

# On the **JOB**™

**GET THE  
BEST GRADES**  
TRANSITION TO GRADE  
CONTROL TECHNOLOGY



## ROUTE TO **SUCCESS**

SON RETURNS TO FAMILY BUSINESS ROOTS

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### **JOINING FORCES**

COUPLE COMBINES TALENTS IN NEW VENTURE

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### DOUBLE **COVERAGE**

TRIBE'S CAT® MACHINES SERVE LARGE TERRITORY

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# ROUTE TO **SUCCESS**

## SON RETURNS TO FAMILY BUSINESS ROOTS

**C**J Morley's journey into the grading and paving business began with a family legacy deeply rooted in the construction industry. Growing up, his father ran a large grading and paving company in Las Vegas for 21 years dating back to 1985.

CJ's own path into the business took some unexpected turns. After his dad was injured in a car wreck during 2006, he left the business just as CJ was heading off to college. Navigating odd jobs and working a stint as an electrician, CJ eventually found himself drawn back into the construction realm, this time as an installer with a solar company.

The pivotal moment occurred when a fellow electrician was seriously injured in an accident

resulting from an electrical discharge. Realizing the risks involved first hand, CJ decided to shift away from electrical work. This led him to explore grading and paving, a familiar domain based on his father's experience.

In 2009, CJ and his dad ventured into a new business chapter. With an initial investment of \$200,000, the pair purchased their first blade and a water truck. This marked the birth of Morley Grading.

Initially, he hoped to capitalize on his dad's established relationships, but CJ soon discovered that he needed to proactively seek new customers. The journey involved overcoming challenges associated with starting a business, then bidding for jobs and

gradually gaining traction in the highly competitive grading and paving industry.

Today, Morley Grading runs three crews and has an average of 15 to 20 open jobs at any given time. The company's commitment to quality and client satisfaction is evident in its diverse project portfolio in the sports, leisure, retail, residential and commercial sectors. Its jobs range from building pads for homes to larger-scale projects like apartment complexes and shopping centers in the Las Vegas Valley.

### **259D a game-changer**

Morley Grading's equipment fleet has expanded over time, and Cat® machines are central to its operating success. With 12 pieces of Cat equipment—ranging from motor graders to wheel loaders, as well as several compact machines—Morley's operation depends on the reliability and performance of his equipment fleet.

The introduction of smaller Cat machines like a mini excavator and a compact track loader has proven especially valuable for finishing work, enhancing efficiency in grading behind curbs and working in tight spaces.

Over time, Morley's Cat 259D Compact Track Loader (CTL) has become an integral part of the operation, serving multiple purposes from finishing work to breaking concrete with a hammer attachment.

“When we're doing intricate grading behind curbs or in confined spaces, the Cat 259D CTL has turned into a real game-changer for us,” Morley says. “We originally bought the CTL when my dad and I built homes next to each other. With all the various attachments, the CTL was very convenient as we built homes and handled many related tasks.

“And then we started taking it out on jobs and finishing corners and parking lots instead of doing it with rakes and the 950 Wheel Loader. Now it's just kind of worked its way into the mix—it's been very useful on every single parking lot we do. We go in and finish with it.”

Versatility and efficiency are crucial, and Cat compact equipment delivers on both fronts, Morley says. For example, crews can break concrete faster using a hammer on the 259 CTL instead of the bucket on its 950K Wheel Loader.

“If it's a commercial entrance, we have the 259D with the hammer on it and we can break the whole thing up,” Morley says. “In the right applications, it saves wear and tear on our other equipment, and the work is completed faster.”

### **Technology = Productivity**

Morley Grading's success is built on a foundation of skilled operators who embrace GPS grading to streamline almost every phase of their work.

*(Continued on page 6)*



“GPS grading and telematics through Cat VisionLink® have been integral to our success,” CJ says. “It’s not just about getting the job done; it’s about doing it with precision, avoiding rework and minimizing downtime.”

CJs’ dad says while there was some initial resistance to machine Grade control technology, construction industry veterans he knows have come to embrace it.

