

CONTINUED PRODUCTIVITY

Why your older Komatsu equipment remains an efficient and reliable choice

The advent of interim Tier 4 emissions standards was ushered in as the calendar turned to 2011, affecting machinery with engine horsepower in the 175 to 750 range. While the standards mandate a reduction in soot and other emissions in new machines, that doesn't mean you have to immediately get rid of your older dozers, excavators and wheel loaders.

"Many of our customers prefer to continue using their older Komatsu pieces because they've found them reliable and a good fit for their business," said Komatsu's Erik Wilde, Vice President, Product Marketing. "They go right on racking up the hours on those machines."

Contractors using Komatsu equipment, such as Webber, LLC, continue to turn the hour meter to impressive numbers. Webber does heavy highway work, and its two subsidiaries recycle materials and manufacture precast concrete barriers. The company also has sand pits and

Many contractors use older Komatsu excavators for a variety of purposes, including such rugged applications as demolition.

concrete and asphalt plants. For more than 20 years, Komatsu excavators, dozers and wheel loaders have been in the companies' fleets.

"Komatsu has been our top equipment choice because it has proven time and again to be productive and reliable," said Donnie Poplaski, Director Equipment Department for Webber. "We have some wheel loaders with more than 25,000 hours and excavators pushing 13,000 to 15,000 hours that still have the original componentry. That says a lot about the quality that Komatsu offers."

Komatsu quality means its equipment runs even in the toughest conditions. Shawn and Todd Harders have found that to be the case with the D65 dozers and PC200 excavators they use to do agricultural and wetland work. The brothers own and operate Harders Dozer & Scraper Work, which often clears land in inhospitable areas.

"We've always believed Komatsu excavators are top-of-the-line," said Todd. "We use our PC200s to remove trees or stack trees that the dozers push up. We also use them to dig channels. Working in water up to two feet deep, which we often do, is tough on equipment. We have 10,000 hours on a Dash-6 excavator that's more than 10 years old. That's a good testament to how well our Komatsu equipment works and lasts."

Hour after hour

Grant Meenach, founder and President of Kern Pacific nearly echos those sentiments. Meenach recently added a PC800LC-8 to a fleet that's always leaned heavily toward Komatsu equipment. Not long after Meenach went into business for himself in 1998, he purchased a PC220LC-5 excavator and a WA320-3 wheel loader.





Contractors often rely on older Komatsu equipment because they find that even with high hours, it works in less-than-ideal conditions. “We’ve always believed Komatsu excavators were top-of-the-line,” said Todd Harder of Harders Dozer & Scraper Work. “We have 10,000 hours on a Dash-6 excavator that’s more than 10 years old. That’s a good testament to how well our Komatsu equipment works and lasts.”

Of course, the latest model PC800LC hydraulic excavator has helped Kern Pacific quickly complete even deep digs up to 30 feet. Meenach said his older Komatsu equipment still does an excellent job of helping the company stay productive and complete projects on time.

“I’ve kept buying Komatsu equipment because its durability means it runs and runs without costing us downtime,” Meenach acknowledged. “We’ve put up to 15,000 hours on a wheel loader without doing much more than routine maintenance. And, when I believe it’s time to trade or sell, Komatsu holds its value.”

Demo starts a trend

All it took for ready-mix concrete producer Ellensburg Cement Products to see Komatsu’s value was a demo that compared apples to apples. The third-generation family business began using Komatsu products about 10 years ago. President Jeff Hutchinson explained that from the first time the company used a Komatsu excavator, he saw a big difference.

“We had a different brand of excavator that was getting very old and wasn’t giving us the productivity we wanted,” said Hutchinson. “We called the top equipment dealers in the region and told them we wanted to demo their machines, so they all brought similar-size excavators out for us to try. Bottom line, the Komatsu PC600 performed the best.”

