. Penn has always done very well by me.

“H.O. Penn has had a lot to do with the growth of this company,” he continues. “My sales rep, James Bennett, has been absolutely phenomenal as far as making sure we have what we need. He’s just a phone call away, and he always has the right solutions for me. Whether its parts, service, sales support or financing, I know I’m going to get the results I’m looking for when I call H.O. Penn.

Eight years ago, Romanish purchased a Cat CT660 On-Highway Vocational Truck, which he drives to this day and takes great pride in owning. However, not long after purchasing the truck, Caterpillar announced it was discontinuing production of the CT660 On-Highway truck. He received a phone call from H.O. Penn dealer principal Rob Cleveland informing him of the decision.

## WALLS & PATIOS PLUS

**Location:** Greenwood Lake, N.Y.

**Employees:** 12

**Dealer:** H.O. Penn

**Cat® equipment:** 259D3 Compact Track Loader, 272 XPS Skid Steer Loader, Mini Excavators: 300.9D VPS (2); 305.5E2, 306; Hydraulic Excavators: 317, 320; 430E Backhoe Loader; 914K Compact Wheel Loader; D1 Dozer; Vibratory Compactors: CB14B, CB22; CT660 Vocational Truck, P385B Weiler Paver

“We were doing a job in Brunswick (New Jersey), and Rob called me first thing in the morning to tell me that over the weekend Caterpillar had pulled the plug on the vocational trucks and he didn’t want me to hear it on the street,” Romanish recalls. “That really told me a lot about what kind of organization H.O. Penn is.” **OTJ**



# ON THE CUTTING EDGE

## INNOVATIVE APPROACH SPURS GROWTH

When Josh Campbell decided to go out on his own seven years ago after gaining industry experience with a civil contracting firm, he started with a single Cat® Skid Steer Loader, focusing on manhole replacements.

That niche work led to green demolition and eventually wet utilities, which has become the company's core focus for the last four years. Campbell's initial idea of starting a smaller, less manpower-intensive venture and gradually working up to underground utilities was more challenging than anticipated. However, the company has now fully transitioned to focusing on underground wet utilities.

"Starting small was harder than I thought it would be," Campbell admits. "But that approach allowed us to learn, adapt, and grow steadily. Now, wet utilities are where we excel, and it's become what we're known for."

What started as a part-time venture has grown significantly. Rycon Companies currently employs 20 field workers and 28 overall. Specializing in excavation, site preparation and mass grading, the company operates a fleet of five Cat excavators, a wheel loader, two compact machines, and two water trucks, plus various attachments.

Rycon primarily works with developers, especially in the multifamily housing sector. The firm has also started

expanding into municipal projects, aiming to begin working on governmental contracts next year. Campbell notes that working with owner-developers has been particularly beneficial.

"The relationships we've built with developers have been crucial," he says. They understand the value we bring.

Rycon is currently preparing a site for Marlowe Peoria Place, a 13-building apartment complex. Crews excavated more than 10,000 cubic yards of material to install a large stormwater and sewer system. The job required up to 15 men, three excavators, two wheel loaders and two water trucks. Rycon rented a Cat 745 Articulated Truck from Empire Southwest to haul material across the site.

### Focus on innovation

Campbell says that the company's growth has been driven not just by adding more staff, but by focusing on efficiency and innovative technology, such as fabricating specialized attachments and integrating advanced equipment into their operations.

"We've always believed in doing more with less," he says. "It's not just about having more equipment or more people—it's about being smarter and more efficient in how we operate."



While Campbell got his start operating small machines such as skid steers and mini excavators—which enabled him to grow the company quickly and efficiently—Rycon has transitioned to using larger equipment.

The principles of efficiency and precision that he established early on continue to guide the company's operations. Campbell makes extensive use of rental machines, as he believes that in many cases it's more cost effective than owning. (So far this year, he's spent more than \$250,000 on rental equipment.) Campbell aims to maintain a 50-50 balance between owned and rented equipment. This strategy helps Rycon scale their operations flexibly while managing costs effectively.

