



In the top tier of wind farm construction experts, this company has worked to gain experience and the confidence and trust of owner/operators around the world.

IT'S A TYPICALLY AMERICAN STORY. During the late forties the son of immigrants bought a dump truck to haul coal and gravel in and around Clinton, Indiana. He worked hard, saved his money, and eventually bought two dilapidated bulldozers with the idea of combining the parts to make a single working machine. Like many an entrepreneur before him he operated out of his house, using the back yard as the maintenance shop. His name was Herman White, and from such humble beginnings emerged a company that today is involved in heavy highway and demolition work, asphalt and concrete paving, bridge and site development, underground utility operations, industrial maintenance, hazardous response and remediation, and power plant and refinery construction. In addition, White Construction is one of the premier wind farm specialists in the United States.

Just as its founder built the company incrementally, White Construction has grown from providing piecemeal wind farm services—designing and installing service roads, for instance—to offering turnkey construction packages to owner/developers. “Today we are a self-performing balance of plant EPC contractor,” according to Jamison M. Krynski, senior business development manager. “We’ll pave your roads, pour foundations, erect your towers and turbines, install generators, mount your blades, and wire the whole thing together. And then we’ll handle your mechanical maintenance from that point forward, because we’ve already got the equipment that put it all up there.”

Since 2004, when the company worked on one of its first wind farm projects at the U.S. Naval Station at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, White Construction has completed several projects totaling more than 4,000MW of operating electrical assets at sites located around the United States and Canada. Along the way White has learned many lessons, “paying our tuition” as Krynski says, describing the years of hard work gaining experience that puts a company at the top of its class. As an example, late or uncoordinated deliveries to the job site create project delays, increasing the “burn rate”—or the project’s daily operational costs—dramatically. One solution would be for the contractor to handle logistics in order to make sure towers were delivered on the right date, but also ahead of the rotor blades.

But it’s not as simple as naming the day on which shipments should arrive.

“Every state has a completely different set of rules to follow, so there’s a great deal of permitting involved,” he explains. “And some have a limit on how many highway patrol escorts are allowed during a given day or week, and you need that kind of help when you’re moving these immense tower sections, which are getting larger every year. That’s something you’ve got to learn how to deal with effectively. So logistics is something we’re prepared to handle, even though that’s usually covered by the OEM.”

The biggest challenge facing contractors in the coming years, and one confronting the entire North American wind industry, involves the supply chain. With turbines and related hardware constantly growing larger in order to reap greater returns, transportation modes must respond accordingly. And while Schnabel trailers—huge, self-loading and unloading tractor beds—with expanded capacity have recently been introduced, there are too few available to have an immediate impact. That’s just one reason why it’s critical for wind farm construction companies to have experience not only in basics such as earthmoving and pouring foundations, but in peripheral operations such as transportation and maintenance. “The more versatile and creative you can be on the jobsite, the better you’ll be able to deal with the inevitable delays you’ll run across,” Krynski says. “Understanding how these projects unfold when you’re facing large, spread-out jobsites that can be as large as 30 square miles of open fields requires a unique tactical approach, and the only way you can build that kind of confidence is by spending years gaining experience in every conceivable situation.”

White has clearly gained the confidence of its customers, with many long-term relationships stretching back over the years, and with many completed wind farm projects as a result. “Our goal from the day we entered the wind energy market was to eventually be able to offer a cradle to grave approach, from preconstruction to all the engineering, procurement, and construction services required, and then lifetime support of the project,” Krynski says. “Today, that’s exactly what White Construction can provide.” - R.W. ✎