



New Sideboom Conversion Attachment Hitting Market

Midwestern Manufacturing of Tulsa, OK recently announced completion of its newly designed hydraulic sideboom conversion attachment for a Caterpillar D8N and D8R "high-drive" track type tractor. The newly designed sideboom is attached to a high-drive tractor to convert the machine from a dozer to a pipelayer capable of lifting 140,000 lbs. at a four-foot boom extension. This is comparable to the lift capacity of a 583K and 583R Caterpillar pipelayer.

The pipeline industry has traditionally relied on oval-track pipelayers such as the Caterpillar 583. These oval-track models are an aging fleet, which are not being replaced by current Caterpillar production. Eventually, this fleet of

Caterpillar oval-track pipelayers will cease to be available and the industry will increasingly need alternatives to meet its needs for pipe-laying crawler tractors. Since the mid-1980s, most of the larger Caterpillar track-type tractors have been built with an elevated sprocket under carriage, which presents some design challenges when converting it to a side lifting pipelayer.

The importance of the Midwestern pipelayer attachment comes from its ability to enable the newer fleet of high-drive tractors to be converted into an efficient and safe hydraulic pipelayer. The new features of the Midwestern sideboom attachment for high-drive D8N and D8R track-type Caterpillar tractor include excel-



lent visibility to the front of tracks and load hook, pilot controls for simultaneous control of hydraulic operations, free fall, vertical boom stop and kick out, and multi-

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axis hydraulic joystick combined with a rebalanced weight distribution for optimum control and performance.

The new Midwestern unit is designed with planetary winches and high efficiency motors and brake valves for smooth load control. The higher center of gravity of the high-track machines is countered by a rebalancing of the weight distribution. The track gauge is 82 inches and the shoe width is 28 inches.

This attachment for the D8N and D8R comes as virtually every industry expert is forecasting a worldwide explosion of pipeline construction work. Historically high capital expenditures are forecast for the next five to seven years. The spike in 2006 to near \$80 a barrel for oil is seen by many observers as a triggering event to a period of large pipeline projects.

Brazil plans to be natural gas sufficient by 2009 and oil sufficient by 2012. Petrobras is undertaking a huge exploration and production plan and has designed major cross-country transmission pipelines to bring energy from its western borders and under-populated interior to highly populated coastal areas.

The rapidly growing economies and population of China, India and Indonesia (among

others) will continue to cause large annual increases in worldwide demand for petroleum products which will likely cause continued upward pressure on oil and gas prices due to short falls in supply. Increases in transportation capacity will be a significant factor in the efforts to increase supply.

Higher prices for petroleum products enable higher-cost recovery projects such as oil sands, tertiary recovery, and LNG to become economical. This creates a need for new pipelines to transport products to point of export and to the distribution channels in consuming countries. The result is growing need for pipeline construction machines as well as line pipe and skilled labor.

The Midwestern sideboom attachment for a Caterpillar D8N and D8R will help remedy the shortage in pipeline construction equipment by providing a new source of tractors for attachments to create pipelayer machines. A contractor with an immediate need for a 140,000-lb. pipelayer now has the option of buying a used D8N or D8R tractor, placing it in good operating condition, and then converting it to pipelayer by adding the attachment.

The mounting of the sideboom attachment can be completed in approximately 225

man hours. The resulting machines are then available for work in a short time frame at essentially half the cost of a new pipelayer, which, if available, could take a year or longer for delivery.

The utilization of used tractors with new sideboom attachments is an accepted practice by pipeline contractors around the world. In the U.S., pipelayers are primarily used alongside the open trench to support the pipe as it is being welded, coated and lowered into the trench. Hence, the pipelayer spends most of the operating hours idling alongside the trench and moving slowly forward.

As a result, pipelayers are subject to much less operating stress compared to a dozer that may be constantly moving all day with the resulting wear and tear. In addition, pipelayers generally work in tandem and if one goes down, it can be taken out of service without shutting down the entire pipe-laying operation.

Midwestern pioneered the hydraulic sideboom development for the pipeline industry. It has participated in the industry since 1956 and has manufactured over 4,000 sideboom attachments of all sizes (10,000-200,000 lbs.) and for major tractor manufacturers including Caterpillar, John Deere and Komatsu. *P&GJ*

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