“I also think it’s become a lot easier for the younger generation to get the hang of it,” Corey Morley says. “For me, one of the most difficult things for certain people was teaching them how

“GPS grading and telematics through Cat VisionLink® have been integral to our success. It’s not just about getting the job done; it’s about doing it with precision, avoiding rework and minimizing downtime.”

– CJ MORLEY, OWNER  
MORLEY GRADING

## MORLEY GRADING

**Owner:** CJ Morley

**Location:** Las Vegas, Nev.

**Employees:** 20

**Dealer:** Empire Cat

**Cat® equipment:** 305.5 Mini Excavator, 259D Compact Track Loader, 415F2 Skip Loader, Wheel Loaders: 903D, 938K, 950K, 950GC; Dozers: D6N XL, D8R; Motor graders: 12M2, 160M; CC2.7 GC Utility Compactor



to check grades, because they couldn’t understand up is down and down is up when it comes to cutting and filling.

“Now it’s really simple. You can just follow the screen in your cab—it takes a lot of pressure off of the operator. He knows where the grade line is, and can just proceed with confidence by paying attention to the screen.”





The integration of telematics through Cat's VisionLink technology has proved essential for equipment maintenance, providing timely service reminders and minimizing downtime with critical alerts.

"It helps me understand what is going on with the status of our machines," CJ says. "There's even been times where I've received code alerts, which help us head off smaller issues before they become larger problems."

### **Favorable financing**

Morley Grading was looking for a used 950GC Wheel Loader for about a year when a new option became available that met their specifications. The decision to invest in a new Cat machine was influenced not only by performance, but also by support from Cat dealer Empire Southwest.

"I always kept the new purchases to smaller machines as it made more financial sense," CJ says. "But the timing and the deal that they offered me made too much sense to pass up. The favorable interest rate made a big difference. It knocked off a big chunk of the gap between the cost of buying new versus used. So dollar for dollar, it just made way more sense to go with the new loader.

Cat Financial facilitates Morley's equipment acquisitions, offering favorable rates and terms.

"Cat Financial has been instrumental in our growth," Morley adds. "Their competitive rates and flexible financing options align perfectly with our business strategy, enabling us to expand our fleet strategically more closely aligned with our needs."

### **Dealer support**

As the company continues to grow in the grading and paving sector, CJ Morley remains a dedicated Cat equipment user, acknowledging the reliability, dealer support, and technology solutions that have contributed to Morley Grading's success.

His Empire rep, TJ Sybilrud, has become a trusted ally. There's no substitute for developing an in-depth knowledge of a customer's business and recommending solutions that facilitate profitable growth.

"TJ makes everything super simple—he knows my business and what I'm looking for," CJ says. "Even if I'm not looking for a machine, if the right thing comes around, he'll at least throw it out there for my consideration. When I need help from other experts, he finds the right people for me to speak with.

"It's not just about the machines; it's the partnership we've had with dealerships like Empire," CJ adds. "They've been there to support us every step of the way, whether it's timely parts and service support or finding the right machine that meets our needs." **OTJ**



# JOINING **FORCES**

## COUPLE COMBINES TALENTS IN NEW VENTURE

Seven years ago, Sherry Ronsisvalle was working as an interior designer doing home remodeling projects when she received a call from a homeowner to assist with a ground-up remodeling job north of Birmingham, Ala.

When she went to the home, she met Ken Hays, a contractor who was serving as the GC on the remodeling job.

“We didn’t know each other,” Sherry recalls. “Being the designer that I am, I knew exactly what I wanted—we designers tend to have our preferences. And Ken, being a builder, was very adamant about doing things his way. Most general contractors are leery of interior designers. We think they know more than they do, which obviously I did in this case.”

Sherry designed the kitchen, and would go on to work with Ken off and on for the next six months on other projects. It was during that time they realized more than a professional working relationship was kindling. It was a clear-cut case of opposites attract.

“He’s always telling me to shut up,” she laughs. “But seriously, we realized there was some synergy between us, and we decided to combine our talents.”

A year after first meeting, the pair joined forces in 2017 to form Silverwood Construction, which is based in Gardendale, Ala. The following April, they were married.

