A Half Century of Shattering Rock

Maine Drilling & Blasting

50th Anniversary

YOUR TRUSTED BREED

making it happen
Maine Drilling & Blasting has shattered millions of cubic yards of rock throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region over the past 50 years, doing so prosperously in what is arguably the most scrutinized and regulated segment of the construction industry.

Drilling and blasting rock is a sophisticated subset of construction, an art form as well as an engineering discipline that demands extraordinary skill and attention to detail. Blasters don’t have to get it right most of the time – they have to get it right all of the time. They can’t quietly and routinely correct a bad shot, because flyrock or excessive shaking of structures or even more harmful results are usually spectacular public events. So it is remarkable that a company engaged in activities so potentially fraught with danger has not only survived for a half-century, it has become one of the largest and most successful providers of drilling, blasting and related services in the U.S.

The company was launched in March 1966 by Ted Purington Sr. and wife Judy in their Gardiner, Maine, kitchen. Early on, Ted stressed attention to details as core company policy, especially with regard to employee and public safety.

“Dad had been a drill sergeant in the Army and he brought that kind of discipline and commitment to his new company,” said Bill Purington, Company Chairman and CEO.

“When he told his customers what he was going to do that’s all he thought about until it got done. He believed in working hard, being honest and delivering high-quality service, and he raised his children to think and work the same way,” said Bill.

In the early days, when the company was operating out of the kitchen headquarters, project management consisted of MD&B blasters setting up job sites under the supervision of Ted Sr. At the end of the day, he would grill them with questions on drill productions, patterns, powder factors and quantities. This was referred to by blasters as Ted’s “50 Questions,” and eventually they formed the basis for the company’s “Operating Standards.”

Years later, when the company had grown to the point that it had several Operating Divisions, even Divisional Managers were subject to Ted’s “50 Questions.”

Maine Drilling & Blasting has set standards of safety and professionalism in the construction industry’s most closely scrutinized segment.
Highest Operating Standards
Ted Purington, Jr., Executive Vice President, commented on the company’s operating standards:

“Some of Maine Drilling’s very first projects were highway construction, which honed our performance ethic. There was a mentality that went along with highway construction; its operations were very precise, streamlined and dialed in to be the most efficient. The expectations of MD&B were high, which in turn demanded our performance to be at the highest operating standard and treated with a strong sense of urgency. This flowed naturally from the principles on which Dad started the company: hard work, honesty, quality of service, and operating with a sense of urgency.

“That same set of operating standards has been upheld and matured over the years. We do what we tell the customer we’re going to do and meet their schedules no matter the degree of difficulty.

“Overcoming Setbacks

Dad started the company: hard work, honesty, quality service, and operating with a strong sense of urgency. We do what we tell the customer we’re going to do and meet their schedules no matter the degree of difficulty. Our foundation for operating at a high level was put in place in our early years and continued to grow and expand. For example, MD&B has acquired nine drilling and blasting companies throughout the Northeast, supports more than 200 quarries and blasted more than 2 million controlled blasts. We have also pioneered bulk emulsion technology and drilling technology, and currently operate approximately 100 modern hydraulic drills,” Bill said.

Strategic Focus on Local Service

As MD&B acquired other drilling and blasting companies, it gained their physical assets, contacts with local customers, and skilled drillers and blasters. These experienced drillers and blasters were thoroughly familiar with the geography of their own regions, and thus contributed a high level of expertise to the company. The acquisitions dovetailed with MD&B’s strategic focus on local service:

“We’ve always worked to give regional map, with local people,” explained Bill. “This means local employees and resources for operations. We’ve made it a point to commit to a local presence wherever we go. That’s how we started, that’s how we operate today.”

Still a Family Business

At present, MD&B employee nearly 400 people, has six construction divisions and four quarry divisions, and is registered to do business in the six New England states, plus New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia and West Virginia.