"It's all about balance," Campbell says. "Owning and renting equipment, each have their advantages. By keeping that balance, we can stay flexible and keep pushing forward without compromising on quality. Even as we've grown, we haven't lost sight of what got us here—being efficient, being innovative and always looking for ways to improve."

One of the most significant innovations has been the adoption of a drum cutter, a tool that has revolutionized Rycon's work by improving the process of cutting through rock and demolishing concrete structures. This attachment has made handling materials more manageable and efficient, leading to increased jobsite productivity.

"The drum cutter has been a game-changer for us," Campbell adds. "It's made our work more efficient, especially in challenging environments where precision is key. Plus, with GPS and laser, we're not just faster—we're safer too."

The integration of GPS grade control and laser technologies in Rycon's fleet of Cat excavators has further enhanced efficiency and safety. When working from an engineered plan, many instances arise where on-the-fly adjustments must be made in order to adapt to variances that crews encounter.



"On one project in particular, there were four plan revisions after we started, and you can't update the model fast enough to keep up with those changes," Campbell says. "So that's where the laser catcher and the grade controls come in and help resolve the missing links. The system is integrated in the machine, and enables us to make those adjustments in the field and still maintain accuracy and productivity."

These technologies enable precise excavating and grading, and reduce the need for workers to be in potentially hazardous positions near open trenches.

"One of my key mainline guys loves the older F series models," Campbell says. "Then I've got guys who love the newer machines. The more they learn the technologies, the more they start to fall in love with the newer stuff. As they learn the grade controls and all the features that these machines have nowadays, they definitely lean toward the newer approach."

Campbell's favorite machine is a next-gen Cat 255 Compact Track Loader.

"The 255 is absolutely, pound-for-pound, the strongest, best machine I've ever

owned," he says. "It's just unbelievable what it can lift and push. It easily pushes three to four yards of dirt without the slightest strain. It's just incredible what that machine's capable of."

"Inside the cab, it's like sitting in a fighter jet with all of the buttons on the joysticks and the touchscreen. It helps us on excavations for storm capture systems. We just drive it down to the bottom, set it down with an excavator and use it for grading so the guys don't have to shovel a 50 by 70-foot section. We just put the 255 down there, grade it out real quick and start placing material."

### **Dealer support**

Campbell prefers to operate Cat machines, citing their reliability and support from his Cat dealer, Empire Southwest, and also the seamless integration of technology into the equipment. He contrasts this with his experiences with other brands, which he found to be less supportive and more challenging to maintain due to difficulties sourcing parts.

His strong relationship with Empire, especially with his account manager

*(Continued on page 10)*

Nate Harman, has been crucial to Rycon's success. Nate and the Empire team have provided invaluable support, from advising on equipment purchases to ensuring prompt parts and service support.

"Empire has been more than just a supplier—they're a partner," Campbell says. "Nate and his team are always there when we need them. Whether it's finding the right machine or getting parts on short notice, they've got our back.

"Being this small little startup, we met with several equipment dealers, including one that basically didn't have time for us because we were too small," Campbell recalls. "When we first met with Nate, we were treated like we had something that they wanted to be a part of. It gave us a feeling that we're not in this alone, like we have a partner. The service from Empire has been top-of-the line from the start."

Harman cites the mutual respect and trust that has developed over the years.

