

A SALUTE TO AN RMS CUSTOMER

HALLETT DOCK COMPANY

Commodities handler moves goods around the world from its Duluth-based facilities



Jerry Fryberger,
President



Bill McGiffert,
Vice President

Every day, individuals and corporations around the world rely on someone to find them commodities they need in order for their businesses to run. The process can involve several links in the supply chain, each playing a vital role in making sure the shipment of materials arrives quickly and safely.

Since 1963, Hallett Dock Company has been a vital link in the chain by receiving, storing and shipping bulk commodities from its home in the Duluth-Superior Harbor at the western end of Lake Superior in Duluth, Minn. From its inception with one facility, Hallett Dock has grown to become one of the largest independent companies in the business of transferring bulk commodities in the port of Duluth-Superior. The company was an offshoot of Hallett Construction, which was a construction and aggregate business started in the 1930s by Ernest "E.W." Hallett.

Hallett Dock brings in and ships out products by several means, including by rail car. Commodities are stored either on one of the company's outdoor docks or in its bulk storage building, which holds 20,000 tons.



"The success and growth of the company over the years can be directly attributed to our commitment to providing quality customer service," said President Jerry Fryberger. "Everyone who works at Hallett Dock is focused on making sure we take care of the people we serve. We employ a team approach to business and everyone on the team plays a vital role."

In addition to Fryberger, Hallett Dock's team is headed up by Vice President Bill McGiffert, General Manager Mike McCoshen, Superintendent Clyde Jago and Controller Stephen Sykes.

Long list of commodities

Hallett Dock's commitment to customer service has allowed it to grow from its humble beginnings to a company with enough capacity and equipment to handle in excess of 1 million tons of goods annually. Materials include everything from chrome ore from western Montana that's shipped to Europe, to bentonite clay from Wyoming that goes to Europe and Labrador, to urea from Saudi Arabia for the agricultural markets in western Minnesota and eastern North Dakota.

"The list of products that go through our facility is very extensive and has grown steadily over the years," McGiffert pointed out. "Along with that, the markets we're involved in have expanded as well. We handle products from all over the globe. Our customers have come to expect fast turnaround on their products, but at the same time we have the capacity to store products for long periods of time, if necessary."

Hallett Dock receives commodities at its maritime facilities by several modes, with



Hallett Dock uses several Komatsu wheel loaders, including this WA500-3 model, which an operator uses to move ice-control materials. “The company was one of the first in the area to buy Komatsu equipment,” said Superintendent Clyde Jago. “That was in the late ‘80s, and it was a leap of faith because it had run other brands for a long time. The Komatsus worked very well, and we’ve continued to buy them. We let the operators compare equipment the last time we were looking to buy, and Komatsu came out the clear winner.”

the company’s strategic location providing easy access by rail and water. Rail service and Interstate highway access provide the company with products arriving and departing daily by rail as well as by truck. In addition, its maritime facilities provide transportation of materials by ship. Its location allows easy access to the ports of the Great Lakes, the Saint Lawrence Seaway system and Europe.

“You really couldn’t ask for a better location,” McCoshen remarked. “It’s very easy to bring materials in and take them back out quickly and efficiently, which is important when you’re dealing with large quantities of goods. It provides safe, dependable access, and water is really the most economical form of transportation.”

Commodities are stored at both of the company’s maritime facilities — Hallett Dock has approximately 100 acres of outside storage at the two facilities — or in its one bulk-storage building, which holds about 20,000 tons.

In addition to handling products for a variety of customers, Hallett Dock owns and is a wholesale agent for several materials, such as limestone and limestone screenings, decorative stone, red ball aggregate, ballast stone, black dirt and topsoil, roofing ballast and salt/sand blend.

Employee owned

Hallett Dock handles commodities with a relatively small, but highly experienced staff of about 20 employees. Many of its employees have worked at Hallett Dock more than two decades, including office manager Kara Raymond, who’s been with the company 22 years.