### **Timing is everything**

Silverwood’s primary focus is site preparation for subdivisions in northern Jefferson County. The firm is also involved in commercial development and construction.

“We take it from raw land to fully graded and compacted, and ready to go vertical for several national builders,” Ken says. “We make it pad-ready, meaning we do everything but the paving.”

One of the biggest challenges Silverwood faces is developing and selling a prepared piece of land at the right time. Many factors go into that equation. It can





take a year to 18 months before a property can be sold to home builders as finished lots.

“Everything depends on the economy,” Ken says. “Things can change a lot during that time. But finishing the job faster is the name of the game, and utilizing Cat® equipment with grade control definitely makes the process faster and easier.”

Two years ago, Ken demo’d a Cat D4 dozer before purchasing it from Cat dealer Thompson Tractor. That eventually led to the purchase of another D4 dozer, as well as a 336 Hydraulic Excavator and a 745 Articulated Truck.

Based on the large volume of earth that Silverwood crews move when it prepares a subdivision site, Ken points to the D4 dozer’s smooth ride and the ability to remain balanced as it works steep slopes.

“You can run the D4 really fast on auto grade and be confident about accuracy.

The machine runs so smooth that the blade adjusts automatically to achieve the target grade,” he says. “The GPS is able to guide that blade and adjust it to meet whatever grade the developer’s master site plan specifies.”

Utilizing GPS grading helps Silverwood Construction do more in less time, with fewer people and less equipment. Compared to the old method of working from a printed set of plans and using a surveyor and grade stakes around the site, nearly everything in the grading process is now digital. Ken estimates that GPS grading is at least 40 percent faster and consistently more accurate than the old method.

“With the 3D guidance and auto grade, the plan is loaded onto the D4, and it operates off a GPS site plan so that it knows right where the machine is,” Ken says. “So the built-in 3D surface model knows where the cutting edge of our dozer or excavator is positioned. When our operator is cutting a pond,



the touchscreen in the cab shows him precisely how much to cut and fill.

“And when he gets close to reaching grade, he has a button he can push that puts it into auto grade,” he continues. “All he does is pull back on the levers as he always would, but the blade stays on grade. When he approaches the desired finish grade, the D4 basically finishes the job itself.”

*(Continued on page 10)*

The Silverwood crew received training on operating the GPS grading system from a Sitech rep. When it comes to digging trenches for utilities, the system reduces on the time needed to reach the specified depth.

“The excavator will actually auto dig that trench for you at the specified grade,” Ken says. “That’s another benefit, and it saves us a lot of time.”

Ken cites the example of a young, inexperienced operator who became proficient within a month thanks to GPS technology.

“So, you take a person who has never run a dozer, and he’s out here putting dirt down a foot deep at a time,” he says, pointing to an expansive 28-acre site Silverwood Construction was preparing this October. “He can get up to speed much faster as a result of this technology.”

### Hands-on service

As a construction industry veteran, Ken Hays has operated other equipment brands. He is currently in the process

of transitioning his entire fleet to Cat machines.

“We love Cat equipment because it’s a proven brand,” he says. “It holds its value well on the secondary market when you’re ready to trade, plus it has high reliability and longevity compared to other brands. And if you have a breakdown, Thompson Tractor has a large network of branch locations that can usually supply any needed parts the same day or the next morning. Their parts department is open very late so if there’s something you need, they’re just a phone call away.”

Ken and Sherry also appreciate having one point of contact for equipment maintenance.

“Based on the way our business is structured, equipment maintenance is something that is too time consuming for us to keep up with,” Sherry says. “When it’s time for scheduled maintenance, Thompson Tractor comes out and takes care of it for us. They monitor our equipment and let us know when one of our machines requires service—they’re on it and they come to

our location. So having that convenience is something I absolutely love.

“When we’re right in the middle of developing a piece of land, we can’t stop,” Sherry continues. “If it’s late at night or on a Saturday, they’re real good about that, too—they work around our schedule to deliver what we need.”

Sherry and Ken also like the hands-on, personal service they receive from their dealer sales rep, Eric Hutcheson.