"Josh is the kind of client you want to go the extra mile for," he says. "He's knowledgeable, focused, and always looking for ways to improve. We know that when we support Rycon, we're not just helping a business—we're helping a partner who values our expertise and support." **OTJ**



**“The 255 is absolutely, pound-for-pound, the strongest, best machine I’ve ever owned,”** he says. **“It’s just unbelievable what it can lift and push. It easily pushes three to four yards of dirt without the slightest strain.”**

**– JOSH CAMPBELL, OWNER  
RYCON COMPANIES**

## **RYCON COMPANIES**

**Location:** Peoria, Ariz.

**Employees:** 28

**Dealer:** Empire Southwest

**Cat® equipment:** 242 Skid Steer Loader; 255 Compact Track Loader; Mini Excavators: 305, 308; Hydraulic Excavators: 316, 320, 325, 335, 336; 926 Small Wheel Loader





# REMOTE SERVICE TECHNOLOGY

## DIAGNOSTIC TEST SAVES TIME AND MONEY

Unplanned downtime equals lost productivity. It's time you'll never recover. The last thing any contractor wants is to waste valuable time waiting for equipment to be repaired.

Remote service technology is paving the way for faster repairs, no matter where you're located.

### Cutting-Edge Technology for Technicians

Traditionally, the field service process has looked like this: A technician drives to your jobsite with the tools and parts he or she thinks are headed based on the initial description of the problem. Diagnostics are run on your equipment to confirm the issue, only to realize it's actually a different issue, and the parts and or tools to fix it right away have not been identified.

Now, Remote Service technology enables your technician to diagnose the issue before leaving the shop to drive to your site and be better prepared to repair your machine in one trip.

### The two key components of Remote Service are:

- Remote Troubleshoot (RT) enables dealer technicians to run diagnostic testing on your connected equipment from anywhere in the world, pinpointing potential issues while it's in operation.
- Remote Flash (RF) enables your dealer to update your equipment remotely with the latest software so it can operate at optimum performance levels.

### First-Time Fix

So, what does this look like in real life?

Let's say landscaping customer Mike Smith is operating his D6 Dozer when a fault code pops up on the in-cab monitor. Mike calls his Cat® dealer, who quickly assigns a technician to investigate the problem's root cause and quickly repair the equipment. Mike's D6 is Remote Service capable, so the technician initiates an RT session from the dealership while the dozer continues to work.

The technician connects to the equipment using RT and finds the fault code description, along with a list of related electronic control modules and pre-populated data. He selects the parameters he'd like to view and then asks the operator to perform actions to pinpoint the issue. The technician then determines the parts and tools needed to fix the equipment in one visit to the jobsite.

During the RT session, the technician also notices that the D6 has out-of-date software and initiates the download via RF. While he drives to the site, a dealer technical communicator works with Mike to initiate the flash, so that the software is up to date when the technician arrives, reducing the work that must be completed on site.

### Ready to Go Remote?

Many current Cat equipment models leave the factory with Remote Service technology already installed. If your equipment doesn't have that capability, our dealership may be able to install it for you.

**Contact our dealership today to see if your machine is already remote capable, or how you can activate this efficiency-boosting technology. [OTJ](#)**



# THE RIGHT WAY

## 3RD GENERATION FAMILY BUSINESS THRIVES

**D**ave Gruhot founded D & G Excavating in 1979 with a simple motto: “We do the job right.”

Over the years, through two generations of ownership and the eventual transition to a third, taking that unflinching approach has helped the Marshall, Minnesota contractor grow the business and gain the respect of industry peers.

Whether it’s building a new road, or starting a day care center for their employees, D&G is a tight-knit group made up of long-term team members who always strive to do things the right way.

“D & G is by far the best and most reliable excavating contractor in the area,” says Greg Bladholm of building contractor Bladholm Construction. “They are on the job when they’re supposed to be. Their employees are knowledgeable about the work they perform, and they are very honest and fair.”

Employees are trained to meet the highest standards in workmanship and adhere to safety regulations to ensure each job is completed safely and to the client’s standards.

Every D & G employee participates in extensive safety training each year to ensure their safety and the safety of the public.

Safety coordinator Heather Willert—who started at the company in 2002 as a 16-year-old office assistant—was awarded the Magnolia Construction Woman of the Year from Associated Builders and Contractors in 2009. The company provides multiple types of training throughout the year including:

- MSHA Training
- Trench & Excavations Competent Person Training
- MPCA Safety
- First Aid & CPR
- OSHA Training
- CTOT – Construction Truck Operator Training
- Defensive Driving Course by the Minnesota State Patrol
- Commercial Vehicle Training by the Minnesota State Patrol

“There’s a good culture at D & G—we’re all a team here,” says equipment operator Daren Gravely. “We work together to stay safe, and we get the work done in a timely manner.”

