

A SALUTE TO AN



CUSTOMER

CODDINGTON, INC.

South-central Iowa contractor continues to build niche while remaining diversified

Like other general services excavating contractors, Darrell and Wendy Coddington's success story is typical. They wanted to be in business for themselves, Darrell had a desire to do dirt work, so he started Coddington, Inc. in 1985, incorporating the business in 1997.

But that's only half of the Coddingtons' story. While the Corydon, Iowa-based company continues to do general excavation work, Coddington, Inc. is known for the right-of-way-clearing niche it's created throughout the past several years. The Coddingtons have teamed up with area power companies, providing tree clearing from their power lines and to about 35 feet on either side of the lines. It's specialty work that the Coddingtons weren't expecting to get into when they founded Coddington, Inc.

"It was really a fluke that we got into doing the right-of-way clearing," recalled Darrell, who said Coddington, Inc. began doing

the specialty work a few years ago, but has worked with power companies for much longer. "One of the power companies needed a trencher, and we happened to have one. That led us into doing work for them, which grew into the power-line clearing. We've continued to work for them ever since."

There's been no shortage of clearing work. When the Coddingtons realized the work would be steady, they committed the resources necessary to build that side of Coddington, Inc. Today, the company runs three power-line right-of-way clearing crews.

"There is definitely a need for the clearing," Darrell pointed out. "Many of the power lines have been in place for decades without much maintenance done, so there's quite a bit of undergrowth and tree limbs hanging in the right-of-way and near the lines. That causes problems, and that clearly came to light last winter when an ice storm hit. Many of the power outages in this area were due to limbs falling on the lines. Clearing the right-of-ways is critical."

Darrell and Wendy Coddington own Coddington, Inc., a general excavation contracting firm that also specializes in right-of-way clearing for power companies. Based in Corydon, Iowa, the Coddingtons credit diversification and good employees for nearly 25 years of success.

Building the right equipment list

The Coddingtons found a critical need for the right equipment to do the specialized service. Each crew uses a bucket truck and a Komatsu PC228USLC-3 hydraulic excavator equipped with a specialty head that turns small trees and limbs into mulch.

"The first step is to clear the trees from around the power lines, so that the excavator isn't reaching into that area," explained Darrell. "Once that's done, operators can move the PC228s in and begin turning the limbs and smaller trees in the right-of-way into mulch. The PC228s are excellent for that because they have the hydraulic power to run the heads, but



with the tight tail swing, we can get them into areas where it's not feasible to take a larger machine. We don't have to worry about the counterweight hitting a tree or culvert, and we can even get into a narrow ditch."

The Coddingtons worked with Road Machinery & Supplies Territory Manager Joel Davidson and Southern Operations Sales Manager Larry Smith to purchase the PC228s and set them up to do the work. RMS plumbed the machines and calibrated the hydraulic flow for the specialty heads, which are equipped with teeth and rotate to mulch a standing tree or brush on the ground. RMS also provides on-site service as needed.

"Nobody around here was doing this type of work, including us," said Darrell. "I went to Larry and Joel and told them what I wanted to do. They helped us set up our PC228s for the right-of-way work and have been with us every step of the way to ensure the machines perform the way we need them to. Anytime we've needed something, they've responded very quickly. It's been a real team effort."

The machines are equipped with Komatsu's KOMTRAX remote monitoring system, something the Coddingtons are glad was included when they purchased the PC228s. "It's a fantastic tool, not only for keeping track of where the machines are, but fuel used, idle time and a lot of other features," said Wendy. "For billing purposes, the power companies often ask where a machine was on a certain day. I can pull that information up quickly and tell how many hours it was on that site. We can also quickly track maintenance and error codes, and we can do it all from our kitchen table, office or out on the road."

Continued versatility

In addition to the PC228s, Coddington, Inc. uses a Komatsu PC200LC-8 — also equipped with KOMTRAX — as well as a D65EX dozer and PC40 and PC50 compact excavators that are used for general excavation work. It also rents Komatsu equipment from Road Machinery & Supplies as needed.

Coddington, Inc.'s general excavation work includes land improvement, such as pond



Coddington, Inc. uses Komatsu PC228USLC-3 excavators equipped with specialty heads to take down trees and turn them into mulch in its power-line right-of-way clearing operations. "The PC228s are excellent because they have the hydraulic power to run the heads, but with the tight tail swing, we can get them into areas where it's not feasible to take a larger machine," said Owner Darrell Coddington.



Owner Darrell Coddington tracks several key areas of performance, as well as machine location and hours, using a laptop computer to access Komatsu's KOMTRAX remote machine-monitoring system. The Coddingtons note that KOMTRAX also helps track maintenance.

construction and terrace work for area farmers; water and sewer lines for municipalities; site preparation and basement digging; material hauling; and demolition. In addition, the company has a concrete crew that does flatwork, such as building floors and parking lots.

"We cover a large area of southern Iowa and into northern Missouri, and in this area we have

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Strong customer service focus led to growth

... continued

to be diversified," said Darrell. "That's a key component of our success because our customers range from general contractors to private

homeowners. We learned that early on. Not long after we started out, we acquired a grave-digging business. That's continued to be a part of our business, although it's gradually gotten smaller as we've grown. You can't survive here without being able to adapt to the market."

Its versatility, along with a strong customer-service ideal has helped Coddington, Inc. continue to grow from the early days when the Coddingtons did all the work themselves. "We'd often have our entire family out on a jobsite," Darrell reflected. "Our customers got to know our kids about as well as us. Putting in those long hours and a willingness to take on just about anything a customer needed helped us build a good reputation."

The Coddingtons note that another critical component of their success is an experienced and versatile staff. Among all its services, Coddington, Inc. employs about 15. "We have guys who have been with us a long time and many came from backgrounds that offered experience in a particular area that helped us become better at what we do," said Wendy. "Our concrete crew and, for the most part, the right-of-way clearing crews remain dedicated to those aspects of our business. However, if need be, they can team up with our other staff and work in another area. That flexibility is very valuable, and we appreciate that our employees are willing to work hard to make the business grow and succeed."

Keeping the personal touch

The Coddingtons will continue to offer a myriad of services, but the couple admits that continued growth is not in the plans. Darrell still takes an active, hands-on approach to the business and Wendy continues to do the bookwork.

"We've continued to grow despite not advertising," said Darrell. "That's due to word-of-mouth referrals based on our work ethic and willingness to work with and please the customer. That's something we're very proud of, and I'm not willing to give that up. When customers call, they know we'll answer the phone and do whatever it takes to meet their needs. If we grow more, we risk losing that personal aspect. I never want that to happen." ■



(L-R) One of Coddington, Inc.'s clearing crews is made up of Isaac Coddington and Jerry Davis, while another includes Gene Parham and Carson Haring.



RMS Territory Manager Joel Davidson (left) helps Coddington, Inc. Owner Darrell Coddington with his equipment needs. "They helped us set up our PC228s for the right-of-way work and have been with us every step of the way to ensure the machines perform the way we need them to," said Coddington of RMS. "Anytime we've needed something, they've responded very quickly."

Coddington, Inc. operators use Komatsu excavators in tandem to lower pipe on a project in south-central Iowa.