“We can call Eric anytime, and he helps us right away,” Sherry says. “If an issue pops up with one of our machines, he knows that time is of the essence. Every day that we’re not producing something is costing us money. Eric takes the time and goes the extra mile to make sure that our needs are met.

“For us, it’s not so much about price, but how well a piece of equipment performs and how our dealer rep and parts and service team take care of us,” she says. “And as far as we are concerned, it’s a perfect match—everything just runs smoothly. It has made our lives so much easier. **OTJ**



## SILVERWOOD CONSTRUCTION

**Owners:** Sherry & Ken Hays

**Location:** Gardendale, Ala.

**Employees:** 8 to 12

**Dealer:** Thompson Tractor

**Cat® equipment:** D4 Dozer (2), 336 Hydraulic Excavator, 745 Articulated Truck





# GET THE BEST **GRADES**

## TRANSITION TO GRADE CONTROL TECHNOLOGY

Grade control is no longer a luxury—it's now required on many projects today. Grade control has moved well beyond a nice-to-have equipment option. It's a necessity to stay in the game and remain competitive.

Here's some advice to help ease the switch from traditional to technology-driven accuracy:

### **1. Request a demo**

You can read all about the advantages of grade control—better accuracy, faster completion times, much less rework, safer jobsites, lower costs—but nothing compares to observing it in action. Ask our dealership for a demonstration. Go to a trade show to see it live. At the very least, watch some videos that give you a sense of how grade control increases accuracy and productivity on actual jobsites.

### **2. Start small**

How many contractors do you know—maybe you're even one of them—who started with a truck and a backhoe and now operate a small, medium or large fleet? That didn't happen overnight. It's the same with technology. You don't need to dive in head first by installing 3D grade control on every machine you own. Dip your toe in the water instead. Perhaps you can

start with one machine and a 2D system that's simpler and less expensive. You can always upgrade as your needs evolve.

### **3. Rent first**

Renting equipment with grade control already built in is a smart way to test its capabilities. That way, you can try out the technology before making any financial commitments. See how it works on your projects. Compare 2D, 3D and "assist" technologies. Renting first enables you to become comfortable with grade control, so you'll be confident utilizing its fullest potential once you buy.

### **4. Ask for help**

The trial-and-error method might work. But if you want to maximize the return on your grade control investment fast, it pays to schedule some training. Our dealership has certified trainers on staff who can bring your operators up to speed quickly. Ask about Caterpillar's Road Builder Pro training event that compares traditional construction to technology construction, side by side. It's a great way to see the differences and the value firsthand.

***Don't wait any longer to make the switch to grade control technology. Contact our dealership to start the process. [OTJ](#)***



# DOUBLE COVERAGE

## TRIBE'S CAT® MACHINES SERVE LARGE TERRITORY

Approximately 100 miles north of the Twin Cities, Mille Lacs Lake is Minnesota's second-largest inland lake. Mille Lacs means "thousand lakes" in French. Archaeologists indicate that the area around the lake is one of the state's earliest known sites of human settlement. Portions of the Mille Lacs Indian Reservation primary land mass border the lake.

With more than 4,500 tribal members and over 4,000 employees, the Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians is a federally recognized American Indian tribe. Due to the large territorial spread, the Mille Lacs Band's territory is divided into three administrative districts: District I (near Onamia), District II (near McGregor), District IIa (near Isle), and District III (near Hinckley). As of the 2020 census, population density was 48.3 inhabitants per square mile.

The Mille Lacs Band operates casinos in Onamia and Hinckley. The Grand Casino Mille Lacs Hotel is one of the largest casino hotels in Minnesota, with 494 rooms, retail outlets featuring upscale products, and a nationally recognized events and convention center.

Covering a considerable geographical territory—95 square miles altogether that includes tribal lands in Mille Lacs, Aitkin, Crow Wing and Pine counties—the Mille Lacs Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining streets, water and sewer utilities, solid waste disposal and grave digging.

"Our operations serve the needs of the community in three districts, but we also have other parcels in between, and there's a lot of travel time involved," says Public Works director Brian Scheinost. "The service area



“When it comes to our choice of Cat® equipment, a deciding factor is we know there’s a Cat dealer within an hour of wherever we are for parts and service, whether it’s Columbus, Duluth, Brainerd, or St. Cloud.”