Ellensburg Cement Products eventually traded in its initial PC600 for another, and began buying additional Komatsu pieces, including a WA600 wheel loader, a WA500 wheel loader and an HD325 haul truck.



Companies such as Brannan Sand and Gravel use older Komatsu wheel loaders to charge crushers and as general-purpose machines. “What I’m looking for is reliability and fuel efficiency — machines I can count on every day and that won’t break me paying for diesel fuel — and that’s what I get from our Komatsu machines,” said Aggregate Production Supervisor Jim Thompson.

“All of our Komatsu units have held up really well,” said General Superintendent George Seubert. “We use the WA600 to feed the crusher and the WA500 to feed the wash plants. We now have 8,000 hours on the WA600. It still runs great. Also, fuel consumption on both wheel loaders and the excavator has been very good.”

Consistently fuel efficient

Fuel efficiency is one reason Brannan Sand and Gravel keeps purchasing Komatsu equipment. It helps that its Komatsu units maintain low fuel consumption even as the hour meter creeps into the five-digit range.

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Komatsu — productive equipment that lasts

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Brannan Sand and Gravel is part of the Brannan Companies, which include Brannan Ready Mix and Brannan Construction. With the three entities, Brannan Companies handle complete projects for heavy highway and commercial development as a general or subcontractor, as well as supplying materials.

The Brannan Companies rely heavily on Komatsu equipment, including excavators, wheel loaders and haul trucks, especially in their material pits. "We started using Komatsu machines eight or nine years ago," said Equipment and Shop Division Manager Chuck Irsik. "We'd been running another brand prior to that, but when we were in the market for a new wheel loader around 2001, we thought we should probably do some demos and compare prices. Komatsu performed well in the demo and was priced fairly, so we decided to give it a try. Komatsu machines have been a mainstay for us ever since. They are productive, reliable units that last a long time."

"All of our Komatsu pieces in the pits have performed well, including those that have a lot of hours on them," added Aggregate Production Supervisor Jim Thompson. "What I'm looking for is reliability and fuel efficiency — machines I can count on every day and that won't break me paying for diesel fuel — and that's what I get from our Komatsu machines."

Komatsu machines maintain their reliability and longevity into the thousands of hours. "All of our Komatsu units have held up really well," observed Ellensburg Cement Products General Superintendent George Seubert.

Familiarity leads to purchase

Owner/President Bob Quinn was already familiar with Komatsu equipment when he founded Quinn Construction in 1992. The company does general earthwork and demolition, using several PC200LC excavators, a PC220LC excavator and two WA500-1 wheel loaders.

"I've always believed that proper maintenance is vital, because it ensures that the equipment performs to its maximum capabilities, even with a high number of hours," said Quinn. "The other factor I'm adamant about is buying quality equipment to start with, and that's why over the years we've purchased and stayed with Komatsu. I used Komatsu machinery when I worked for someone else and saw first-hand how well it performed. When I started acquiring equipment, Komatsu was at the top of my list."

Quinn appreciates the versatility the excavators provide, as he uses them for excavation as well as equipping them with quick couplers to run several attachments for demolition. "We get a lot of flexibility from the excavators," said Quinn. "The wheel loaders have been outstanding as well. We used to do some crushing, and we originally bought them for feeding the crushers. Now they're general-purpose machines. Both have about 16,000 hours on them and are still as productive as they were when we purchased them."

In it for the long haul

Komatsu's Wilde said he hears numerous similar stories around the country and throughout Canada as users continue to see the value, reliability and productivity in even the oldest Komatsu machines.

"In many cases, equipment users like to keep machinery as long as possible because it continues to earn them profits long after it's paid off," said Wilde. "With Komatsu equipment, they're confident that's going to be the case. We do everything we can from a product support standpoint for that to happen by continuing to stock parts at our distributors, parts depots and main parts location. When customers are ready to add to or update their fleets, our latest technology models are an excellent choice for many reasons. Like our customers, we're in it for the long haul." ■

