

KOMATSU PC228 EXCAVATORS EXCEL ON I-235 PROJECT

Contractors utilize “short-tail-swing” machines on high-profile Des Moines freeway job

Three well-recognized Iowa bridge-building contractors have discovered that Komatsu PC228USLC-3 “short-tail-swing” excavators are well-suited for work on the high-profile I-235 reconstruction project in Des Moines.

Jensen Construction Company, Inc. and Cramer & Associates, Inc., both headquartered in Des Moines, and United Contractors Inc., based in Johnston, are involved in the large and complex job in the heart of the state’s capital.

The I-235 improvement project was launched in 2001 and is one of the largest ongoing jobs in Iowa. The project involves demolishing and rebuilding

approximately 70 structures along the heavily traveled freeway, including bridge deck and approach removal and replacement.

Jensen Construction, Cramer & Associates and United Contractors are using a large fleet of Komatsu equipment from Road Machinery & Supplies Co. through veteran Des Moines Branch Territory Manager Bob Newman on the job, including PC228 excavators.

Ideal excavator for tight spaces

The short-tail-swing radius of the 143-horsepower, 51,765-pound PC228s makes them ideal for work in tight and congested areas like those on the I-235 project, said Newman, while giving operators the same power and lift capacity of comparably sized conventional excavators. Plus, the contractors are using a variety of attachments on the versatile machines, including breakers and compactors, in addition to buckets.

“The PC228 has been the perfect machine for us because it allows us to work in the confined and narrow spaces we have on the job,” noted Randy Freel, General Superintendent for Jensen Construction. “We fell in love with our first 228 and added a second one to help us with the amount of work we have going through town. The biggest challenges on the job are the limited amount of space we are working in and moving traffic in and out of the area. So the PC228s have been great for us and we have had good luck with them.”

Guided by President Kurt Rasmussen and Vice Presidents Jeff Rasmussen and Dan Timmons, Jensen Construction was founded in 1908 and focuses on bridge construction projects throughout the Midwest. Kurt and Jeff are members of the fourth generation of their family to guide the firm, which has a large fleet of Komatsu equipment from RMS, including 13 excavators and 10 dozers.



Jensen Construction Company, Inc. has utilized two Komatsu PC228 “short-tail-swing” excavators, including the machine pictured above, during work on the I-235 freeway reconstruction project in downtown

Des Moines. Randy Freel, General Superintendent for Jensen Construction, pictured at right, said the unique excavators are well-suited for work on the tight and congested job. “The PC228 has been the perfect machine for us,” he said, “because it allows us to work in the confined and narrow spaces we have on the job.”





A Cramer & Associates operator uses a Komatsu PC228 excavator equipped with a hammer to demolish the 2nd Avenue eastbound on-ramp over the Des Moines River bridge as part of the company's work on the I-235 reconstruction project.

Increased performance, safety

Working as a subcontractor to Jensen Construction, Cramer & Associates is removing and rebuilding the 3rd Street bridge and demolishing the 2nd Avenue eastbound on-ramp over the Des Moines River bridge.

According to Dan Cramer, Chief Operations Officer for Cramer & Associates, the PC228 has been a valuable workhorse for the company since they acquired the machine last May. The company also has a Komatsu PC220 excavator from RMS.

"The nice thing about that machine is the short tail swing," said Cramer. "It has performed much better than we ever anticipated when we first saw it. Not only from a production standpoint, but also safety. On this particular project, we're usually working in tight spaces. We're up against a barrier or wall or close to a truck. With this machine, you don't have to worry about smashing into things. It can move into a tight space and swing."

Cramer & Associates is a strong family business that is currently guided by members of the second



Veteran RMS Territory Manager Bob Newman, left, with Dan Cramer, Chief Operations Officer for Cramer & Associates.

generation of the Cramer family — Dan Cramer, Robert Cramer and Mike Cramer. The late Del Cramer (Robert's father) founded the contracting company and managed it with his brothers George Cramer (Dan's father) and Don Cramer (Mike's father) for many years. Don Cramer still plays an active role in the company.

Project proves performance

Led by President Gary Sandquist and Vice President Mike Jeffries, United Contractors has completed bridge-building projects throughout the U.S., including jobs as far away as North Carolina.

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Unique excavators shine on freeway project

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"We are the prime contractor on the I-235 project and it is the largest current project we have going," explained Project Manager Jon Allen. "On one section of the job we have three bridges — one over Easton, another over East 21st and a bridge over railroad tracks we subbed out. Down by East 9th and East 6th Streets in downtown on I-235, we poured the deck on the 9th Street bridge, and we've got the East 6th Street bridge poured. Also, between East 9th and East 12th Street, we are constructing 60-foot walls. Because the corridor is so narrow there, they're widening it and putting in vertical walls so they can put some on- and off-ramps coming onto I-235 through the area."

According to Allen, the PC228 has been a welcome addition to the job and the company's large fleet of equipment, which also includes three Komatsu dozers.

"We use the heck out of the 228 and the foremen are always arguing over who gets it, so we know it must be doing a good job," he said.

"It works great," added Operator Jeremy Gilleland. "One of the major jobs we used the machine on was building leveling pads next to the walls. I didn't have to worry about hitting the wall when I swung around to get rid of the dirt."

Komatsu equipment showcase

The I-235 reconstruction job has served as a showcase for the PC228s and other Komatsu machines — and you're sure to see more Komatsu equipment working on the freeway in the future, according to Bob Newman of RMS, as the Iowa DOT and contractors move forward with the massive project over the coming years.

"It's absolutely fantastic for us to have all the Komatsu equipment involved in this project — and I take a lot of pride and joy in it," he concluded. "Along with the PC228s, we have had Komatsu dozers — (D31s, D32s, D37s, D41s) — and excavators (PC200, PC210, PC400 and PC600) on the project. It puts a smile on my face every time I drive down 235 to see all those Komatsus, because often the machines are working in a development or another job that's not as visible. Here, people drive through downtown and see them every single day."



United Contractors Operator Jeremy Gilleland gets a full bucket with a Komatsu PC228 excavator during the company's work on the I-235 freeway project in Des Moines. He is pictured at right next to the unique excavator, which has a short tail swing radius, making the machine ideal for work in tight spaces.



Jon Allen, Project Manager for United Contractors, Inc., based in Johnston.