



“Workin’ It” in Omaha

R&B Excavating’s motto is “Workin’ It.” It’s a big reason why the Omaha, Nebraska-based sanitary sewer and storm pipe specialist is one of the busiest contractors in the area. It’s also consistent with Omaha’s growth strategy.

MORE THAN CORNFIELDS

Omaha’s no backwater town. Billed as a “Midwestern oasis,” greater Omaha has worked hard to promote its attractive business climate. It’s paid off handsomely, with a growth rate far above the national average. Rated by *Forbes* magazine as the 11th-best city for business and careers, and home to four Fortune-500 headquarters, Omaha plays host to the likes of billionaire

Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway, Inc.; ConAgra Foods; The Gallup Organization; Mutual of Omaha; construction giant Peter Kiewit Sons’ Inc.; telecommunications firm Qwest; and the Union Pacific Railroad.

TAKING THE HEAT

That solid growth bodes well for companies like R&B Excavating. Omaha’s expansion, combined with R&B’s quality reputation, keeps the

COLOR ME ORANGE.

Underground Utilities

sewer contractor's project schedule full. Owner Russ "Peewee" Thille says his firm generally tackles eight to ten projects a year — jobs with price tags ranging from \$400,000 to \$1 million. Obviously, his equipment is a key component in how smoothly those projects run, but it was a move to reduce both fuel costs and maintenance-related downtime that ultimately led him to Hitachi.

"The price of fuel is on everyone's mind these days, and we're no exception," says Thille. "Plus, we're concerned about how often we have to replace fuel filters on some of our excavators. In many cases, it's every 120 hours. By comparison, we have an older machine with an Isuzu engine that gets more than 700 hours on a single filter. That unit also happens to be our best performer when the temperatures get into the upper 90s and low 100s. So, when the local Hitachi dealer told us about their Isuzu engines, I was instantly interested."

That interest translated to a purchase of a Zaxis 450LC in early 2005. Thille says the unit has been an excellent addition to the fleet, and has won praise from his operators who like the added power and surprising speed.

"I like the fuel savings and needing to change fuel filters only twice a year," says Thille. "The filters on some of our other machines need to be changed 25 times per year. Being down 20 to 30 minutes for a filter change doesn't sound like much, but it adds up. So there's a time savings as well. Not to mention the loss of productivity having four laborers standing around."

WORKING IN THE SHADOWS

One of R&B's latest projects involved laying over eight miles of 10-inch sewer for the 900,000-square-foot Shadow Lake Towne Center retail area in the southern suburb of Papillion.

"This was a 130-acre project," Thille says. "I had two crews in there for most of the job, first to lay the main trunk line, then to dig roughly 400 sewer stubs. Each stub ranged from 15- to 20-feet deep. We also did a 15-inch outfall and several 96-inch siphon structures that were 15-feet deep."

The Zaxis 450LC used a 54-inch, 3.06-cubic-yard bucket for most of the excavation, and a 30-inch, 1.57-cubic-yard bucket with the aggregate box. A quick-coupler made the change-out between the two buckets quick and easy.

"We moved a decent amount of dirt on that project, and the Hitachi was a great performer. When the snow was flying late in the season, it was nice to have a machine like the Zaxis 450 there for us."

*R&B Excavating is serviced by
Murphy Tractor & Equipment,
Omaha, Nebraska.*



COLOR ME ORANGE.

Underground Utilities