

Technology Delivers Improved **PERFORMANCE**

Hybrid excavator reduces fuel consumption by more than **50 percent**



Utilizing the latest technology and construction techniques to improve efficiency and productivity provides Ricklefs Excavating, Ltd. with an edge in the highly competitive earthmoving market.

“We keep trying to find ways to get more and more work done with less. It takes a lot of thinking outside the box, and working to find a better way. We don’t want to become stuck in a rut,” said Bryce Ricklefs, owner and president of the Iowa-based company.

Willingness to embrace new technology led to the company’s purchase of a Cat® 336E L Hybrid Excavator, which has reduced fuel consumption by more than 50 percent. “We run about four gallons per hour laying pipe with a 90,000 pound machine. That has been a great machine for that application,” Ricklefs said.

The contractor had been burning nine to 11 gallons per hour to do the work previously with machines of the same size. “With the fuel efficiency of the 336E L Hybrid, we figure we’ll save about \$12,000 per year in operating costs,” Ricklefs said. “The E Series of Excavators has very smooth controls, great balance. It’s just an excellent excavator.”

The 336E L removed existing asphalt and concrete to enable construction of a helipad recently at Jones Regional Medical Center in Anamosa, Iowa.

Ricklefs Excavating, Ltd., works mainly within a 75-mile radius of company headquarters in Anamosa. The firm, which has approximately 30 employees, specializes in civil construction, grading, and sewer and water construction. Approximately 80 percent of the company’s business involves public works projects.

“We’re always looking to improve the methods we use to perform the work in order to increase our production and grow our share of the market,” Ricklefs said. “A lot of our success is due to operating efficiencies. We like to utilize larger machines on jobs, such as D6R Dozers, and 330- and 345-class excavators. That enables



us to move more material quickly and complete jobs faster than using smaller machines.”

Ricklefs is an operator himself, including the 336E L Hybrid Excavator.

“I really like the Cat excavators. They have a lot of power, the hydraulics are very strong, and they have superior lifting power. They’re very well balanced,” Ricklefs said. “The E Series, especially, has made leaps and bounds in smoothness of operation. The controls are very graceful, very fluid.”

Peak Performance

With the technology emphasis, GPS is standard on all Ricklefs Excavating dozers. “GPS has become a backbone to the efficiency on the earthmoving side of the business,” Ricklefs said. “It saves so much time. It’s become an industry necessity to stay competitive.”

The effort to improve efficiency and productivity includes paying close attention to the set-up of machines to achieve peak performance.

With clay and sand soils common in the area in which Ricklefs Excavating most often works, closely spaced spade nose teeth are utilized on excavator buckets when trenching. The teeth typically last 2,000 hours. “We get a



RICKLEFS EXCAVATING, LTD.

President/Owner: Bryce Ricklefs

Location: Anamosa, IA

Established: 1998

Employees: 30

Services: Civil construction, grading, and sewer and water construction

faster, smoother bottom running the close spade nose teeth compared to straight teeth. Rock is normally not a big concern for us,” Ricklefs said.

“We always try to set our machines up with the widest pads we can

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— BRYCE RICKLEFS
President/Owner
Ricklefs Excavating, Ltd.

get on them,” Ricklefs said. “We’ve been setting up most of the excavators with quick couplers, too, so we can quickly switch bucket sizes for different applications. That also gives us the ability to crane and lift heavier structures at the jobsite.”

The contractor utilizes a variety of buckets, hammers and compactors on excavators to increase machine versatility. Shears and concrete crushers are rented as needed.

From The Beginning

Ricklefs Excavating, Ltd. has been running Cat dozers, compactors, and excavators since the company was founded in 1998.

“We like Cat equipment because of the excellent availability of parts,

and the product support that comes with the machines. The equipment has good reliability and good uptime,” Ricklefs said. “Whenever we need a part, it is there. If they don’t have it in stock, it will be there first thing in the morning.”

Altorfer Cat has done a great job supporting equipment. “They are very attentive. If there is a problem, they work very hard to make sure the machine gets up and running. They’re there to make sure that we succeed,” Ricklefs said.

A strong preventive maintenance program helps keep uptime high. “Uptime is very high,” Ricklefs said. “The machines are always rolling.”

Ricklefs Excavating owns most of the machines used on jobs. “We’ll

rent project-specific machines when we need to,” Ricklefs said.

Cat Financial is often used to purchase machines. “Excavators and dozers we try to purchase new. We put enough work through them that we feel we get the best machine cost over the life of the machine doing that,” Ricklefs said.

Utilizing the latest technology and construction techniques to improve performance keeps Ricklefs Excavating growing, even in the recent recession.

And the future is bright. Crews were working more than 15 jobs going into the fourth quarter of this year, and there is a backlog going into 2015. “We’re pretty positive about the workload ahead,” Ricklefs said. ■

