

Showcase: CR Metal Fabricators Ltd.



Photo courtesy CR Metal Fabricators

SAFETY FACTOR: CR Metal Fabricators has broken into the mining industry with its proprietary explosives transport boxes that use barrier laminate dividers. The transport boxes are also used in the forestry, road building, and oil and gas sectors.

CAMPBELL RIVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

The tough keep going

This metal fabrication company has broken into the mining industry in a big way, with new customers spanning the country from west to east

by JESSICA KIRBY

CR Metal Fabricators Ltd. is not afraid of the tough stuff; in fact, the metal fabrication company in Campbell River thrives on it.

“We love to rise to the occasion,” said Rob Beetstra, company president. “Customers bring us their problems and we work with them to create solutions. We have full drafting capabilities with 3-D modelling, so if they can dream it up, we can write it down and make it work.”

A solutions company

And that is exactly what the company has done over its 50 years in business—dream up solutions that help keep the company current and responding to revolving industry trends.

“This has added to the company’s success,” said Beetstra. “The market has been beaten to death for the easy jobs, but we are challenged with the difficult jobs.”

CR Metal Fabricators caters to a roster of clients that spreads worldwide. It has fabricated components for Vancouver Island Health Authority and BC Hydro, SafeStar water systems and Peter Kiewit Infrastructure. Major projects include Port Mann Bridge replacement components, various run-of-river projects, at least four dam upgrades, and boat-to-plant processing systems used in aquaculture.

SafeStar ships CR Metal products across the United States and eight floating log booms manufactured by the company were

sent off to Ghana in West Africa.

“All of our revenues used to come from the resource sectors and when the mills closed we had to accept that and take whatever came in the front door,” said Beetstra. “We were willing to do anything, modernize with the times, add computerized drafting, and get Canadian Welding Bureau (CWB) certification for fusing steel, aluminum and stainless steel. We’ve earned the satisfaction of a job well done.”

A mining breakthrough

The company has broken into the mining industry with its proprietary explosives transport boxes. Also used in forestry, road building, and oil and gas, CR Metals’ boxes range from aluminum bolt-in boxes that fit in a pick-up box to complete carrier bodies fabricated from steel with a non-sparking urethane lining.

Both models and custom units use barrier laminate dividers to separate the explosive area and the detonator. The barriers are constructed of tough, dense wood and metal composite insulation that is hard to source and even harder to manufacture. Carrier bodies are also equipped with accessory storage cabinets and drill steel carrier tubes.

“For us, the mining market is growing like crazy,” said Beetstra. “We have new customers near Dease Lake, Watson Lake, Fort McMurray, and as far as Newfoundland. It is definitely a market we intend to continue pursuing.”

The company also manufactures structural steel components, hoppers, cones, blowpipes, tanks, platforms and walkways—essentially anything made of steel, aluminum or stainless steel.

In the metals market

“General metal fabrication is our specialty,” said Beetstra. “We are CWB certified to 47.1 and 47.2 for structural steel and aluminum, and this is important for our customers.”

In the forestry and mining sectors, CR Metal Fabricators has made a name for itself with, among other things, its CR metal liners, which drop into the box of a pick-up truck for the duration of a lease, leaving the bed spotless and increasing the vehicle’s trade-in allowance.

“At the end of the lease you take it out, put the tailgate back on, and inside the box is good as new,” said Beetstra. “It’s obviously superior to having the bed all smashed up, and you can also just drop the liner into the new truck.”

Natural Resources Canada invited CR Metal Fabricators to the International Society of Explosives Engineers trade show in 2013, which helped bring attention to the company from mining and other industries.

All in the family

CR Metal Fabricators has marched fearlessly through two major recessions, largely because it has never had an owner who failed to innovate.

Victor and Dorothy Gallop started the company in the early ’60s, and later sold it to their daughter, Donna Wilson, and her husband, Barry. In 2007, current owners Rob and Darcy Beetstra purchased the company, keeping it family-owned; it has been running for decades and counting.

It might be the secure family foundation that has kept the business running strong, or it might be each owner’s dedication to well-trained, happy employees.

More than 35 employees have gone through the company’s apprenticeship program, which turns out highly skilled individuals with a strong work ethic and company loyalty. The current employee group has been with the company an average 15 years and it is rare that anyone leaves.

“We take them on as floor sweepers, evaluate and assess them and help them through the apprenticeship program,” said Beetstra. “I watch them grow, get married, have babies. They show me their new cars and I become a part of their lives.”

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