### From then to now

For nearly two decades in the 1960s and ‘70s, company founder Dave Gruhot worked for local contractors including Deutz & Crow Sand & Gravel, and Dwire Inc. before starting D & G Excavating with his wife, Sharon in 1979.

D & G had very humble beginnings, starting with just two employees, a dump truck, an excavator and a Cat® 950 Wheel Loader, which the company still owns and operates to this day. The business was founded as a family operation, headquartered in the basement of Dave and Sharon’s residence until they built the firm’s current office building next to the main shop in 1994.

In 2007, Dave’s son, Brian, and his wife, Kristin, purchased D & G Excavating, Inc. Brian had been with the company since its inception, digging his first basement at age 14, while Kristin joined in 1992. She serves as CEO and chief operating officer, while Brian is president of the 45-year-old firm. The second-generation owners have grown D & G to where it is today with 32 employees.

Their son, David, is next in the line of succession to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing industry. According to Kristin, David has been around the business since the tender age of two, when he rode in company trucks. He operated a backhoe loader at a demonstration day and dug his first hole as a four-year-old.

“After school, I’d come to the shop every day,” David says. “All summer long, I’d ride around with my dad or my grandpa. Once I got to high school, I started helping out by shoveling, taking

grades and greasing the equipment. So this is all I’ve really ever known, and I don’t want to do anything else.”

Employees say the family atmosphere makes D & G Excavating a great place to work.

“My favorite part of working here is that it’s kind of like family,” says supervisor Roger DeBaere, who has been with the company since 1982. “We know each other’s strengths and weaknesses, and we all pitch in to complete jobs to the best of our abilities.”

Adds Willert: “We aren’t just a business. We’re a blended family, because we’re together and we’re a small enough crew that we’re not just a number. We know each other well.”

While on vacation in 2016, Brian and Kristin came up with the novel idea

*(Continued on page 14)*

## D & G EXCAVATING

**Location:** Marshall, Minn.

**Employees:** 32

**Dealer:** Ziegler

**Cat® equipment:** Skid Steer Loaders: 256C (2); Compact Track Loaders: 255 (2), 259D3, 299D3; Mini Excavators: 302.7CR, 308E2, 308; Small Excavators: 312CL, 316EL; Excavators: 320CL, 330C, 330D; Medium Wheel Loaders: 926M 950A, 950G, 950H (2), 950M; Dozers: D6HXL, D6T, D8N; Motor Graders; 140M2, 163H; 1974 Caterpillar 627B; Scrapers: 627B, 627F; Pneumatic Rollers: PS110, PS130; Vibratory Compactors: CS433E, CP433E, CP323C Utility Compactor; TH83 Telehandler; D25D Articulated Truck



of starting a daycare center for their employees' young children.

"The daycare is open as long as it needs to be, which means that we start accepting kids at 6 a.m.," Kristin says. "Here in Minnesota, a lot of the home-based daycares won't start accepting kids until 7:30. But our guys start work at 6:30."

D & G also hosts employee cookouts and sponsors a companywide camping trip.

"We try to make it fun and keep our people happy," Brian says. "Happy employees are more productive, and taking this approach is a big part of what makes us successful."

### **Variety of services**

D & G has been providing excavating and earthmoving services in Southwest Minnesota and beyond since its inception. Projects range from digging small pools, building driveways, to road building and site preparation for commercial and residential developments.

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**// Ziegler has always been very attentive, going the extra mile for us, they do their best to keep us moving so we don't have a machine down for too long. And the parts availability with Caterpillar is much better than other brands, in my experience."**

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**– DAVE GRUHOT, OWNER  
D & G EXCAVATING**

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D & G also specializes in demolition projects, such as removing an old farm site, or tearing down an old lake home to make way for a new build. It also provides services such as tree and grove removal, and farm site cleanup.

