

The Commonwealth Quarterly

News from around the circuit.

Spring 2003



Commonwealth Electric Company
of the midwest

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Working to Build Better Customer Relationships

John Benefiel – Manager of Communications Division

The Communications division in Omaha is working towards increasing our fixed base of service work and revenue while improving capabilities for construction projects. We are actively engaging potential customers to initiate and build relationships. Improvements are on-going in the tracking of customer relationship management activity and job documentation.



ABOVE: The Omaha Convention Center and Arena

Work is under way to expand our universe of technical expertise across voice and data networking, security/access, CCTV, building automation, fire/life/safety, and audio/visual. Our goal is to be in the eyes of customers their first choice for consultation, design and installation of all their low voltage cabling applications.

Major projects underway are the Omaha Convention Center and Arena, where we are installing data, voice, HVAC controls and RF/broadband cabling. Also is the University of Nebraska Medical Center Tower where installa-

tion is on-going for the HVAC controls cabling. In addition is the Hilton Convention Center Hotel where we will be installing all low voltage cabling including data, voice, security and CCTV.

A new member of the staff is Don Jacobson. Don comes to us with thirteen years of experience in various Information Technology disciplines. Don will be involved with sales and marketing along with other project work. We are excited about the future and the great staff of technicians we are fortunate to have. Thanks to everyone who has provided help to the Communications division.

Des Moines Foremen Receive Safety Training

Michael Price – Branch Manager

The Des Moines office embarked on a four part foremen's training schedule this month focused on offering the foremen additional training in field and office procedures. This first class focused on safety and emphasized electrical safety procedures. Des Moines foreman, Keith Marschel and Corporate Safety Director, Ruben Bera attended an electrical safety seminar in Kansas City in March. Ruben and Keith brought back their new found knowledge to share with the rest of the foremen.

Additional training sessions are scheduled throughout the spring and summer months. Additional topics will be estimating, project



Des Moines foremen review field safety procedures as part of a new training program.

reporting and time cards, productivity improvements and product technical training.



Unusual Worksites Present Unique Safety Challenges

Ruben J. Bera - Corporate Safety Director

Safety Directors sometimes get a bad rap. We are often seen as people who look for bad things and trying to catch someone not working safe. While it is true we do look for hazards, we do not intentionally go looking for things to find wrong. It is actually quite the opposite. Through our travels on the job sites we get to see many different types of operations and we get to see many different situations where you have to get a job done.

We've seen you working in meat packing facilities where you were required to wear coats, rubber boots and hairnets (something else to get in the way). We've seen you work at waste water facilities where the word alone can stir your imagination. You've done work in a major insurance building where you had to work around the office employees and do your best to "keep the mess down". We've seen you work in industrial plants where working conditions are less than ideal.

As a skilled work force, we have seen you in situations where someone else may decide not to do the work, but you have preformed these hazardous tasks and completed them safely. It is our job to ensure your safety and we do this in many ways. From the tool box talk you receive to the on-



HIGH WIRING: Phil Bremkin connects an electrical conduit high atop the new Omaha Arena and Convention Center.

“Our job is to make sure that your job is hazard free.”

site safety training, our job is to make sure your job is hazard free. We are

part of the “team” that makes Commonwealth Electric Company of the Midwest stand out from the rest.

To illustrate some of the difficult tasks you do, note the photos we took at the new Omaha Arena and Convention Center. Our employee, Phil Bremkin crawled out on a beam to connect conduit. There was no other way to get this done. The fall hazard was tremendous and without careful planning, a disaster could have occurred. A meeting was held with the crew and the Safety Director and a plan was developed. The result was a completed project accident-free. Working together is what it is all about.

Another good example is the project in Lincoln at the Salt Valley Generating Station.

The crew directed by the general foreman, Steve Wilkens, has put in over

203,745 hours into this project and not a single accident. We have conducted various safety training classes on-site and have dealt with many safety issues. This job required working in man holes, trenches and scaling down smoke stacks. Very difficult working conditions. Hats off to this crew for an accident free job.

In the coming newsletters, I will

try to feature some of the projects you have finished. Electrical work in itself can be dangerous but when you add the conditions, the potential for some-

thing to go wrong greatly increases. It is up to each and every one of us to make sure our jobs are completed on time and safe.

Safety is not just something else we have to do; it is part of what we do. Remember, "Think Smart/Work Safe".



ACCIDENT FREE: Attention to safety pays off at the Salt Valley Generation Station work site, which has remained accident-free despite difficult conditions.