– CHAD DUNKLEY, SUPERVISOR  
MILLE LACS EARTHWORKS DEPARTMENT

extends all the way to the Wisconsin border where we pick up residential and commercial refuse. Our garbage trucks average about 1,000 miles a week.”

### Versatile machines handle many tasks

Altogether, the tribe owns 12 pieces of Cat® equipment, including a range of attachments that enhance productivity. Snow removal is a principal task during the winter months.

“We don’t just stop at the roads,” Scheinost says. “As soon as the roads are cleared, we jump in our pickup trucks and start plowing peoples’ driveways. We’re more community oriented, helping people out that way.”

When the snow starts piling up and crews need a place to move it, they use a Cat snow blower attachment mounted on a Cat 259D3 Compact Track Loader.

“Last winter we used that blower for clearing out snowbanks that accumulated,” Scheinost adds. “We had to make room for the next snowfall, especially after the very snowy January we experienced.”

For the coming winter, Public Works is looking to procure a Cat snow pusher

attachment that will be used on a new 938M Wheel Loader to more efficiently clear parking lots.

In the summer months, crews will use a Cat broom attachment on the 938M to clear vegetation that has been cut along the roadsides.

The new Cat Wheel Loader replaces a machine that’s 21 years old. Another location where the new machine figures to be helpful is the tribe’s solid waste transfer station, where it’s used for trash loading and compacting.

“When we go from the old machine to the new one, it feels like you’re jumping into a Cadillac,” says Tony Pike, a solid waste operations manager. “It has all the bells and whistles. Now we have a digital screen, an air conditioner that works really well, and a Bluetooth system that connects our phones.

“The 938M is easier to run, and more comfortable to operate,” Pike adds. “I have a bad back, and there’s a little button I can push to activate the Air Ride feature. That’s nice, as it cuts down on bouncing around in the seat and makes for a more comfortable ride.”

### Earthworks division

The Mille Lacs Earthworks Department handles new construction, demolition, road maintenance, grave digging and other tasks. Located approximately 45 miles east of Onamia, the department is led by Chad Dunkley and Guy Davis. Combined with Public Works, they provide double coverage for the tribe.

The two have up-to-date training in equipment maintenance and operation, and have traditionally scored well in operator competitions. As a skilled operator, Dunkley took first place in the skid steer rodeo at the 2022 Minnesota Fall Maintenance Expo, and placed first at the same event this year in the excavator category.

Some of the main tasks Dunkley and Davis perform include maintaining

*(Continued on page 14)*



roads, widening approaches, plowing snow, winging back snow banks and mowing. In addition, they provide grave digging, excavation, emergency sewer repairs, as well as final grading and seeding for new housing sites.

“We’re called out after all major storms in the summer to clear trees from roads,” Dunkley says. “We’re busy all year long.”

The department recently added another much-needed piece of equipment to make jobs safer, faster, and more precise. A new Cat 920 Compact Wheel Loader handles a variety of tasks, and can go elsewhere on the reservation for bigger jobs. The Cat 920 tops out at 25 mph, making travel between jobs feasible.

“We chose this machine because it can be driven down the road if needed, or loaded on a trailer without pulling special permits,” Dunkley says. “This machine makes loading sand and salt into snow plows during the winter about

three times faster,” Dunkley said. “What used to take us at least 12 passes with the skid steer, we can now do in four with this machine.”

The crew also utilizes a 308 Next Gen Mini Excavator for demolition of older structures on the reservation, as well as digging cemetery plots.

“It’s not a real big machine, but it’s powerful for its size, and you can get into tighter spots,” Dunkley says. “It has a faster boom swing, and if we want to hug a basement wall we can use the hammer attachment to break up steel reinforced concrete that much easier. So it does the job for us.”

Dunkley also utilized a Cat D6K Dozer to build two softball fields in District 1 and District 3.

“Cat grade control was very beneficial from rough shaping all the way through to final grading on both fields,” Dunkley says. “It cut way down on measuring

with a laser transit and stick. And once I adapted to running in Eco mode, I saw a huge fuel savings to the point where now I run all of our equipment in Eco mode.”