Since 2005, D & G Excavating has also specialized in underground utilities. This includes both existing and new street construction, underground utility reconstruction, commercial and residential water and sewer services, including emergency repair.

The company also carries and delivers an assortment of aggregate materials and

decorative rock and other materials for landscaping needs. D & G has qualified team members trained in storm water management and BMP installations. It provides erosion control materials, and can handle small seeding and hydro-mulch projects.

During the winter months, D & G serves a wide variety of snow removal needs with its large fleet of snow equipment. The contractor handles everything from clearing small to large parking lots, and plowing city streets and township roads 24 hours a day.

### **Doing the work with Cat<sup>®</sup> machines**

D & G has a large fleet of Cat machines that handle a wide range of work, from commercial site prep to smaller residential projects such as building sidewalks and patios.

Compact machines such as skid steer loaders and mini excavators are primarily used for residential projects (e.g., sidewalks, basketball courts, patios) and detail work on larger projects, such as underdrain digging for new streets.

David Gruhot says there is a noticeable difference between the Cat 308E2 Mini Excavator and the Next Gen Cat 308. He likes the improved cab layout and stick steering, finding the overall performance significantly better than the older 308E2.

Compared to the Cat 259D Compact Track Loader (CTL), David says he likes the better serviceability and



performance on the 299D3. He cites improvements such as better routing of hydraulic hoses, a tighter rear engine door seal, and enhanced overall performance.

D & G recently traded in two of its older CTLs for two new Cat 255 Compact Track Loaders which feature advanced touchscreen monitors that provide cutting-edge functionality and control. Advanced joysticks provide unmatched control of machine functions and adjustments within the display without operators having to remove their hands from the controls.

When it comes to site preparation, crews utilize GPS grading on a Cat D6T Dozer for greater efficiency.

“It’s been a big time and cost saver,” David says. “It’s getting harder to find just general laborers, and if you can eliminate the need for a grade checker, it saves all the way around.”

D & G also utilizes Cat Product Link™ for tracking the location of equipment in the field and staying up to date on service intervals.

“Product Link is really nice for keeping track of the status of equipment,” David says. “We only have one mechanic, and he’s really busy, so this helps him keep track of machine hours and lets him know when PMs are needed.”

D & G maintains a Customer Value Agreement with its Cat dealer, Ziegler, which includes S•O•S<sup>SM</sup> Services Fluid Analysis, provides comprehensive tracking on both Cat and non Cat equipment. Fluid analysis can help identify problems that even experienced operators can’t detect before there’s a time-consuming repair.

The relationship between D & G Excavating and Ziegler Cat dates back to 1979, when David’s grandfather started the company.

“Ziegler has always been very attentive, going the extra mile for us,” David says.



“They do their best to keep us moving so we don’t have a machine down for too long. And the parts availability with Caterpillar is much better than other brands, in my experience. Most of the time we receive parts the next morning, even if we order them at five o’clock in the afternoon. So that’s been a big cost savings, because we have very little unscheduled downtime.”

DeBaere recalls an instance years ago where D & G needed a part for one of its backhoe loaders, and Ziegler went out of its way to find one quickly.

“They went on up to The Cities and took it off a brand-new machine and brought it out here. How many dealers do that? But they did it, and we were really impressed.” **OTJ**



# HIGHWAY 11 EXPANSION

## TECHNOLOGY, PRECISION & COLLABORATION

Since its founding in 2003, Carcel & G Construction has grown steadily under the leadership of managing member Carmen Hastings to become one of the largest and best-known earthmoving companies in Alabama.

Headquartered an hour north of Birmingham in Cullman, the woman-owned firm handles state road improvement and private site development projects in Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee. The firm is also engaged in underground utilities, demolition, landfill construction and industrial site work, and has more than a dozen jobs working at any given time.