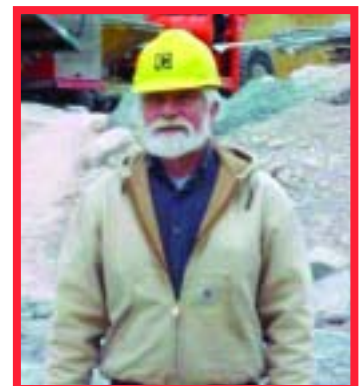
Front row (left to right): Bryon Duncan, Nolan Harrah, Mark Putty, Rick Riedel, Jon Scott
Back row (left to right): Dave Elrod, General Foreman Mike Vollertsen, Todd Verkamp, Frank Koenig, Skip Woolsey, John Skoda, Curt Glass, John Roland, Dennis Beck, Roger Othling, General Foreman Steve Wilken, James Bush, Gary Prevette, Bob Carper

Jim Kramer Retires After Over 20 Years

Norm Stentz – Vice President

Jim Kramer retired in November 2002 after more than 20 years with Commonwealth Electric Company. As a foreman and project general foreman, Jim supervised a large number of important and complex electrical construction projects. Some of these projects included an ethanol plant in Sutherland, Nebraska, power plant projects, a wheel plant for the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad, a 10-megawatt cogeneration plant for ADM, a new building for The Gallup Organization (SRI), Journal-Star printing complex, a 69 KV underground distribution system for LES, for Kawasaki Motor Corporation, numerous design-build projects for Molex Corporation, and, finally a brand new store for SAKS FIFTH Avenue in Las Vegas, Nevada. What a way to end a great career, right there on the fashion show mall of the Vegas strip! Even Elvis couldn't have done better than that!

Jim will be remembered as an expert, intelligent, and extremely responsible electrical craftsman. He always had a smile on his face and a supervisory demeanor that earned him the respect of everyone on the project. Jim will be sorely missed by everyone at Commonwealth, as will many other constructors who knew and worked with him.



We wish Jim the very best for his well deserved retirement and we want Jim to know that the door at Commonwealth is always open to receive him.

Thanks Jim and best of luck!

CECM Opens New Office in Tri-Cities Area

Mike King – Branch Manager

On April 7, 2003, R.G. “Bob” Mallum was hired as the new Tri-City Superintendent. Bob will be in charge of running services in the Tri-Cities area (Grand Island, Hastings and Kearney). Bob is married to Karen and they have three children and eight grandchildren. We currently have a service van, manned by serviceman Justin Conaway in the Tri-Cities area. The new office is in Grand Island at 1600 S. Eddy St., Suite 2. The phone number for the office is (308) 384-1113.

Bob comes to us with a vast knowledge of inside electrical work and voice/data wiring.

Please join us in welcoming Bob to the CECM family.



LEFT: Tri-City Superintendent Bob Mallum



ABOVE: Commonwealth's new Tri-Cities office in Grand Island

Design/Assist at the Hilton Hotel

Eric Hoge – Manager of Engineering Services

Many of us are familiar with Design/Build projects. But how many are aware of the opportunities in Design/Assist? In a Design/Assist project, the electrical contractor is retained to help the engineer with design. While the engineer does the actual design, the contractor works with the engineer to develop the most cost effective design.

Many times the engineering firms are not aware of what drives the cost in the field. With this type of arrangement, the engineer and construction team meet to make sure that the design meets the budget constraints desired by the owner.

The Hilton Hotel and Convention Center in Omaha is an example of this type of arrangement. The developer, Landmark Organization, chose Leo A. Daly to be the electrical designer. Landmark also retained Commonwealth Electric before the design was started to assist Leo A. Daly in the effort.

As a design partner, Commonwealth Electric was asked to participate in multi-disciplined design meetings at the archi-

tect's office in Dallas, Texas. We had the opportunity to critique the electrical and lighting design before construction drawings were released. With input and some design changes, the design was kept within the owner's budget.

A by-product of this type of arrangement is the opportunity to build a good relationship with the engineering firm. In the Hilton project, the close working relationship led to quick acceptance of requested changes. On several occasions sug-

“With input and some design changes, the design was kept within the owner's budget.”

gested changes were discussed and information gathered by a simple phone call which streamlined the information flow to the field.

If you would like more information on the structure of the relationship used in this project or other design/assist projects, contact Eric Hoge in the Omaha office.