Parts availability is important to get back to work as quickly as possible when repairs are necessary.

“When it comes to our choice of Cat equipment, a deciding factor is we know there’s a Cat dealer within an hour of wherever we are for parts and service, whether it’s Columbus, Duluth, Brainerd, or St. Cloud,” Dunkley says.

Scheinost concurs with that assessment.

“Once we buy something, we still have to maintain it,” he says. “Ziegler Cat is only 25 miles away from us in Brainerd, and they are quick to send a technician and a service truck when we need help. And for obtaining replacement parts, that’s an important factor, too. We know we can usually get the parts we need the same day or next day.” **OTJ**

## MILLE LACS PUBLIC WORKS & EARTHWORKS

**Location:** Onamia & Hinckley, Minn.

**Employees:** 100+

**Dealer:** Ziegler Cat

**Cat® equipment:** Compact Track Loaders: 239D3, 259D3; Multi Terrain Loaders: 257D, 287D; Mini Excavators: 304H2, 308; 313 Small Excavator; 420XE Backhoe Loader; 920 Compact Wheel Loader; 938M Wheel Loader and IT14G Integrated Tool Carrier

*Tony Pike and Brian Scheinost  
of Mille Lacs Public Works.*





# Work **SMARTER**

## MINI EXCAVATOR TECHNOLOGY MAKES IT EASIER

Working smarter, not harder, is the name of the game on excavating jobs, and today's mini excavator technology makes it easier.

Labor shortages, training operators, and adhering to project deadlines are just some of the challenges faced during excavating projects. Mini excavator technology that comes standard on the 306 CR, 308 CR, and 309 CR models makes jobs easier for newer operators and enables more experienced operators to boost productivity and efficiency. These technologies eliminate the need for tasks like manual grade checking.

### **Ease of Use E-Fence**

Many jobsites involve navigating around overhead obstacles like trees and power lines, and underground obstacles such as fiber optic cables and utilities. That's where new mini

excavator technology is a huge asset on a wide range of jobsites.

Ease of Use E-Fence limits machine motion to within operator preset boundaries for ceiling, floor, wall and swing meaning structures can be avoided overhead, underground, in front, and to the left and right of the machine. E-Fence is ideal for new operators to work within set boundaries, and can minimize job costs from rework and downtime due to equipment damage and fines from damaging utilities and other structures.

### **Ease of Use Indicate**

Similarly, when loading a truck or working near live traffic, set the desired swing boundary to the left or right of the machine, as well as maximum reach in front, to avoid any mishaps and downtime.

The ability to stop a mini excavator's swing function at a pre-set target is another handy feature when trenching or truck loading. This helps save fuel and provides faster cycle times, meaning more money in your pocket. Keeping the cut accurate in sloping, leveling, fine-grading and trenching applications is easier with bucket-assist features that maintain the bucket's last position automatically.

When doing slope work, new mini excavator technology can also help reach target grades quicker and more precisely. The in-cab system enables operators to select the target depth and slope, and the monitor provides real-time feedback on distance to grade.

**Contact our dealership to learn more about the standard technology benefits on the 306 CR, 308 CR, and 309 CR Mini Excavators. [OTJ](#)**



# FOSTERING **GROWTH**

## GENERAL RENTAL HELPS OTHERS SUCCEED

As a student at the University of Connecticut (UConn), Mike Grogan worked a side landscaping job to help put himself through school. That experience provided him with experience operating heavy equipment.

Then five years ago, Grogan and his wife, Megan, bought an equipment rental business in Tolland. General Rental is a full-service rental operation featuring tools and equipment for every need.

The team at General Rental is committed to educating clients about safe operation of all equipment. They provide safety and operator training on every tool, and stay current by offering the latest professional-grade tools and equipment to meet customer demands.

“We started off with two mini excavators and two skid steers,” Grogan recalls. “About a week later, a rep from H.O. Penn stopped by and asked us if we’d be interested in trying out some Cat® equipment.”

