

# AGGRESSIVE *Wal-Mart* Site

**H.E. Sargent and Maine Drilling & Blasting move 1.7 million yards of earth and rock at Lewiston job**

Story by Alan Rosenberg  
Photos by Matt Noyes

**U**nder six lighting plants brightening the scene, it was hard to tell day from night for five weeks last fall at a 65-acre construction site in Lewiston, Maine. Crews from site contractor H.E. Sargent worked two 11-hour shifts around the clock, six days a week to prepare the area for a new Wal-Mart distribution center. At the peak of construction, sub-contractor Maine Drilling and Blasting drilled, loaded and detonated three shots a day.

On the busiest of days, rumbling across the sandy terrain – much of the site was

once a sand and gravel pit – one could count as many as 14 35-ton articulated Caterpillar ADTs, six Cat excavators (two 345s, one 330 and three 325s), one D-9, two D-8s, five D-6s, a 337 backhoe, four loaders (two 980s and two 938s), a 769 water wagon, six compaction rollers, and a grader.

Added to that were Maine Drilling and Blasting's three drills – two Atlas Copco D7s and one 748.

That's what it took to move 1.7 million cubic yards of earth in a relatively short period of time.

With an elevation difference of 100 feet, simply leveling the area required an

extensive amount of work. Then, with 20 acres of buildings and additional acres of parking lots and roads, there is a need to construct five retention ponds for run-off. Site work also includes preparing the ground for two 10,000-gallon water tanks and pump house for the sprinkler system.

Below Left: H.E. Sargent uses a Cat excavator to load a Cat truck at Lewiston Wal-Mart site.

Top Right: Site contractor is moving 1.7 million cubic yards of earth for distribution warehouse.

Bottom Right: Maine Drilling & Blasting's Atlas Copco drill bores 4-inch holes for explosives.



The earthmoving operation, required primarily to level the site, is the first stage in the construction of a new Wal-Mart grocery distribution center that will serve 30 stores in the New England area, according to Mia Masten, community affairs for Wal-Mart.

When the \$60-million project is complete, two buildings will total 900,000

square feet. The first phase, including the site work, roads and parking for the entire project, will culminate in the opening of the dry-goods distribution building a year from now. The second phase, a 100-foot-tall building to store refrigerated and frozen grocery



Shooting three times a day on average, blaster filled boreholes with up to 4,000 pounds of explosives per shot.

items, is set for completion in 2006. Five retention ponds are being constructed to capture run-off from the buildings and parking lots.

William H. Lane, Inc., of Binghamton, New York, is the general contractor. Sub-contractor Jay-Ton Construction, of Tennessee, is charged with pouring 45,000 cubic yards of concrete, foundations, slabs, and paving, relying on equipment that includes a John Deere 200 excavator, two John Deere 310 backhoes, two 25-ton off road dump trucks (one John Deere and one Terex), and three 6,000-pound Lull fork lifts.

For its part, at the peak of site work, Maine Drilling crews detonated as many as three blasts a day, trimming ledge, helping to excavate a retention pond, and trenching for utilities, according to blast superintendent Tim Frazee.

Reducing the 35-foot-high ledge to rubble required loading as many as 40 4-inch-diameter holes with up to 4,000 pounds of explosives. To prevent fly-rock, the blast area is covered with 24 10,000-pound mats.

"Though we have to work fast, safety is always the primary consideration," said Frazee. And safety depends on coordination. "We have all this equipment working close to us and several dozen people on the job site. So every time we blast we have to coordinate with the contractor, security guards and city fire officials and communicate with hand-held radios to ensure that the area is secure.

"As soon as the dust clears from a shot, we are preparing for the next one," said Frazee. "I've been in this business for almost 30 years, and it's one of the most aggressive sites I've been on." ■

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