

Finding an All-Season Solution in Canada

Premay Pipeline Hauling relies on DECKHAND® to get big jobs done in rain, snow or shine.

EARLY DAYS

With an estimated 840,000 km of transmission, gathering and distribution pipelines within Canada, Premay Pipeline Hauling, L.P. (Premay) has been at the forefront of many of Canada's most successful pipeline construction projects over the past 35 years.

When Paul Schultz took over from his father, Les Schultz, as Senior Vice President in 2003, he hoped to carry Premay's success into a new era by committing to a plan of continual operational improvement, while remaining true to the four core values that his father had woven into Premay's DNA: operational excellence, integrity, people focus, and safety.

In Premay's early years, its crews handled pipe using cranes or side booms equipped with straps, chains, and end-hooks. Paul had been thinking about this pipe handling process for years with an eye towards making it more efficient and safer.

"Deploying cranes for this work was always challenging because of the time and money involved in mobilising the equipment, not to mention the training and hiring of skilled operators. Also, working in Canada's harsh winter conditions made this a less than ideal way to do things," stated Schultz.

With the goal of improving the process, Paul decided to introduce excavator-mounted vacuum lifts to his



jobsites during the summer of 2006. Originally designed in 1999, vacuum lifts were designed to use a diesel motor powering a suction pump to create a seal between the attachment and the pipe, thereby allowing an operator to move pipe using an excavator.

"However, I found that vacuum lifts just did not work very well for us in the winter. Our guys still needed to tarp the pipe or remove snow and ice by hand prior to lifting, and the diesel motors weren't always wanting to start in the cold. The labour needed to perform these tasks was too much for what it was worth."

Because of these drawbacks, Premay would continue to use side booms and cranes during the winter months and then switch back to vacuum lifts during the summer.

A CHANGE IN DIRECTION

Schultz first heard of the DECKHAND® in 2010. An attachment that is powered by an excavator's auxiliary hydraulic circuit, it uses a variety of interchangeable arms to securely grip the pipe during lifting operations.

"When I first saw DECKHAND®, I thought it could really work well for us. Because it is a mechanical design that is powered by the excavator's hydraulics, it didn't appear to have any of the winter drawbacks of the vacuum lift. However, I wanted to see it in action for myself," said Schultz.

He arranged for a demonstration on a jobsite during a cold, blustery, snowy day. Schultz was immediately impressed with DECKHAND®'s ability to pick up and move snow-covered pipe. Furthermore, the design of the DECKHAND® gave his operator ▶

► total control of the load without the need for taglines, whilst its load holding safety systems removed the possibility of accidentally dropping a pipe.

“During the demonstration, I kept thinking that using DECKHAND® could lead to higher productivity with less manpower and improved safety, so I decided to rent my first DECKHAND®s shortly afterwards,” says Schultz. Premay would continue using DECKHAND® during the winter on all their jobsites from 2010 - 2012.

At the end of 2012, Schultz made the decision to switch from renting to purchasing, and acquired his first four DECKHAND®s. “My rental experiences had made me a believer. DECKHAND® saved labour and prevented incidents. Fewer workers also meant fewer challenges. Instead of splitting time between vacuum lifts in the summer and cranes in the winter, along came DECKHAND® which was viable not only during the winter months but 365 days a year.”

An important part of Premay’s business is the loading and unloading of rail cars. Using cranes and side booms for this task had been challenging for Schultz, given the complexity of the process and the need for highly skilled operators. DECKHAND® alleviated this challenge by removing the need for cranes and end-hooks. The equipment’s total control design and camera system allow operators to confidently perform this task.

“Even with DECKHAND®, loading and unloading rail cars requires careful attention to detail and a skilled operator. Out of my 25 operators, I have five who specialise and have been trained for this type of work,” states Schultz.

Premay now benefits by being able to bring new operators on board with greater ease. Schultz credits LaValley Industries for being there from day one to assist Premay in training their operators utilizing train-the-trainer programs for proper product usage and technique.

Premay continues to ensure its operators have the most current operating training, with the goal of staying at the forefront.

TAKING CANADA BY STORM

Premay has pioneered the use of DECKHAND® in Canada and has in turn introduced it to other contractors and energy companies alike. Premay spent a large portion of 2013 working on the Inter Pipeline, Ltd (IPL) pipeline project which begins north of Fort McMurray and runs down to the Heartland Petroleum Chemical complex in Strathcona County, Alberta. Premay used DECKHAND® exclusively to help complete 2700 km stockpiling and stringing 36 - 42 in. pipe, while introducing the equipment to fellow contractors.

Since the Canadian portion of the Keystone XL project has been under construction, Premay has been performing pipe hauling duties using DECKHAND®, continuing stockpiling work continues to this day.

The DECKHAND® model Schultz was originally introduced to was the DH4, which can handle pipe up to 24 inches in diameter. Premay has since grown its fleet to include the DECKHAND® L (DHL) and DECKHAND® XL (DHXL), which can handle pipe up to 56 inches. In fact, Premay was the launch customer for the DHL, taking delivery of the initial four units in 2012.

CHALLENGE

Cranes, chains and vacuum lifts weren't solutions for year round pipe hauling for this Canada contractor.

SOLUTION

DECKHAND® was introduced to improve productivity and safety in harsh weather conditions where other methods had come up short.

OUTCOME

DECKHAND® advantages and easy training improved efficiency and safety on Premay's jobs.



“In the beginning, many people did not understand the new DECKHAND® technology and were skeptical. In fact, every now and then I still have people ask me if it squishes pipe.” said Schultz. “Our introduction of DECKHAND® into the Canadian market has educated people, dispelled myths, and made it a necessity for many,” he continued.

Premay lives by the motto: ‘If we say it, we do it,’ and the DECKHAND® has played an important part in helping the company keep its word. ◆