

PROFILE

NAES CORP.

By Russ Willcutt



Providing engineering, construction, turbine repair, and O&M services, this company has the infrastructure and expertise to help wind developers and owners succeed.

WHEN A COMPANY IS THE ENERGY industry's largest independent provider of operations and maintenance services—currently operating about 120 plants producing some 34,000MW throughout the Americas—and has also been providing maintenance services for nearly three decades, it's in a position to provide its customers with a depth of experience that is unmatched. But there's another thing it can offer, as well.

"And that's leverage," according to John Brewster, president and CEO of NAES Corporation. "We are constantly leveraging our experiences and skill sets to new technologies and customers, and leveraging our purchasing power by entering into arrangements with a variety of service and materials providers for better economics, which enables us to pass the resulting savings along to our customers."

Formed in 1980 by four northwest U.S. utilities to provide project management services, NAES has evolved into a significant enterprise with distinct areas of service expertise including plant operations, maintenance and construction, technical support, turbine field services, and staffing. Headquartered in Issaquah, Washington, the company has multiple offices and plant sites housing some 2,600 employees.

NAES continues to grow. The plant operations segment continues to add new contracts and typically hires new employees as contracts are signed. The majority of recruiting is conducted by in-house staff, and a focus on maintaining continuity of leadership is used. New employee growth is incremental and predominately from the local region, so that the local economy benefits. By contrast, the maintenance and construction segment tends to fluctuate with the work. "We currently employ about 1,000 maintenance and construction personnel," Brewster says, "but our workload has been growing. In fact, we've recently created a new division called the Engineering and Construction Group, which provides support for our two wholly-owned subsidiaries. NAES Power Contractors has served the union maintenance and construction market for many years now, and NAES Constructors will pursue maintenance and construction projects in the open shop market."

As for wind, NAES is using its leverage to provide a springboard for growth. "We are building upon our experiences and proven processes and

now providing plant operations, maintenance and construction, staffing, and technical support to owners of wind farms, and we expect to see our business expand in each of these areas," Brewster says, adding that NAES is adapting services to match needs in each segment.

In plant operations, NAES is currently operating nearly 500MW of wind. The scope of work includes the development of customized operational programs and procedures, installation of maintenance management systems to provide the basis for compiling maintenance history and promoting knowledge capture, and oversight of all other service providers such as the WTG OEM, micro weather forecaster, and environmental consultants. Other services include the development of annual budgets and operating plans, interface with power off takers, and other tasks in order to attain safety, compliance, cost, and production requirements. "Owners hire NAES because they realize that the investment is necessary to mitigate their risk exposures and meet their financial targets," Brewster says.

In the technical support segment, NAES is providing NERC support because NERC requirements can extend into wind, and program and procedure development since owners still require safety, compliance, and maintenance management/knowledge capture. In staffing, NAES services range from placing temporary field technicians to the conduct of defined search.

Extending into maintenance and construction on the basis of its turbine services history seems logical. "Targeting scheduled and unscheduled maintenance, retrofits and upgrades, storage repair and maintenance, and end of warranty inspections takes advantage of our pedigree in quickly mobilizing a skilled workforce with the right tools to get the job done effectively," he adds.

Having joined NAES in June of 2010, Brewster is leveraging his own 32 years of industry experience in plant operations, maintenance, and executive management, saying that he is definitely bullish on the wind industry. "Renewable energy is the future, and wind will take a leading role in its growth. Our deep involvement in the energy sector, our ability to leverage our skill sets—all of which support one another—give us an ideal platform for continued growth and success." 