

VOLUMETRIC MIXERS PLAY CRUCIAL ROLE IN UPDATING UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

G-CRETE: AT A GLANCE

YEAR STARTED

2015

MARKET SERVICE

San Antonio, TX

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Underground Utilities

MOBILE SERIES

C Series

When the 2020 census was released, San Antonio continued to grow. But this wasn't news to G-Crete nor its sister company, DGuerra Construction. The seventh-largest city in the U.S. has kept the companies busy with underground utility work for years. Over time, however, the need to self-supply concrete led them to Cemen Tech volumetric mixers.

Cemen Tech Volumetric Mixers Help G-Crete Grow & Scale Business Operations

The use of Cemen Tech volumetric mixers has changed what projects G-Crete, and DGuerra Construction, approach and bid on. Seth Bittick, vice president of operations, said when he started with the company in 2018, their bids stayed in the \$1- to \$7-million range. Since then, the utility side has grown in scale.

"Through the growth of the market, and growth of both the concrete and construction sides, we [can] bid on projects that are upwards of \$25- to \$30-million. Now we try to stay in the \$10- to \$25-million range as our bread and butter."

The flexibility afforded by volumetric mixers is key to working in an existing utility-rich environment, such as the San Antonio area.

"What we see in our customer base is even if the order is set up for 3 p.m., they're estimating that time

earlier in the day. Things can change real fast installing utilities," Bittick said. "There could be unmarked lines, some slough off in the trench, change of dirt type, but the volumetrics allow us to get the load there at the scheduled time.

"If they're running 30 minutes, 45 minutes, [up] to an hour late, typically we're at no jeopardy of losing the load versus a barrel truck. Then, as long as the aggregates are the same, it lets us pour a different mix."

Versatility Affords Time & Money Savings To Everyone

Yet, the versatility afforded G-Crete extends beyond project bids, touching internal and external benefactors. One example is the significantly reduced overtime paid to crews waiting on concrete.

"Let's just assume all those guys make \$20 an hour. You've got six to seven guys sitting around making \$20 an hour, waiting on concrete, because they can't leave the site until it's poured," Bittick said.



However convenient self-supplying concrete has been, he said the goal for G-Crete is to be mostly retail delivery with a small fraction of self-supply. The retail side serves residential work, such as backyard patios and sidewalks, and competing utility contractors.

“They [utility contractors] like the scheduling ease where they may be three or four days out with someone else,” Bittick said. “We can typically get them the next day; as long as they’re flexible on scheduling time, we can usually make it happen.”

Technology Couples With Ease Of Use For Operators

Although moving to the fully automated C Series volumetric mixer wasn’t Bittick’s first choice, he recognized the volumetric industry is moving toward technology.

“We came to the agreement that we might as well get on board and get ahead of it,” he said. “We’ve been pleasantly surprised by the reliability and accuracy of the C60.”

Once the company’s first C60 was in service, he noticed the ease of use and reduced miscommunications for the operators.

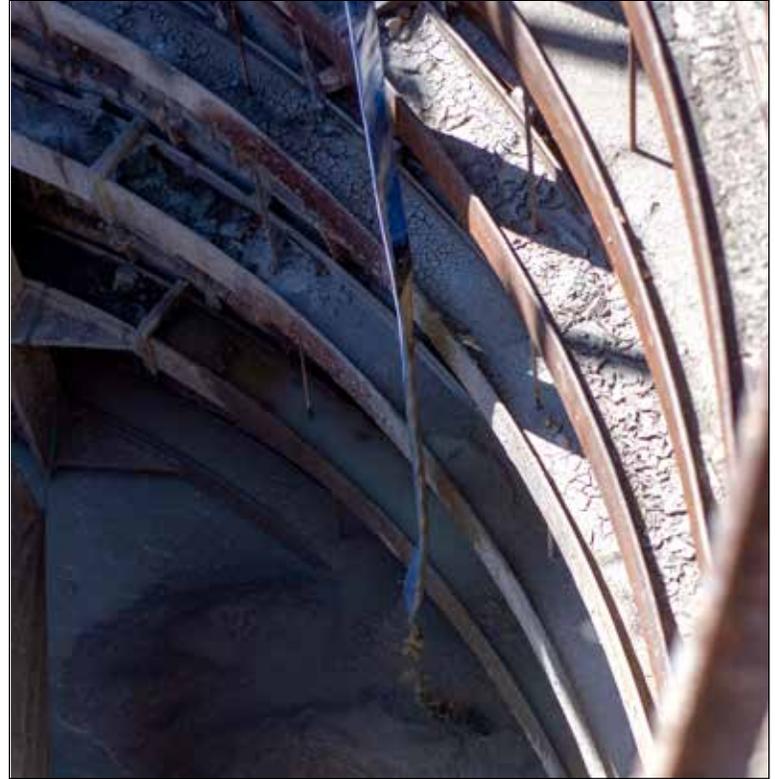
“We had a two-day startup learning the C60. I think anybody that pays attention during the startup could be very proficient on the C60 within a few weeks,” he said. “It kind of takes some of the driver error issues out of the equation, especially partnered up with ACCU-POUR™ where the tablet receives the job info and then communicates it to the back of the truck.”