“The company is employee-owned, and that’s a real benefit,” Fryberger emphasized. “They all have a stake in the success of the company and, therefore, they take customer service very seriously. Since our employees are involved in the day-to-day operation, they have great ideas, and we’ve taken many of them and put them to use in making our operations run more smoothly. It’s exciting to see. Plus, it’s a small company in which decisions are made quickly because the primary focus of the employees is to provide quality service to our customers. It’s like a big family.”

“We have a long list of employees with many years of service, and that really pays off,” said Sykes. “They know how to handle any situation and quickly resolve any issues that may pop up. They’re adaptable, which is important to us as well because we handle so many different products. They’re enthusiastic and well-organized. We believe it’s the best work force in the business. We have relatively little turnover, so that’s a positive as well.”

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Mike McCoshen,
General Manager

Efficiency is hallmark of Hallett Dock

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Clyde Jago,
Superintendent



Stephen Sykes,
Controller



Kara Raymond,
Office Manager

(L-R) President Jerry Fryberger, Superintendent Clyde Jago and Larry "Bear" Demenge stand beside one of Hallett Dock's WA500-3 wheel loaders, which the company uses to move and load materials.

Reliable equipment

Because Hallett Dock handles so many products, it's important for the company to have several pieces of equipment that are capable of keeping up with the fast pace that comes with loading and unloading vessels, unloading rail cars and loading trucks.

"It's important that we have machinery that lasts and can keep up with our needs," Jago affirmed. "We're moving thousands of tons of material every day, and our customers rely on us to do it as quickly as possible. We can't afford downtime, so it's necessary to have machinery that doesn't break down."

For loading and unloading, Hallett Dock relies on Komatsu wheel loaders purchased from Road Machinery & Supplies' Duluth branch through Sale Representative Jim Gunderson. Hallett Dock owns two WA500s and four WA600s that run almost nonstop. It also owns an older Komatsu dozer it uses for a variety of tasks.

"The company was one of the first in the area to buy Komatsu equipment," Jago noted. "That was in the late '80s, and it was a leap of faith because it had run other brands for a long time. The Komatsus worked very well, and we've continued to buy them. We let the operators compare equipment the last time we were looking to buy, and Komatsu came out the clear winner."

"What we really like is that the equipment lasts," he added. "We try to keep machinery around as long as it's productive and not costing us more in maintenance than it's worth. Our Komatsu equipment allows us to do that. We take good care of it with routine service and maintenance. We've really had no major issues."

Hallett Dock handles routine maintenance on its machinery, using Road Machinery as needed for service work. "We've developed a very good relationship with Jim Gunderson and the team at Road Machinery over the years," Jago said. "They've been very good about meeting our needs and getting to us quickly if we need them. Road Machinery is really good about having parts on hand, and if they don't have something in stock they can get it to us the next day."

Doing more with less

Due to the resolution of the Stryker Bay Superfund site, Hallett Dock was recently encouraged to consolidate its operations, going from four docks to two: Dock No. 5 in Duluth and Dock No. 8 in Superior, Wis. The loss of space hasn't slowed the company down.

Instead, the reduction in total acreage to store commodities has allowed Hallett Dock to streamline its operations and make improvements to boost efficiency. The company has installed state-of-the-art rail car unloading facilities, along with dust collection systems, purchased Boston Yards from BNSF, and installed a 250 x 700 concrete, bulk-storage pad at Dock No. 5. In addition, new, 2.2-million-gallon, liquid-storage tanks and an automated scale were built at Dock No. 8 in Superior, Wis.

"We believe the change is good," claimed Fryberger. "It will actually mean an expansion of our services. We've always been very flexible and willing to work with customers to find solutions to their transportation and storage needs. It's a management philosophy we've adopted and developed over the years. That hasn't changed just because we consolidated a portion of our facilities. We're still in the business of serving customers and finding ways to get their materials from one point to another to meet their schedules." ■

