

CONVERSATION

Kent Pedersen

General Manager – Sales and Business Development
Avanti Wind Systems



+1 (410) 969-8978



www.avanti-online.com



Avanti Wind Systems Corporate Introduction

‘We have been more than pleased to offer extra safety services’

Tell us about Avanti and its core philosophy.

Allow me to first thank *Wind Systems* magazine for the opportunity to participate in this interview with a primary focus on the safety of all the hard-working technicians in the wind industry.

Our mission statement is “Safe Work in Wind Turbines” with our focus and value statement explaining that “through high-quality safety products and solutions for wind-turbine towers, we help our customers make wind energy more cost competitive.”

These are critical and broad areas as employees in the wind industry are deploying their activities in a risky environment such as working at heights, electrical hazards, manual handling, fire, confined space, and other surrounding aspects as extreme temperatures, onshore and offshore access, wildlife, etc.

What are your duties with Avanti?

Since 2006, I have held a general manager — sales and business development position with the responsibility of growing Avanti from a service-lift-and-ladders-with-fall-protection manufacturer into a full-line tower-internals-kit-set manufacturer, system integrator, aftermarket services with core focus on safety



inspections and certifications, user training and a GWO training facility in Franklin, Wisconsin.

What are some of the services and products Avanti specializes in?

Service lifts, or should I say wind-turbine elevators (WTEs) as they are now called in the U.S. market, is what made Avanti set up a U.S. corporation in 2006. Through the last decade, we have steadily grown our install base of WTEs to more than 3,500 in the U.S. alone, with many of our products made here in Wisconsin.

As the different state elevator authorities having jurisdiction (AHJs) require annual inspections of the WTE installations, we have had the honor and responsibility of ensuring these installations are safe

every time a technician needs to get to the top of the turbine and back down again.

Over time, our customers have told us that they would like for us to inspect other safety systems while we are in the tower. We have been more than pleased to offer extra safety services, since that is what we are great at. Our group of traveling safety professionals is highly trained in safety inspection and certifications.

By conducting more than just inspections of the WTE, we save the owner down time, less mobilization, less safety orientations, and fewer contractors to qualify. The owner obtains a uniform set of safety inspection forms, maintenance control plans, and safety certificates, all accessible and stored securely in cloud-based and backed-up servers.

What goes into a turbine inspection?

In most turbine towers, you have the following safety systems/safety equipment that, either by code requirement or by the manufacturer requirements, must be inspected by a competent person annually or periodically: elevator, climb assistance, suspension beams, guard rails/fences, anchor points, ladder, fall protection, rescue kit, emergency lighting, chain hoist, grounding straps, fire extinguishers/suppression, manhole cov-

“ Most turbines have approximately 18 different safety systems just in the tower. ”

ers/hatches, walking surfaces, edge protection, not to mention some of the critical safety items that, over time, get affected materially by use, temperature, vibration, environment, and general wear and tear.

Do different countries have different standards?

Yes, so, for example, the inspection criteria of a chain hoist are different in the U.S. vs. Germany vs. Australia.

Most turbines have approximately 18 different safety systems just in the tower, and that requires our Avanti safety professionals to understand and be able to inspect and certify per the local code requirements, as we are a global wind company.

What areas has Avanti pioneered to increase turbine maintenance efficiency?

Maintaining a safe work environment does not mean that you cannot save money at the same time.

Having an elevator in a tower, for example, has, by itself proven to have a reasonable return on investment for several owners and OEMs, allowing for a safe, fast, and efficient way to eliminate the dreadful 80- to 140-meter climb several times a day plus a potential bonus climb when something is forgotten up- or down-tower.

During the first annual inspection, we typically find a lot of “kinks” in the installed systems needing repair, replacement, and adjustments following the fast-paced construction schedule, but with a consistent and annual inspection program, we focus on predictive and preventative maintenance and subsequently find spare parts and service time for re-

pairs have a significant drop year over year. A large wind farm in Ohio saw an 83-percent drop in WTE maintenance running cost over just three years of annual inspections.

The wind-farm employees often comment that it’s like getting back into a clean car after an oil change; it just runs and feels better and makes less noise. Overall, a safe, clean, and professional work environment breeds better work ethic, higher motivation, and overall improves the quality of the wind turbine. This ultimately leads to greater uptime for the owner, and it is this additional uptime that can be measured on the bottom line.

What is Avanti ONE?

Avanti ONE is the brand of our all-encompassing safety certification program. We have been offering Avanti ONE in the U.S. market for three years and now have more than 35 U.S. wind farms with multi-year contracts for performing a variety of Avanti ONE inspections. Some contracts range from four inspections per tower to all safety components.

Where do you see the wind industry headed in 2017 and beyond?

The trend we see in the U.S. wind industry in terms of safety is a maturing market with even higher safety standards and safety expectations from the owners, turbine OEMs, and AHJs.

We also see more towers in the 80- to 120-meter range needing larger capacity and faster elevators.

While that is safer and more efficient for all the workers, we also see the marketplace expecting suppliers to become more efficient in order

to lower the annual maintenance cost in a market with focus on turbine uptime, while maintaining ISO OHSAS 18001 or a similar safety-quality management system.

As we wrap up here, I would like to thank EDP Renewables for a superiorly organized, second annual safety day conducted at the Meadow Lakes Wind Farm in Indiana. My personal hope for the wind industry is that all wind-farm owners keep safety as high on the agenda as what I experienced that week. It was a fun and fact-filled safety day that left the techs, executives, OEMs, contractors, and suppliers very safety accomplished.

Avanti was recently acquired by Alimak Group, who is Alimak?

Alimak Group is a world-leading provider of vertical-access solutions for industrial and construction industries. With a presence in more than 100 countries, Alimak develops, manufactures, sells, and provides services to vertical access solutions with focus on adding customer value through greater safety, higher productivity, and improved cost efficiency. The Group’s products and solutions are sold under the brands Alimak Hek, CoxGomyl, Manntech, and Avanti. Alimak has an installed base of more than 60,000 elevators, hoists, platforms, service lifts, and building-maintenance units around the world. Founded in Sweden in 1948, Alimak has its headquarters in Stockholm, 12 manufacturing facilities in eight countries, and 2,400 employees around the world. www.alimakgroup.com