The sales rep provided a compactor for Grogan to try out, and the relationship grew from there. Today, General Rental owns 14 pieces of Cat compact equipment that it rents to the public.

“During the first year we bought four pieces of Cat equipment, and from there we’ve consistently added to our rental fleet while phasing out the non Cat machines,” Grogan said. “We try to add newer and better equipment every year.”

Dealer support and parts availability are critical to General Rental’s operation, underscoring Grogan’s dedication to Cat equipment.

“As a small business, everybody at H.O. Penn treats us like family,” Grogan says. “I can call our sales rep (Sean Molloy) anytime. He delivered buckets for our Cat 305 Mini Excavator in the back of his SUV. And H.O. Penn always has the parts we need—they do whatever they



can to help out and keep our business humming.”

### **Incubation factor**

Some of General Rental’s customers end up buying a piece of Cat equipment from Grogan, which effectively makes his business an incubator for future Cat customers.

“A fair percentage of people who rent from us end up buying the machine,” he says. “So, we want them to have a quality piece of equipment and a great experience. People who rent from us like to run nice, clean Cat equipment.”

General Rental’s Cat equipment fleet includes six mini excavators, three 259D3 Compact Track Loaders, a 232 Skid Steer Loader and a CB14B Roller. Rental customers run the gamut from do-it-yourselfers to contractors who need additional equipment to complete a job or fill gaps in their capabilities

“A lot of our equipment is deployed on state projects—whether it’s at UCONN or the Charter Oak Bridge,” Grogan says. “Our customers can’t be slowed down by equipment availability problems. Keeping those machines running is essential, because we don’t make money if they’re broken, and we have to wait for parts from another country or from another dealership. H.O. Penn delivers the part we need the same day or within 24 hours. So prompt parts delivery is huge for us.”

General Rental also supplies equipment to local municipalities and landscapers, as well as small excavation companies looking to add to their fleets.

“We are frequently the first source of machinery for a company that’s just starting in business, whether it’s a septic business, construction or home building,” Grogan says. “They rent from us when they are starting out, and then we usually help them grow their businesses.

“If they think the equipment works great and serves their needs, they are more



likely to purchase their own or keep renting from us. We’ve had companies that have rented from us for two years and then they go out and spend a million dollars and buy their own equipment. We’re a small outfit, but we have a big impact on helping people achieve their business goals.”

Grogan estimates that General Rental helps 10 to 15 new customers build their business every year. Beyond the Cat machines, they also rent work tools and other supplemental equipment.

“Maybe one of our contractor customers will buy a Cat 304 Mini Excavator from us, and then they will rent our ripper, trenching bucket, or a tilt bucket,” Grogan says. “That way, they don’t have to spend \$4,000 to buy that work tool. And, if they need it frequently enough, they’ll buy it from us.”

### **Mini Excavators are popular**

The Cat 303.5 and 304 Mini Excavators are popular choices with Grogan’s rental customers.

“Anybody can run a 303.5 mini because it’s not too big,” he says. “The 304 mini

with the enclosed cab is starting to become more popular because they still can haul the machine on a trailer.

“A big selling point for these Cat machines is the comfort. If you’re going to be in a machine for eight hours a day, our contractor customers definitely like the creature comforts that are available in the 304 such as A/C and Bluetooth. They also like the stick steer feature. I did a YouTube video about that, and it actually received a lot of views.”

For ordering parts online, General Rental uses Cat Product Link™, which streamlines the process. General Rental also makes extensive use of the Cat VisionLink® interface to keep tabs on the location of its machines in the field.

“VisionLink is probably one of our most-used technologies—it keeps people honest, and we can control what’s going on with our fleet,” Grogan says.

When fault codes pop up on VisionLink, General Rental technicians can promptly address the issue, or call H.O. Penn for additional support when needed.

*(Continued on page 18)*

“When field service technicians come out from H.O. Penn, they help us through any problems,” Grogan says. “We benefit from a little added training when they work on our equipment. It’s very rare, but when they do, we look over their shoulder and everybody’s helpful. We’ve become friends with many of those technicians.”

## Equipment acquisition made easy

Grogan uses Cat Financial for all of his equipment needs.