Carcel & G is serving as general contractor on the \$52 million Highway 11 expansion in Tuscaloosa County. Commencing in late 2022, the 7.5-mile project spans from the town of Woodstock to Vance, adding two additional lanes to the existing highway. The goal is to alleviate traffic congestion and support heavy truck traffic crucial for industries—including two Mercedes-Benz

facilities positioned on each end of the project, as well as other local businesses.

In the 1990s, Mercedes-Benz decided to build its first-ever U.S. manufacturing facility in Alabama, and throughout the years the company has invested millions of dollars to increase its presence in the state. In the spring of 2022, Mercedes-Benz opened an electric vehicle battery plant in Bibb County. The massive factory is one of the largest in North America. Other elements of the operation include a global logistics center and parts hub, as well as a campus in Tuscaloosa County.

“There’s been significant growth in industry over the last 25 years that has transformed the U.S. 11 corridor from Daimler Benz Boulevard to State Route 5 into one of the most traveled roadways in the region,” said John McWilliams, a Public Information Officer with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) in a published report.



// Many of our machines have integrated GPS controls. It saves many man hours based on not having to have a couple extra guys setting and monitoring grades all the time. You always have the site plan in front of you, so all the operators have to do is cut to fill to achieve grade.”



— RYAN MCDONALD, COO  
CARCEL & G CONSTRUCTION

Traffic volume grew 4.6 percent between 2014 and 2016, and is expected to increase with the expansion of existing operations and the possible addition of new industries.

The scale of the Highway 11 project involves moving 700,000 cubic yards of unclassified excavation, more than 15 bridge or box culvert extensions, and placing 10,000 linear feet of slotted drain. This endeavor also includes placing 136,000 square yards of aggregate base and thousands of tons of asphalt, spread over 136 acres of cleared land.

With a satellite office in Bibb County, Carcel & G has an innate sense of the area and the conditions on the ground. The firm also has an established relationship with the Alabama Department of Transportation.

“We’re well suited for this project, as it fits our strengths: moving dirt, grubbing, and concrete,” said chief operating officer Ryan McDonald. “We’ve been able to do much of the work ourselves — a 50-50 split between us and our subs.



“There’s lots of bad soil in the area, and the clay material can’t support roads,” McDonald said. “This is typical for the area. No matter what you do to identify the soil before construction, you can’t guarantee what you’ll find until you open the ground. Because of the poor soil, there’s been lots of undercutting and removal of the unstable soil.”

### **Small machines make big contributions**

Carcel & G’s equipment fleet consists of 160 pieces of rolling stock, including 70 Cat® machines. On the Highway 11 project alone, 28 pieces of equipment are deployed, with Cat machines making up more than half of the fleet. To support the large volume of earthmoving, key machines utilized on

the job include the reliable Cat 336 Hydraulic Excavator, D6 Dozers, and a variety of finishing dozers, compact track loaders and a mini excavator.

Advanced technology on Cat machines further enhances their efficiency. GPS grading systems streamline the excavation and grading processes, significantly reducing the need for manual labor and ensuring precise execution.

“Many of our machines have integrated GPS controls,” McDonald says. “We have excavators speed ditch digging and pipe laying. A lot of our dozers do a majority of the rough grading. It

*(Continued on page 18)*

saves many man hours based on not having a couple of extra guys setting and monitoring grades all the time. You always have the site plan in front of you, so all the operators have to do is cut to fill to achieve grade.”

As an essential tool for fleet management, Cat VisionLink® provides real-time data on hours, locations, and fault codes, enabling proactive maintenance and optimal fleet utilization.

“VisionLink is just something that’s indispensable to our operation,” says Carcel & G fleet manager Justin Taylor. “I would hate to be without it—it’s an integral part of managing our fleet. I have a screen in my office dedicated to VisionLink. We use it every day to track machine hours, locations and fault codes.”

