



# ALASKA DEMOLITION LLC

By NANCY ERICKSON

MEMBER PROFILE

## *Right time, right name lead to skilled company's supported success*

**R**emember the delight in a little boy's eyes as he carefully constructs a Tinkertoy house and immediately smashes it to bits?

You might get that same sense from the crew at Alaska Demolition LLC in Anchorage — and they get paid for it. But it's not exactly that easy, said operations manager Mike Waddell.

"You just can't go out there and tear something down," Waddell said recently from his office on Rampart Drive.

He likened structures to Tinkertoys: Understanding how one is put together makes it a lot easier to take it apart. But when that factor is missing in a structural demolition, the risk factors skyrocket.

"There are multiple hazards associated with demolition operations, as most times there aren't

enough records to identify how buildings were actually constructed," Waddell said. "Extremely tall structures have a very pronounced ability to create fall-on hazards for equipment and personnel if projects are not choreographed properly to minimize exposures."

"You have to know the animal you're dealing with," he said.

Demolition of the Bassett Army Community Hospital in Fairbanks in 2008 was just such an example.

Waddell said the company he's worked for since 2005 typically doesn't use wrecking balls. But in this particular project, a 120-foot-high crane and wrecking ball were used to rip off the top three or four stories of the structure to get enough material to



Disposal transport tractor-trailers line up at Alaska Demolition's 38-acre reclamation site in Palmer.

build a 40-foot-high working trail and pad. Equipment was positioned on the pad to bring down the remainder of the building, Waddell said.

### Getting started in a garage

Company founder Justin Green, 40, doesn't refer to himself as a gambler, but he could have held his own with the best of them in Las Vegas when he started his demolition business 20 years ago out of his garage in Anchorage, employing his rugby team as laborers.

With the help of his office manager, Carolee Regnart, whom he refers to as the backbone of his company to this day; his father cosigning for Green's first piece of heavy equipment; and the trust and support of fellow contractors, Right Away Rip-Out took off faster than the 20-year-old entrepreneur anticipated.

About two years into the business, when government contracts began to filter in, Green realized the company name had to go.

He recalled an early season walk-through with Anchorage's top-notch contractors to preview a potential big job. As they studied how to tear down the walls, someone in the group suggested contacting "Right Away Rip-Off."

"I knew it was time to get more serious," Green said. And then Right Away Rip-Out morphed into Alaska Demolition LLC.

Alaska-born and -raised, Green credits the success of his company to perfect timing and support from his peers.

Green said he hit the economy at the right time 20 years ago and quickly captured the niche from the first company in Alaska specializing in demolition to an industrial leader today in mechanical demolition and environmental services.

Green has earned the respect of his fellow contractors.

Alaska Demolition's first big project with Neeser Construction Inc. was tearing down the old Hub Bar in downtown Anchorage 15 years ago. Owner Jerry Neeser fronted the money to Green's young company to purchase equipment to do the job, Green said.



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ALASKA DEMOLITION LLC

*Alaska Demolition crews begin removing remains of the old Tanana River bridge near Tok. Workers watered existing river ice to build an additional four-foot pad that would withstand the collapsing bridge after it was demolished with explosives. The explosion can be viewed on YouTube: Tanana River bridge.*

"Alaska Demolition and Neeser Construction have had a longstanding relationship since the beginning of Alaska Demolition's move into the Alaska construction market," Neeser said. "Alaska Demolition started out as a small, interior demolition contractor and has evolved into the largest mechanical demolition contractor in the state."

Other local contractors agreed with that assessment.

"Alaska Demolition has been Davis Constructors' demo contractor of choice for many years, and they have proven themselves to be hard-working, thorough and excellent at what they do," company president Josh Peppers said.

Mike Shaw, president of Roger Hickel Contracting Inc., said of Green's company: "Alaska Demolition is a go-to contractor as they are able to provide experience and resources necessary to bring projects to completion."

Gilberto Guarderas of G&S Management Services is another contractor who believed in Green early on.

"Gilberto worked with me every way possible to ensure my success," Green said. "Our first job for him was the Whittier transit shed demolition for Alaska Railroad, where my office and sleeping quarters were in the back of the sleeper in my first Kenworth truck."

### No downtime this past winter

Winter usually brings a lighter workload for the crew at Alaska Demolition, but not this year.

A crew of 37 is working with general contractor Criterion General Inc. to reconstruct the Alaska Legislative Information building on Fourth Avenue in Anchorage.

"Things are going as planned," said Criterion vice president Dave DeRoberts. "It's quite an extensive job, but the guys are getting on it and getting it done."

Criterion has worked with Alaska Demolition for more than 15 years, DeRoberts said. The building that is home turf for Alaska's politicians when in Anchorage is presenting its challenges.

“Normally (Alaska Demolition) would demolish a building for us, but on this one they had to demolish a building between two buildings,” DeRoberts said.

The old Anchor Bar was sandwiched between the two buildings and sharing a common wall with one, he said. The wall had to be shored up before surgically removing the bar instead of going in and wrecking it.

“It’s well beyond a renovation,” Waddell said. “It’s almost a reconstruct. We’re taking it down to the concrete floor and steel beams.”

The challenge in this type of project is to remove the parts and pieces without damaging the structure, he said.

Numerous steps are involved in a demolition project before heavy equipment is mobilized to the site, Waddell said.

A hazardous materials survey is performed first to identify materials requiring removal prior to demolition, he said. Utility companies are called in to locate services in the area, and an engineering survey may be required to determine if there is the potential for damage to adjoining structures. Then



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ALASKA DEMOLITION LLC

Only a small section of the foundation remains of the Elmendorf coal-fired power plant following demolition by four Alaska Demolition excavator operators in 2007.

it’s time for the hazardous materials abatement crew to perform removal of regulated materials and properly package, transport and dispose of it in EPA- and/or Alaska Department of

Environmental Conservation-approved locations.

When the determination has been issued that the building is safe for demolition, heavy equipment moves in, he said.

So what happens to all that debris after demolition of a building?

Materials not recycled are transported to Alaska Demolition’s inert reclamation site in Palmer, which accepts material that is neither chemically nor biologically reactive, Waddell said.

But then there’s the toxins and hazardous waste to deal with.

Items such as lead paint, mercury and contaminants are shipped out of state via companies such as Emerald Alaska Inc., Clean Harbors or Total Reclaim, Waddell said.

An Associated General Contractors of Alaska member for more than 14 years, Green appreciates all those who have helped him along the way.

“I’d like to thank all the contractors in Alaska who have trusted us in the last 20 years and help us to grow to who we are,” Green said. “We look forward to many more years of being the go-to demo contractor in Alaska.”

*Nancy Erickson is a freelance writer living in Seward.*

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