“Based on our experience, I think it’s easier to buy heavy equipment than it is to buy almost anything else in the world,” he says. “It took us five days to buy a car for my wife once, but I can buy an excavator at night or on the weekend. You’re dealing with people that you know. Our Cat Financial rep came out and visited us on a job where one of our machines was working digging a retaining wall. He talked to us about using our credit to a greater extent. So now we have a Cat Credit Card to make things simple when we need to buy something.”

**“No other dealership has pushed to help us grow as H.O. Penn has done. We’re a small business that went from a couple pieces of equipment to 10 times larger over five years. Their influence has been huge.”**



— MIKE GROGAN, OWNER  
GENERAL RENTAL

Unwavering support from H.O. Penn and Caterpillar have played a key role in the growth of General Rental’s business, Grogan says.

“Sean and I talk every week to discuss equipment that would be beneficial to rental customers in our region,” he says. “We discuss what the current trends are—not only the climate in the rental equipment industry, but the state of the construction industry in general, because we help supplement contractors with their equipment needs.

“H.O. Penn doesn’t just care about whether I’m buying equipment from

them,” he adds. “They partner with you and help you grow your business. I consider myself the little brother and Caterpillar and H.O. Penn are the big brothers, and they’re helping me grow.

“We wouldn’t be where we are without H.O. Penn and Caterpillar,” he continues. “No other dealership has pushed to help us grow as H.O. Penn has done. We’re a small business that went from a couple pieces of equipment to 10 times larger over five years. Their influence has been huge, and yet they’re not pushing products down our throat. They’re just helping us see what we need to better serve our customers.” **OTJ**

## GENERAL RENTAL

**Owners:** Mike & Megan Grogan

**Location:** Tolland, Conn.

**Employees:** 12

**Dealer:** H.O. Penn

**Cat® equipment:** 232 Skid Steer Loader; Mini Excavators: 303, 303.5 (2), 304, 305, 308; 259D3 Compact Track Loaders (2); CB14B Utility Roller



# CERTIFIED OPERATOR TRAINING

## 2024 CLASS SCHEDULE

Elevate your operator skills to a higher level with certified training from Empire. Led by our team of Caterpillar Certified Instructors, these three-day classes are a mix of classroom and field instruction including safety fundamentals, one-on-one instruction, machine operating tips, skills evaluations and more.

| 2024 Dates  | Class                | Cost    |
|-------------|----------------------|---------|
| Jan 8 - 10  | Medium Wheel Loader  | \$2,200 |
| Jan 22 - 24 | Mini HEX & SSL       | \$2,000 |
| Feb 6 - 7   | Medium Dozer         | \$2,200 |
| Feb 19 - 21 | M Series Motorgrader | \$2,300 |
| Mar 4 - 6   | Medium Excavator     | \$2,300 |
| Mar 18 - 20 | Backhoe Loader       | \$2,000 |
| Apr 8 - 10  | Medium Wheel Loader  | \$2,200 |
| Apr 22 - 24 | Mini HEX & SSL       | \$2,000 |
| May 6 - 8   | Medium Dozer         | \$2,200 |
| May 20 - 22 | M Series Motorgrader | \$2,300 |
| Jun 3 - 5   | Medium Excavator     | \$2,300 |
| Jun 17 - 19 | Backhoe Loader       | \$2,000 |
| Jul 15 - 17 | Medium Wheel Loader  | \$2,200 |
| Jul 29 - 31 | Mini HEX & SSL       | \$2,000 |
| Aug 5 - 7   | Medium Dozer         | \$2,200 |
| Aug 19 - 21 | M Series Motorgrader | \$2,300 |
| Sep 9 - 11  | Medium Excavator     | \$2,300 |
| Sep 21 - 23 | Backhoe Loader       | \$2,000 |
| Oct 7 - 9   | Medium Wheel Loader  | \$2,200 |
| Oct 16 - 18 | Mini HEX & SSL       | \$2,000 |
| Nov 4 - 6   | Medium Dozer         | \$2,200 |
| Dec 2 - 4   | M Series Motorgrader | \$2,300 |



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