

Dollars and Sense

Hydro-Exc.

By Adam Zeciri

"Out of sight, out of mind" can quickly turn very much "in your face" if a buried product pipeline or utility line is, well let's just say, "unintentionally discovered."

Can you really put a dollar amount on damage prevention? Sure you can. In fact, it happens every time a utility line is damaged with a backhoe, bulldozer, auger, directional boring machine or shovel. It won't take long before you find out exactly what it costs when you don't prevent damages. "Out of sight, out of mind" can quickly turn very much "in your face" if a buried product pipeline or utility line is, well let's just say, "unintentionally discovered." That's precisely what drives Hydro-Exc. both literally and figuratively.

Hydro-Exc.—short for hydraulic excavation—was formed in 2003 by Mitch and Colleen Ravesloot, along with Tom Vanbuskirk. Having spent over 20 years in the site utility field, Mitch discovered an increasing need for an alternative method for excavation. It didn't take long before he figured out a way to repurpose a sewer-jetting truck to be used to dig holes. Until recent years, a sewer-jetting truck was used primarily to clear clogged sewer mains using a high-pressure stream of water and to suck leaves and debris out of clogged storm catch-basins. It was around that time that several manufacturers devised a nozzle system, similar to the kind used for a power washer at the car wash, to intensify and focus the stream of water used for sewer-jetting. This high-pressure series of water streams is used to break up the earth, while the vacuum hose sucks the spoils into a storage tank. Using pressurized water for digging is exponentially faster than vacuum excavation alone.

This method of excavation, along with a few others, is commonly referred to as a "soft-dig" in the industry. A soft-dig is typically used when digging must occur in a congested underground area, when non-metallic utility

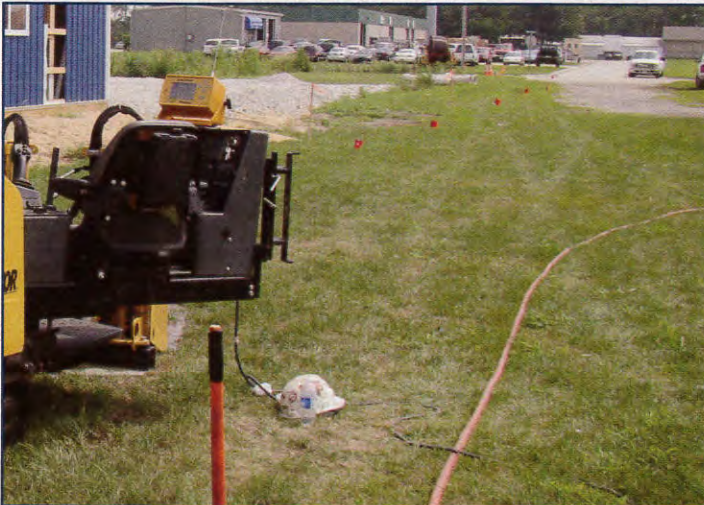




Directional drill head.



Directional drill head beginning the push.



Directional bore for electrical conduit staked with red flags by a utility locator.



The bore head being removed.



Back-reamer is attached.



The conduit is attached to reamer head for pullback.



Pullback initiated.

lines cannot be located traditionally, or to visually inspect pre-marked utility lines prior to other excavation methods like directional boring. Having a request from one of their large clients in Indiana prompted Hydro-Exc. to recently make that leap as well, offering the additional service of directional boring. "The reason was simple." Explains General Manager Gregg Nadess, "They sim-

ply don't have enough crews themselves to keep up with their demand for boring." He continued, "We came up with the idea to fry and provide the client with a 'one-stop shop' for the services they required. That not only makes it easy for them, having to not make a thousand phone calls for one job, but it helps streamline the entire process for us as well." As he put it, "It just made sense."

Another challenge commonly faced in the normal course of events, is how to dispose of the slurry spoils, or what's sucked out of the holes. The spoils of hydro-excavation are not commonly accepted by most landfills, as they are liquefied earth and cannot readily pass through a paint filter. The "paint filter test" is how landfills and the Environmental Protection Agency distinguish solids from liquids. Due to ever increasing regulatory requirements set forth by the EPA, companies like Hydro-Exc. have been faced with an exponentially increasing dilemma: what to do with the spoils slurry.

MTC Enterprises, Inc. is their solution to that dilemma. The brainchild of Mitch Raveslout, MTC Enterprises specializes in both the separation of liquids from solids and the solidification of liquefied spoils. The short explanation for how solidification works is this: A drying agent is introduced to the spoils and is then churned. The drying agent acts as a sponge for the liquids, thickening the spoils like the starch in a batter. While MTC was created out of a direct personal need, they strive to provide the spoil reclamation process for anyone with hydro-excavation equipment or directional drilling mud. Their patented design allows for ease of truck transport to and from a worksite, or for an extended stay at a landfill site. Right now they have a total of three fully operational re-purposed storage containers that



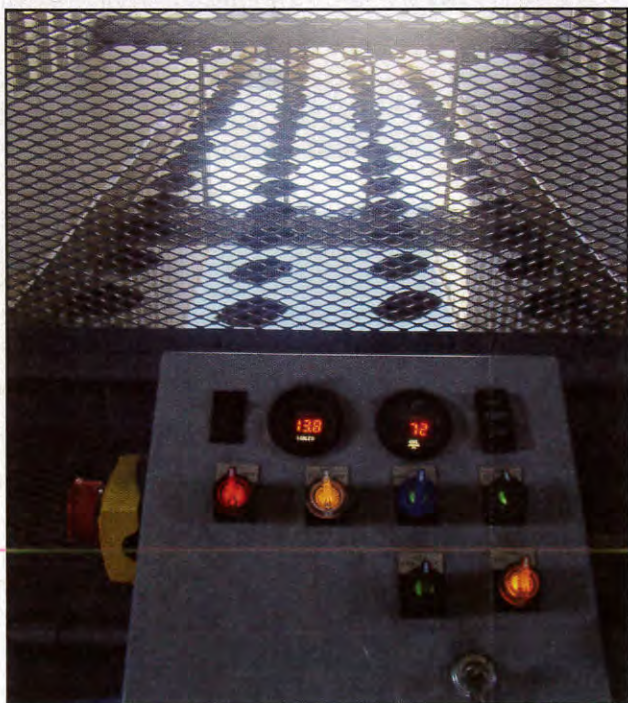
MTC patented Separator separates water from earth.

perform two independent functions. The Separator divides water from earth. The Solidifier adds a drying agent and thickens the slurry. The prototype, built by Mitch and Wayne Raveslout, was the first Solidifier they created and it is still in use today. As put by Wayne, "You should have seen it! It was like 'Monster's Garage' in the shop when we were building these things!" **UF**

Hydro-Exc. and MTC Enterprises are based out of Merrillville, IN with other offices in Chicago, IL; St. Louis, MO; and Detroit, MI.

For more information on the services they provide, contact Gregg Nadess at 815-530-5953 or email gnadess@yahoo.com.

www.hydroexc.com



The MTC patented Solidifier introduces a drying agent as thickener.

