

Slushers get the job done

■ Nelmaco's low-tech appropriate technology still popular

BY SCOTT HADDOW

Fred Delabbio is a highly sought after man in the mining industry.

Owner of Nelmaco Eastern Ltd. in Sudbury, Delabbio and his small company of four full-time and two part-time employees, focuses on manufacturing, remanufacturing, supplying, repairing and selling a variety of equipment for mining, tunnelling, construction, marine, diamond drilling and industrial needs.

Nelmaco is the original equipment manufacturer of JOY equipment, including pneumatic and electric slushers, motors, valves, hoists, tuggers and winches.

Delabbio took over the Joy Canadian product line from another company entirely five years ago and things have sky-rocketed from there to the point where Delabbio tries to refuse business, but customers convince him otherwise



Nelmaco Eastern Ltd. owner Fred Delabbio has his hands full manufacturing, fixing and modifying slushers from around the world.

to repair their equipment.

It takes more than owning a product line and its rights to become highly sought after in the mining industry. It takes innovation, intelligence and good

old fashioned business acumen.

"We're the world's largest manufacturer of JOY slushers," Delabbio said. "We have all the patterns and designs. We're able to make new JOY prod-

ucts and we're making changes because technology has changed. We have used innovation and design to build better JOY products that lower costs and last longer. It's going extremely well. We



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can barely keep up with demand. We're in every country around the world - 80 per cent of our business is export. Customers come to us from around the world. It's reputation. I get calls from Asia, South America ... asking us to fix equipment. I try and say no, but they tell me they will pay whatever it takes. So, I do it."

Delabbio is a man full of pride in the work he and his company does. It doesn't take long for him to show off the company logo of a beaver dressed in mining gear with the slogan "We Really Give a Dam" on it.

Delabbio wouldn't put the logo on anything he didn't deem fitting.

"We're noted for our service and quality," he said. "We warranty everything. We don't sell junk and a lot of other people do sell junk. We refuse to do it. Yes, there is a lot of pride here and that is key to the business. You would be surprised how many people identify us with that logo - it's a logo people can trust. I have good people working for me and that is what makes it roll. We also sell our slushers and JOY equipment with manuals and parts lists. Not a lot of other companies do that and it is very important to our customers."

Slushers are making a comeback of sorts despite the fact they never really went out of style in mining operations around the world.

"(It's) a great piece of equipment," Delabbio said. "Slushers have come back into use more in North America over the last few years for selective mining. I have a client in the Yukon

in a diamond mine. They had to fly in every gallon of oil and it was costing them a fortune. They bought two slushers from us and those machines replaced three scoop trams and met a lot of ventilation requirements. The slushers do the work of other more expensive-to-run machines and do it with a fantastic saving for the customer. We're running very large orders now."

Twenty-seven years ago, Delabbio struck out on his own with his company after being a salesman for JOY products for 15 years. He is also an engineer. He loves to boast that he makes a bona fide effort to make an impact in the local community and is a proud Canadian. Delabbio is convinced this helps to keep business flowing in his direction, even when times get tough.

"We always push we're Canadian because Canadians are the leaders in the world in hardrock underground mining," he said. "In Sudbury, I work with four major fabrication shops and a few other businesses. There is a lot of spin-off business from me. Twenty-seven years ago, I looked at doing different things. I decided I would rather work for myself than other people. It has taken a lot of hard work to get here. It makes me feel good to see where the company has come from. It makes me think I was right to go out on my own. I never envisioned I would be world-wide." ■

www.nelmaco.com



Nelmaco Eastern slusher, crated and ready for shipping.

The lowdown on slushers

Slushers are electrically or pneumatically powered devices used for collecting muck. They were widely used before the introduction of mobile equipment, but continue to be used and may even be gaining in popularity. One web search result defined the slusher as "essentially a double drum hoist." It goes on to note that "one cable of the slusher is attached to the front of the scraper

so that it can be pulled towards the slusher and an orepass. The other cable goes around a block securely fastened in the far end of the slusher drift or pillar and is attached to the back of the scraper. Pulling this cable brings the bucket toward the end of the drift or pillar for another load. As the scraper is dragged across the muck pile, the ore is pulled into an ore pass or into an ore car.

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