



# Precision tracks on...

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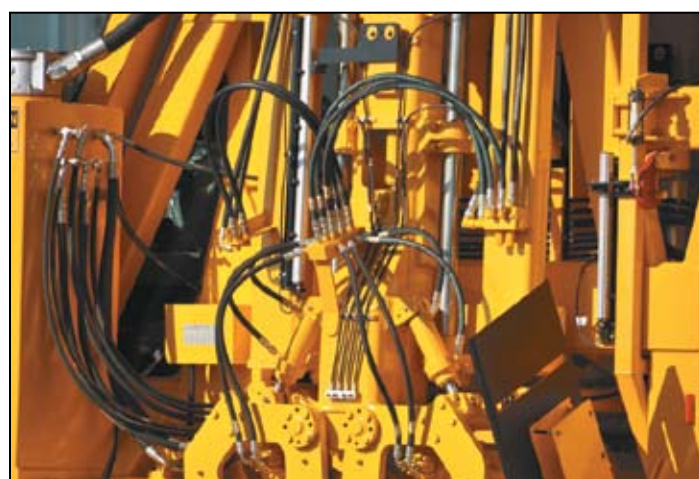
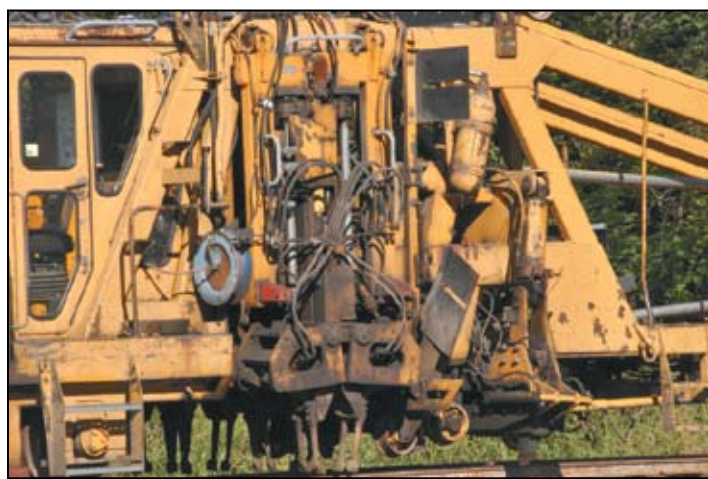
In an old refurbished building located on South 19th Street in Independence hides a gem of a business. Precision Railway Equipment Company is owned by Rio Grande Pacific Corporation with its headquarters in Fort Worth, Tex., owned by Rick Bertel, and is locally managed by vice president and general manager, Harry Smith. Precision Railway is an authorized remanufacturer for Harsco 6700 model production tampers. Precision Railway partnered with Harsco, the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) in 2012.

The tamper is a specialized machine used to put a new surface on the railroad tracks. It works the same way as putting a new surface on on a highway. As a highway gets rough, vehicle traffic must slow down, the same occurs on a railroad track. As the railroad track gets rough and out of line the train traffic must slow down. These machines were built to make the track smooth

and increase the speed in which the trains may travel. Today's machines are 108' long and weigh 70,000 pounds. These machines took the place of manual labor. They are faster, more accurate, efficient and less labor-intensive.

Smith's experience with the 6700 models began in 1977 when he was an employee of Harsco for 10 years before starting his own business where he operated and maintained the model 6700's. In approximately 2009, Bertel had two of his 6700 models remanufactured by other remanufacturers and was not pleased with the results of the quality of their work. Smith and Bertel have had a long relationship throughout the years which led to them discussing the possibility of opening their own remanufacturing business.

It was the consensus of all parties involved that they would need to partner with OEM. Harsco holds proprietary rights to many components on the 6700 model. Precision is now one of only two authorized companies



to purchase these components.

In 2012, Precision Railway Equipment purchased the building after his good friend, Terry Hugo, encouraged him to look at the building on South 19th Street. The company began remanufacturing tampers in 2013.

Smith says the company can produce one tamper per month or 12 per year. Currently, they have refurbished 23 tampers from this shop. Smith clarified, "When I say we can produce one a month, we are staging each machine. It could not roll in here and be done in one month. It will actually take 90 days to produce a complete machine." He illustrated his statement by saying they set up three machines and work on each at the same time the production equates to one machine each month.

Smith pointed out that the company refurbished 11 tampers in 2015 followed by a lean year producing only five in 2016 as result of the rail roads cutting their capital budget spending. However, January has seen orders pick up. Currently, the company has six rebuilds on the books. "We

should have a good year," said Smith.

Precision Railway Equipment currently employs 32 skilled workers. It has produced 23 6700 model tamper machines since 2013. The company has built tampers for use throughout the United States, Mexico, Panama and exploring opportunities in Argentina. A new tamper sells for approximately \$1.2 million while a refurbished one from Precision Railway Equipment sells for about \$700,000. The Precision machines are completely rebuilt from the ground up into what could be practically be considered a new piece of equipment.

Another aspect of Precision Railway is the fact that the business supports many of the area business by purchasing their parts and services.

The future is looking bright for Precision Railway Equipment as the need for more railroad transportation continues to be a vital resource for a growing economy.

Go to the Reporter website for more photos of Precision Railway Equipment at [www.indydailyreporter.com](http://www.indydailyreporter.com).

