Northern Lights
Paving company enhances safety and visibility on Idaho State Highway 41

EQUIPMENT

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As the daylight slowly fades amongst the rolling mountains and tall pines of the Idaho panhandle, the crew of Poe Asphalt Paving, Inc. sets in for the long night ahead. A veteran crew, they set to work installing the automation systems and skids, preheating their Carlson EZIV and rigging the lights for the night’s job. For them it’s just another day at the office, but tonight they have a new tool in their night paving arsenal: LED Blade Lights.

Night paving for Poe Asphalt isn’t new, nor are the demands of such large scale projects. The company has been at the forefront of major paving projects throughout eastern Washington and western Idaho, including Spokane’s Highway 290 and Lewiston-Nez Pierce County Regional Airport, for which they received a 2013 NAFA Quality in Construction Award-Airports.

Founded in 1953 by Ernie Poe, the company has grown steadily with each passing generation to become one of the area’s largest and most respected asphalt paving companies specializing in commercial, municipal, and heavy highway class projects. With Mark Poe serving as president and CEO of the company, along with sons Dustin and Brian Poe serving as superintendents, Poe Asphalt Paving continues to be a family owned company serving the Spokane, Washington, area to the north and the Lewiston, Idaho, region to the south.

PAVING IDAHO 41

Nested in Idaho’s northern panhandle, State Highway 41 sees heavy traffic yearly from tourists and recreationists heading north to a plethora of campgrounds and lakes. For those heading south, namely trucking companies, Idaho 41 has become an increasingly important roadway for access to Interstate 90 without having to enter the city of Coeur d’Alene. Selected for rehabilitation by the Idaho Transportation Board in December 2015, and funded in part by a $541.1 million surplus in the state coffers, the $4.5 million rehabilitation and safety enhancement project received substantial lobbying from businesses, local communities, and Kootenai County. Following the bidding process, Poe Asphalt Paving, Inc. was awarded the contract to rehab and pave the 10.2-mi (16.41 km) stretch of Idaho 41 between Rathdrum and Spirit Lake.

"This project has been scheduled for nearly 30 days of paving, with approximately 40,000 tons (36,287 tonnes) of asphalt being laid over that period in two lifts," explained Dustin Poe, supervisor on the Idaho 41 project. Not only is the project before them sizeable, all paving during the second phase is to take place at night while base stabilization takes place during daylight hours.

With the Idaho 41 project being so close to Poe’s Post Falls plant, the company is able to truck the material to the job site while ensuring close monitoring of mix temperature, density, and RAP (reclaimed asphalt pavement) as mandated by state inspectors. Producing 325 TPH (295 MTPH), Poe’s Astec, Inc. plant is able to keep up with the crew for consistent paving throughout the long nights. To maximize efficiency and meet the specifications set forth in the contract, Poe Asphalt has employed a window pick up machine to feed its 10-ft (3.05 m) paver with a Carlson EZIV front mount screed.
ELEVATING JOBSITE SAFETY

For Poe Asphalt, safety is a top priority for the crew. This is especially so on a night paving project with heavy traffic. “This section of Idaho 41 is heavily trafficked, so being seen is at the forefront of our safety concerns,” explained Dustin Poe. With the two-lane Idaho 41 reduced to a single lane with pilot cars needed, there is even more traffic within close proximity to the crew and equipment.

While motorists driving past the work zone present a significant safety hazard, statistics have shown that most accidents and deaths inside work zones are attributed to trucks and construction equipment hitting or running over crew. Add in the element of night, where pervasive shadows and limited visibility can lead to dangerous scenarios, and the need for adequate lighting is greater to reduce risk. “Keeping the crew safe is our Number 1 priority,” Poe stated. It is for that reason that Poe and his crew have turned to Carlson’s LED Blade Lights mounted on their machines to maximize visibility and safety on the job site. “The crew enjoys the Blade Light because you can’t go unseen,” explained Poe. “Traffic and trucks can easily see the crew coming to and from the equipment.”

Such high visibility was especially noted regarding the company’s window. Prior to the Blade Lights, the crew fitted a small 12v DC LED light tied into the machine’s battery for visibility. While some light was produced, it did not fully illuminate the platform or the piles of material. By fixing a Blade Light to the window, and tying it directly into the battery, the crew illuminated the platform for greater safety and better visibility for operation. “They give off the illusion that its daylight,” Poe added.

Aside from safety, Poe Asphalt Paving has found other advantages with the Blade Light’s high output illumination and directional platform. “The auger chambers and the hopper are even well lit,” he noted, adding that, “in comparison to our older balloon lights, the LED Blades seem to keep insects away and is nice for the crew.” That is especially so in the woods of northern Idaho, where mosquitoes are a constant pest. By keeping the crew comfortable and giving enhanced visibility on the job site, Poe Asphalt’s new lights have given them another tool in their arsenal to continue to meet the demands of their customers and Departments of Transportation. And by enhancing the safety of the work zone, the crew is ready to take on the many nights of paving Idaho’s State Highway 41 that lay ahead.

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