“We cut down a lot of miscommunications as far as which mix design they’re pouring. Or, if there are two different mix designs on a job, it makes it easier to communicate that.”

Volumetric Mixers Play Crucial Role In Updating San Antonio’s Sanitary Infrastructure

San Antonio, like many cities across the United States, has begun replacing its aging underground utility infrastructure.

This specific project replaces five miles of sanitary sewer pipe, as required by the city’s 2013 agreement



with the EPA. Although a subcontractor, to meet the scale of the project, G-Crete has had an all-hand-on-deck approach. The work includes installing Hobas pipe into the shafts that are 143-inches in diameter and vary in depth.

While G-Crete handles the concrete supply, DGuerra Construction oversees the open cuts, backfilling, trucking for tunneling, and abandonment of the old sewer lines.

“Typically when we’re filling a shaft, we’ll have five trucks down here, [but] a lot of times we’ll have two,” Bittick said. “We’re about to start our first shaft where we are going to use pneumatic tankers to do the continuous pour where we don’t have to pull off [the site].”

He estimated with the on-site setup, G-Crete should be able to produce 160 yards of low-strength flow fill per tanker. The company employed a lay-flat system to avoid free-falling the concrete into the manholes and avoid segregation issues.

“We’re trying to do a new process where we can get 160 yards per day, per mixer. That’s what we’re heading toward because these shafts are getting larger as we continue through the project.”

As of this publication, Bittick noted the overall project was 10 months ahead of schedule.

“With the flexibility of the volumetrics and good planning by the prime [contractor] and subs [sub-contractors], we’ve been able to fly through the shaft and tunneling section,” he said. “We’ve had a lot of success scheduling and being able to push the project ahead with the C60s.”

Remote Location No Issue For Placing Fresh Concrete

The ability to pour where the project dictates was showcased during work for the Green Valley Special Utility District. Bittick noted the transmission sewer main is located in an area predominately used for hayfields, which creates unforeseen issues underground.

“We’ve had some ground shifting and groundwater issues, and the portion of the project right now is near a wet weather creek. We get a rise and lowering tide effect with the creek, and that’s why we’re using so much flowable fill concrete. We don’t [want to] float our pipe and get out of elevation because it’s a gravity-fed line.”



ACCU-POUR™ & Cemen Tech CONNECT Helps Streamline Daily Operations

Like many others in the volumetric industry, Bittick is always on the go at G-Crete. It’s not uncommon for him to switch between his roles as vice president of operations and sales manager, and sometimes moonlight as a loader operator. But with ACCU-POUR™ at his side, he’s able to shift between roles no matter where he is.

“With the mobile platform, I’m able to dispatch, make changes to orders, up or lower quantities, anything I need to do remotely off my phone,” he said. “[It’s] handy for a guy like me.”

The ability to work wherever his cell phone has reception also helps Bittick when there’s an issue with one of the mixers.

“I came from a business [where] we did use Cemen Tech, but we also had some other brands. We came up with terminology that was different than maybe what the part name is. [But] with Cemen Tech, with the CONNECT option, I can show your specialist what we’re looking at. Maybe what I’m calling it and what he calls it is something different, but I can show him what we’re looking at, show him the issues that we’re having, and it streamlines the entire process.”

And for Cemen Tech CONNECT’s advertised ability to reduce downtime?

“Absolutely. Not only are we figuring out what the issue is, but we’re also figuring out the parts available, and when the part is available, the earliest we can get it, and we can adjust our schedule accordingly.”

Advice For Those Entering Or New To The Volumetric Concrete Industry

Bittick has been around concrete and the volumetric industry for more than 20 years, his biggest piece of advice to someone wanting to enter the volumetric concrete industry is to talk to experienced operators.

“Get their feedback because the longevity of the mixer and support makes a huge difference,” he said. “All mixers are great when they’re new, but as they get older, the support after the new wears off is probably the most important aspect to success in this business.”

When it comes to choosing a volumetric concrete mixer, Bittick wholeheartedly believes Cemen Tech mixers are the way to go.

“In my opinion, it’s the best mixer on the road with the best customer service as far as anything in the parts turn around, support as far as issues, trying to troubleshoot. It’s second to none.”

