

PROFILE

SPIDER WIND ACCESS

By Russ Willcutt



For more than six decades this company has been providing access solutions to commercial and industrial clients. The wind energy market is now a primary focus.

IT BEGAN IN RENTON, WASHINGTON, in 1947 when Spider—now a division of SafeWorks, LLC—was formed by the Fisher brothers. Painters by profession, they recognized a need for suspended access to industrial structure and high-rise buildings and introduced the well-known Spider basket. Thus, with contracting in their DNA, Spider understands its products must be safe, practical, and reliable.

For more than 60 years contractors have been depending on Spider to provide solutions that work both safely and profitably. The wind energy industry is a major recipient of this expertise, both throughout North America and around the world. Spider understands that wind farm owners and operators share common problems worldwide, requiring specialized access choices.

With this experience in developing hoists, suspended platforms, and rigging for both the industrial and commercial markets, Spider realized it could play an important role in the emerging wind market. “Since our suspended access solutions have been used in power generation operations for years, it was a natural for us to get involved in wind as well,” says Clint Ramberg, director of Spider Wind Access. “But we wanted to make sure we did it the right way.”

Spider reached out to wind turbine owners, operators, and service providers seeking input and guidance prior to conducting tests and achieving the necessary certifications before their first wind access platform was designed and launched. With the success of the beta tests, and receiving a positive response from contractors, the leadership team decided to play a larger role in the wind market and identified a dedicated team of experts to concentrate on the wind access industry. Spider is the only manufacturer with its own nationwide branch network focused solely on providing safe access solutions at elevation. Leading professionals demand reliability, and they put their trust in Spider to comply with local standards, regardless of where the work is found.

“Having the global footprint with local manufacturing, service, and support in all key wind markets,” Ramberg says, “we design and manufacture practical, simple, and smart access products that offer the lowest cost of ownership in the industry and are available for direct distribution from 25 company owned offices throughout the Americas.”

Versatility is key, as the modular design of Spider products allows for configurations to meet virtually any wind-related application. At the center of the product lineup is the 360° Blade Access Platform (BAP), which easily converts into a 5- or 6.7-foot BAP

for tight spaces. The modularity of the system also allows easier transportation, not only between turbines but over longer distances as well, reducing the overall mobilization costs. The 360° BAP also converts into a curved Tower Access Platform (TAP) and eliminates the need for expensive cranes, providing a safe and reliable wind turbine maintenance solution. In addition to platforms Spider offers a complete line of safety solutions including harnesses, lanyards, rope and cable grabs, self-retracting lifelines—including the Spiderline horizontal lifeline system—anchorage connectors, and traction and drum hoists.

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Ramberg says two primary targets for the company’s platforms are operations and maintenance (O&M) service providers and specialty contractors. “Whether it’s an O&M performing the full scale of turbine services such as inspections and repairs, or a contractor cleaning towers, performing composite repairs, or applying coatings, Spider access systems are ideal for any of these wind applications,” he says. “We are an ISO 9001:2008 manufacturer, and all of our products are OSHA and UL compliant. We also provide competent person training to help users comply with OSHA regulations”

As the wind energy industry continues to evolve, Spider Wind Access will grow along with it, with new products already in development to address the larger turbines that will be coming online, both on and offshore. “We have people who’ve been with this company for their entire careers,” Ramberg says, “and with more than a century of combined experience between us we have a wealth of knowledge to share with our clients in the wind industry both here in the United States and around the world.”