

We Plug Holes!



Foam Plugg'r

Fall 2010

Field
Forum

Safety and Economy of Helicopters on the job site

*By Ed Winchester, President
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Part I: Managing risk, safety and cost

As more and more sites are reclaimed, the jobs tackled are more remote. While ingenuity and hard work are usually able to carry the day, some sites require a helicopter. Sometimes it's a question of economics, sometimes one of safety, sometimes one of risk mitigation.

Safety

Let's begin with safety considerations. The sites we work on can be hazardous. Simply getting to them may present the first obstacle. It is up to you to determine whether or not it is prudent to put your crews at risk of potential serious injury when mobilizing tools and materials to a particular job site. If you can keep your crew off steep, narrow trails where they can be hurt, why not do it? Remember, they will be carrying packs with 70 pounds of material on their back. The cost of an injury to an employee or the time lost dealing with an injury can be huge. We all deal with risk, but some risks need to be reduced.

Cost considerations

In addition to being safer, using a helicopter for mobilization may just be cheaper. For example, let's say you have three adits to close, requiring approximately 30 yards (~2190lb) foam and the features are five miles from the road, along a well-used hiking trail. Some would be tempted to send a large crew out with packs. Five people, with each person hiking the trip each day, results in 30 man days for mobilization. At prevailing wage rates, that could drive costs sky high.



Photo by Ed Winchester

Five-bladed Whisper Jet S-55QT operating near Las Vegas has a useful load capacity of 2,700 pounds.

HELICOPTERS, *continued*

Operators use a variety of helicopters; some will lift seven to nine hundred pounds while others will lift several thousand pounds. The big difference is cost. An MD500 will likely cost about \$900 per hour while a Huey will cost closer to \$2,500 per hour. The MD500 will get the job done in less than an hour while the Huey requires only one trip. So the hourly cost is \$900 vs. \$2,500. However, that doesn't take into account the time it takes the

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Foam goes to Egypt

In July and August this year a US/Egyptian joint venture exploration project utilized our plugs to help reclaim shot holes. FOAMPLUG has been used in ten, now eleven foreign countries. For a graphical representation of where Foam Concepts products have been utilized, go to <http://www.foamconceptsllc.com/map.swf>

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helicopter to fly to and from its base. This is referred to as ferry time and as a general rule, if that big fan is spinning, you are paying.

Generally, when looking for a helicopter, people only ask two questions: how much per hour, and how much can it lift? But this is only the beginning. You also need to know the altitude of the staging area and the job site, as well as the likely temperatures during the work. The availability of fuel (Jet A) is important, but the operator will likely bring a fuel truck with them, which is an additional charge. When you develop a plan for the work, it needs to include the locations of the drops, staging areas, fueling spots and any other hazards such as overhead power lines.

Continuing our earlier example, let's say you chose the MD500. You were told he could lift 700 pounds; you must understand that this is a max lift, in this example. That max lift is based on him being light on fuel, thus the first lifts of the day will be lighter than 700 pounds. Depending on the circumstances, the helicopter may be able to work with a small fuel load in order to maximize lift but if so, he will be on the fuel truck like a hummingbird on a feeder full of sugar water.

At some locations, the use of drum sets may make sense, but when using a helicopter, they may make less sense.

Drum sets reduce your ability to tailor loads to the helicopter. An advantage to using boxed foam is the durable packaging and the ability to gradually increase loads as the helicopter burns off fuel. Keep that in mind when planning a helicopter operation.

Remember that safety is *the* priority with lift work. The next issue of Foam Plugg'r will address some safety specifics as they pertain to reclamation work.

Call Larry for answers!

You're busy. And you need answers. As co-owner of Foam Concepts LLC, a key aspect of Larry Poss's job at the plant in Cloquet, Minnesota, is to address customers' immediate needs.

What questions does Larry answer? Larry fields your freight cost queries, delivery date dilemmas, basic quotes and product pricing. His job is to make decisions that assure you get what you need, without compromising another job.

He does all of this in addition to managing the plant, overseeing production and shipping and maintaining inventory. How does he do it?

"In manufacturing, that's what we do," said Larry. "Sometimes it just means careful scheduling, sometimes it means pulling overtime to get the job done and keep everything else on track."

But you can bet that Larry will figure it out. With 22 years as a manufacturing plant manager with responsibility for three sites and oversight of 60-plus employees, six years as a national bank examiner for the US Treasury Department and six years as a business consultant for Minnesota Technology, Larry is a meticulous planner and a get-it-done kind of guy. So when you want to know, **call Larry at 888-744-7584.**

R/B side darker, sweeter?

The R side (B side to others) is a polyol based on, yep, sugar! Some folks, drum users especially, have noticed a significant darkening of the R side. Because the sugar could be made from a variety of plant sources (though cane and beets are typical), there may be color variations between batches. This has no impact on the foam quality or even the final color. You still can't eat it.