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**MAJOR DRILLING GROUP INTERNATIONAL INC.
OFFERING DEPTH IN A GLOBAL INDUSTRY**

THE MAGAZINE FOR CONSTRUCTION EXECUTIVES

Offering Depth in a Global Industry

Produced by James Tingley & Written by Hallie Seltzer

Major Drilling Group International Inc. is one of the largest drilling service companies in the world, and as such houses some of today's most talented drilling industry members. The company, established 26 years ago, has offices in Canada, South and Central America, Australia, Asia, Africa and the US. Its headquarters are in New Brunswick, Canada, and the company's US branch (opened in 2005) is based in Utah, home to what many consider the most beautiful terrain in the country. Often, however, the most beautiful of terrain can be the most difficult to drill, observes Rob Newburn, vice president of North American and African operations.

No matter the aesthetics or circumstances, Major Drilling can perform just about any kind of drilling that one would need. The company performs surface and underground coring, directional drilling, reverse circulation, coal-based methane, shallow gas and environmental drilling, to name a few services.

Safety is Priority Number One

All of Major Dilling's 120 employees are crucial to making each job a success. Newburn explains that most of the employees have been with the company for many years. "The drilling industry is a fairly small community; everyone seems to know everyone," he says.

These "family" members are kept in good care. In many industries there are trade or technical schools to teach a particular craft, but not in drilling. So Major Drilling prides itself on its safety in an industry whose reputation for many years was a dangerous one. When employees are hired, they are placed in a four-day induction that encompasses both the theoretical and practical nature of drilling and the equipment they will be using. After this induction, they shadow an employee for about week on a rig before they are hands-on.



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Newburn takes a great deal of pride in where the industry has improved in safety. He believes that about a tenth of the people who were hurt 10 years ago are hurt today. They are still working on making that number zero.

Rocky Terrain and Deep Hole Targets: An Average Project

Major Drilling aims to work on an average of 30 projects per year. The company enters into multi-term contracts when possible, though less so in recent years. A typical project can range anywhere from 1,000 to 3,000 meters. The time of each job is dependent on the targeted depth. A 1,200-meter hole takes, on average, about three weeks. With all jobs, accuracy is the name of the game. After a hole is drilled, Major Drilling put in ledges all the way back up until the workers have made sure that they've intersected with their mark up to 15 times.

Newburn and the company recently performed its most technically challenging job to date when working with resolution copper. The hole Major Drilling was meant to drill was 2,500 meters; however the drill couldn't be positioned where the team needed it to be because of the difficult terrain. Major Drilling ultimately had to directionally steer the drill and bend the hole to the target. It takes an incredible aptitude for accuracy to complete a job of that magnitude, and Major Drilling completed the job in a manner that left the client more than satisfied.



promoted to his current position after successfully managing the Townsville, Australia, operation of Major Drilling. His experience has allowed him to lead his team to use the safest practices and maintain consistency. The state of the economy and the company is a concern, of course; at peak the company can employ twice as many people. But Newburn knows that staying the right course will assure Major Drilling has far better results than companies feeling the panic. "This situation is not going to end tomorrow, but my guess is by 2011 we'll get back to where we were in our boom period," predicts Newburn.■

COMPANY AT A GLANCE

Established : 1983

Major Drilling Employee's : 120

VP N. America Operations : Rob Newburn

www.majordrilling.com


The technology of drills hasn't changed a lot over the past 30 years. "There is no consistency in the drilling industry," says Newburn. "Either we are busy working on a job, or we are lacking in funds, which makes it incredibly difficult to implement or develop new technology." The implementation of better steering capabilities has made acute accuracy achievable, however. A new underground core-drilling rig will be introduced to Major Drilling's arsenal in the next two months.

Major Drilling has been in the industry for many years, so the company's main marketing is through word-of-mouth. The company has about 10 senior customers, and another 10 mid-level customers (based on the number of projects each provides per year), and these projects tend to keep the company busy. In this economy, the company tends to avoid the smaller projects, as it can be a risky venture. With its trusted clients, Major Drilling can be ensured that it will receive payments, and, in return, the client knows they will be getting the highest quality of work.

The Future in Major Drilling


This year, the company saw annual revenue of \$50 million. This number is quite a bit lower than what the company is used to, but with the rates of copper and oil, the drilling industry is struggling. Additionally, because other industries, like construction, are struggling, it dictates the work that companies like Major Drilling are getting.

Newburn has been in the drilling industry for 32 years, and has been with Major Drilling for eight years. He was



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a great partnership with Major Drilling.
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years of success.

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