“During that half-century of evolution from a tiny startup in Maine to an internationally recognized specialist in rock blasting, MD&B has remained a family business. Long before Ted Sr. and Judy retired in 1996, their sons, Ted, Jr., Jim and Tom had become involved with the company in different capacities, and they were followed by son, Bill, joining the company as General Manager in 1982 to help guide the company’s reorganization.

Jim and Tom retired in 2006 and 2007, respectively. And third generation William Purington II, is now the company’s Executive Division Manager.

Personal Stakes Boost Performance

Many employees have joined the family business participating in the MD&B’s stock ownership plan established by the company in 2004, which gives them a stake in the company at no cost to them. MD&B’s Employee Stock Ownership Plan not only benefits employees, it enhances individual accountability and service as well. Having a personal investment in the success of the company encourages employees to take responsibility for performing their own job as well as the most professional manner possible.

According to Ted Werner, Senior Vice President, employee ownership yields benefits for not only employees but the company and customers as well:

“Maine Drilling & Blasting is its people. Good, hard-working people who have committed their lives, focus, and energy day in and day out to getting the job done safely and efficiently. We don’t shy away from a challenge.

“Our team is made up of the most disciplined, experienced and talented craft and management people in the industry. And we’re owned in the company, from laborers to executives. We come to work every day doing what we love. We work to earn our resources and our customers to find better, smarter, safer ways to do things because it’s in our customers’ best interests and in our own best interests. The more efficient you are, the more you save, the more you pass that value to your customer, the company and, ultimately to yourself.”

“That’s very inspiring, very motivating. Our current generation truly acts in an ownership capacity, and everybody benefits,” Werner said.

9/11 Inspires Stiffer Regulations

Employee Ownership motivation helps trim operating costs and boost profits, but more importantly, it is key to corporate survival in an environment of complex government safety regulations placed on the drilling and blasting industry, especially in the aftermath of September 11, 2001.

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and in the past four years has lowered the average age of company executives from 65 to 55. Mitchell Green, Senior Vice President, has been responsible for creating a Leadership Development Program that incorporates several levels of training to prepare two types of employees for leadership roles. The in-house training is taught by teams from the Engineering Department, while Product Services teams conduct bulk truck driver and operator training. The in-house trainers comprised of highly experienced field employees provided by four groups, Equipment Services, Product Services, Technical Services, and the Engineering Department.

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The Leadership Development Program includes the Leadership Development Program’s Executive Education Program and the Leadership Development Program’s Executive Education Program. The Executive Education Program includes: superintendence training, which cultivates high potential operating officers; a two-year executive education program that incorporates several levels of training to prepare for leadership roles; and the development of senior company leaders.

Green said the Leadership Development Program has been underway for 15 years and in the first year, they have lower the average age of company executives from 65 to 55. Mitchell Green, Senior Vice President, has been responsible for creating a Leadership Development Program that incorporates several levels of training to prepare two types of employees for leadership roles. The in-house training is taught by teams from the Engineering Department, while Product Services teams conduct bulk truck driver and operator training. The in-house trainers comprised of highly experienced field employees provided by four groups, Equipment Services, Product Services, Technical Services, and the Engineering Department.

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Training MB&I’s Third Generation

Maintaining high levels of performance in the drilling and blasting industry requires people of the highest caliber and a training program set at the highest standards, according to Mitch Green, Senior Vice President. "We look at training as being vital to organizational development and to our sustainability as a company. What's most important is that we train people not only in skills and trades but also to become culturally aligned with the company," Green said.

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At first glance, the actual process of shattering rock seems elementary. However, doing this safely, predictably, efficiently, economically and within a specific job timeframe takes extensive planning for each project.

Blasting equipment, or the process of breaking rock, is a complex operation. The number of parameters that have to be taken into consideration when designing a blast plan for a project is noteworthy. And this means, like Murphy’s Law, things that could go wrong would go wrong, if not for the exhaustive attention to detail exercised by engineers, drillers and blasters performing this work.

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