

CONCRETE SPECIALTY, INC.

Contractor's multiple capabilities provide customers with turnkey package



Roger Miller, President.

As the name implies, Concrete Specialty of South Sioux City, Nebraska, specializes in concrete paving. But concrete is far from the only type of work the company does.

"We're a full-service construction company," said Roger Miller, President and owner of Concrete Specialty, Inc. "We do dirt work and underground utilities in addition to our concrete business. It allows us to present customers with a turnkey package, which we think is a big advantage for them and for us.

"We really like to do our own dirt and utility work on projects where we're doing the paving," Miller added. "The main reason is because it gives us more control over costs, quality and timeliness. Since we're doing all the work instead of relying on subcontractors for parts of it, it's easier for us to sequence the job. We can move our own people around when and where we need them. It's much more efficient and cost-effective for us and for our customer."

Getting started

Back in the 1970s, Miller was working for a concrete contractor when he decided it was about

time to strike out on his own. "I had worked for several contractors over the years and I was tired of traveling so much," he recalled.

So Miller and his brother, Larry Miller, started Concrete Specialty in 1976. They incorporated in 1979. "My brother owns a percentage of the company, but he's in the restaurant business," noted Miller. "He doesn't get involved in the day-to-day operations."

Today Concrete Specialty, Inc. employs 45 to 50 people during its peak season from March to December. In the beginning, however, the company was Miller and two or three other employees. At first Miller concentrated on concrete work because that's what he knew best. The company added dirt work and underground utilities to its capabilities in the mid 1980s.

Concrete Specialty crews work within a 100-mile radius of South Sioux City. "We will travel further, but we've been pretty fortunate to be able to stay fairly local the last few years," he said. "We haven't had to do too much traveling."

50/50 split

Concrete Specialty's work is about evenly divided between concrete and underground utilities. "We have two underground utility crews and they do storm sewer and water and sanitary," he explained. "Then we have an inlet crew that builds inlet structures. Finally we have a concrete crew and a small dirt crew."

Miller estimated that his company's work is also split about 50/50 between public and private jobs. Most of the public work the company does is concrete paving for municipalities. "Our concrete work includes city streets, a little bit of state work and some taxiways on airports," he stated. "On the private side, we do a lot of new housing developments."

Assisting Miller in running Concrete Specialty are Estimator Pat Callahan, Office Manager Pam Naylor,



Concrete Specialty, Inc. headquarters in South Sioux City, Nebraska.



Concrete Specialty crews recently built a road east of Sioux City connecting the bypass to Highway 75. Equipment on the job includes a Komatsu PC300 excavator for trenching and pipe work (left), a WA380 loader for miscellaneous site work and a D41 dozer for grading. "We've been very pleased with the Komatsu equipment we have," said Foreman Ron Carter. "We get good production and it holds up real well."

Utilities Supervisor Don Rademaker and Concrete Supervisor Leo Stoos. "Leo's been with us about 18-19 years," Miller said. "Pat's been here 11 or 12 years. Many of our main operators and foremen and supervisors have been with us quite a while."

Because he can rely on experienced employees, Miller goes after the more complex jobs. "We like the scrappier jobs," he smiled. "That's our forte. They're obviously more challenging, but we have the personnel to take on the tough jobs and bring them in on time and on budget."

Wide project range

Concrete Specialty will take on jobs ranging anywhere from about \$50,000 up to a couple million dollars.

Recent large projects included Phase III of a street-widening and utilities project in Sioux City, Iowa. "That was a big job for us, and we also did a lot of the infrastructure at Dakota Dunes," Miller said. "It's a housing development and golf course just across the bridge in South Dakota. We did the paving and underground utilities there and we're pleased with the way that turned out."



In 2001, Concrete Specialty crews did a lot of work in Onawa, including some street paving, utility and storm sewer. The company also removed and replaced about 3/4-mile of old Highway 75 in Onawa for the state of Iowa.

Other recent projects included the rehabilitation of Court Street in downtown Sioux City last fall. "We replaced sanitary and storm sewer and paved it," noted Miller. Concrete Specialty crews are also working on a utility project in Omaha, Nebraska. "We started it last fall and we'll finish it this spring," said Miller.

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Concrete Specialty can “do it all”

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Pam Naylor,
Office Manager.

Tough equipment for complex jobs

To handle the tough jobs his company is known for, Miller turns to tough and reliable equipment from Road Machinery & Supplies Company in Sioux City. The company's fleet includes four Komatsu excavators (one PC400, two PC300s and a PC220), three Komatsu wheel loaders (two WA380s and a WA320), a D41 Komatsu dozer, an 850 Galion grader and a Komatsu GD650 grader.

“Komatsu equipment has worked very well for us through the years,” said Miller. “It’s productive and reliable and it lasts a long time. We’ve demonstrated other machines, but the guys seem to like the Komatsus and I’ve always enjoyed my dealings with RMS. They’re straight shooters who have always treated us fairly. I also like and trust Doug Miller, my salesman, who has helped us out a lot.”

In addition to the Komatsu equipment, Concrete Specialty also has four Gomaco machines from RMS (a GP2600 paver, a Commander III curb and gutter

machine, a T/C600 texturing/curbing machine and an 8500B trimmer) and four Load King trailers.

Miller relies on Keith Kjar, Service Manager at RMS’ Sioux City branch, and his staff for service and parts support. “During the winter we go through every piece of equipment in our shop, but any major stuff, we have RMS take care of it,” said Miller. “We’ve just always received good service from their shop and mechanics. That’s the main thing to us — the service.”

Excellent people who do quality work

Roger Miller credited his employees for the gradual growth and success of Concrete Specialty, Inc., since 1975. “We just have some excellent, excellent people,” he stated. “There is no magical formula other than getting good employees, and we have them all the way through. They make the money for this company.”

Miller works hard to retain those employees. “They have profit-sharing, bonuses, insurance,” he listed. “We have years of incentive programs, like you get a watch after 10 years. Five years is a jacket, and three is a sweatshirt. Anything we can come up with.”

Miller appreciates the laborers and operators he has because he’s walked a mile in their shoes. “Most of the jobs they’re doing, I did at one time or another,” he noted. “I’ve been there and I know what it’s like. I know that the people out in the field can make you or break you. Good people are very valuable and I do my best to keep them happy here.”

It’s “Miller Time”

Miller takes a lot of pride in doing quality work for his customers. “We don’t take any shortcuts on a job,” he said. “Quality work is our calling card and we won’t accept doing anything less than our best.”

Miller is proud enough of his company’s work that he wants to make sure everyone knows when his crews are on a job. He has the initials MLR TYM emblazoned on all of Concrete Specialty’s equipment.

“It stands for Miller Time,” he explained. “We like to fly our own flag and let people know who’s getting the work done. That’s what Miller Time means to us — it means we’re here and we’re going to take care of this. You can count on it.”

With its dirt, pipe and concrete crews in place, Miller says he’s not really looking to grow the company any larger than it already is. “We’re as big as we need to be and I’d say I’m pretty happy with the present size of our company. We’ve found a niche where we’re comfortable and profitable. We just want to do quality work and keep our family of employees intact.”



In addition to Komatsu equipment, Concrete Specialty has Gomaco paving equipment from RMS. This GP2600 paver was at work on a street job in Onawa, Iowa.



Concrete Specialty Dirt
Foreman Bruce Bryan
with Road Machinery
& Supplies Sales
Representative
Doug Miller.