### **Partnering with Thompson Tractor**

Carcel & G has developed strong partnerships over the years. One of the most important is with Cat dealer Thompson Tractor, a trusted equipment supplier that plays a crucial role in their operations. With a Customer Value

Agreement (CVA) in place on all of the contractor’s Cat machines, Thompson Tractor ensures all maintenance needs are met in a timely manner, from routine oil changes to comprehensive inspections.

“The service department at Thompson Tractor understands the nature of our work,” Taylor says. “They understand that we are production oriented, so when one of our machines is down, they know the impact it has on our productivity, and they’re very responsive and fast to get our machines back up and running.”

Eric Hutcheson, the dealer sales representative from Thompson Tractor, is a key figure in this relationship. With over 20 years of experience, Hutcheson brings a wealth of knowledge and reliability to the table. He assists Carcel & G in selecting the right machines and attachments, planning production strategies, and ensuring that every piece of equipment is optimized for maximum efficiency.

“I’ve known Eric Hutcheson for probably 20 years,” Taylor says. “He’s been in the equipment business

for a very long time, and he’s very knowledgeable and just a joy to work with from a business perspective. If Eric tells you that he’s going to do something, he does it. If he needs to get back with you, he’ll do it promptly. If he doesn’t have an answer, he’ll find someone who does.”

Carcel & G also has regular contact with Thompson Tractor product support representatives.

“They come in every month and meet with us,” Taylor says. “We discuss any fault codes that may have popped up on our machines, or any oil samples that require action. Thompson has done site planning for us. They’ve helped us with production studies and overall fleet management.

“Their accounting system is linked into our fleet management system, so if we buy a part at Thompson over the counter, it automatically opens a work order on our end,” Taylor adds. “The Thompson Tractor team is highly integrated into our business, and plays a key role in helping us be successful.” **OTJ**



## **CARCEL & G CONSTRUCTION**

**Location:** Cullman, Alabama.

**Employees:** 110

**Dealer:** Thompson Tractor

**Cat® equipment:** 252B Skid Steer Loader, 259D3 Compact Track Loader (3), 305 Mini Excavator; Backhoe Loaders: 416E, 420D, 420E, 420F; Hydraulic Excavators: 312E, 315F, 320E, 320F (2); M318D Wheel Excavator; Wheel Loaders: 930H, 930M; IT38 Integrated Tool Carrier; Dozers: D3K2 D4, D5C, D5G, D5K2 (5), D5N, D6N, D6T (3), CP56B Vibratory Soil Compactor



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Prepping your equipment for peak season? Looking for an alternative to buying brand new? No matter the circumstance, there's a good chance an equipment rebuild is right for you.

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Every Cat Certified Rebuild includes a like-new warranty on all replaced parts, and you can add an optional Equipment Protection Plan (EPP)\*\* to protect your machine, power train, hydraulic or machine component rebuild.

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**To learn more about the options available under the Cat Certified Rebuild Program, contact our dealership.**

\*Offer valid through December 31, 2024, on select models of compact and large Cat equipment. Offer restricted to customers in the USA and Canada. A \$500 minimum purchase invoice is required unless otherwise stated. Rental transactions do not count toward \$500 minimum. Offer includes 1) special financing rate with the Cat Card account and 2) a 36 months/5,000 hours (whichever occurs first) Certified Powertrain and Hydraulics Rebuild Equipment Protection Plan (EPP). Customers not required to redeem both offers. Offer does not apply to purchases subject to invoice billing (see your Cat Card agreement for invoice billing terms). Offer subject to change without prior notice. Additional terms and conditions may apply. Check with your Cat dealer for specific details and a complete list of eligible models.

\*\*Coverage differs by country. Additional coverage terms are available.

Financing is subject to credit approval by Caterpillar Financial Commercial Account Corporation for US customers, and Caterpillar Financial Services Limited for Canadian customers. Not all customers will qualify. Visit Catcard.com or contact your Cat dealer for more information.

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*– Lucy Thompson Marsh, Owner*

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