Dakota Contractor Keeps Irons In Many Fires

All the talk about North Dakota for the past few years has been about the shale oil boom, the lowest unemployment in the U.S., and related topics. However, in one of the state’s largest cities, Minot, at least one significant electrical contractor has enjoyed the past decade or so... without putting a big piece of its workforce in the oil fields.

That company, Main & Holmes Electric, has instead thrived by doing much of the electrical work for projects generated by the oil boom. For example, see this ElectricTV video discussing electrical work generated at the Minot International Airport.

“Minot is one of the biggest cities near the oil fields. The closest oil well is less than 30 miles away,” explained Casey Kvaamme (pronounced “kwa-may”), an estimator for Main & Holmes. “We didn’t do much of the oil-field work directly, but we have done a good deal of the other work – of all kinds – that has been created here.”

What’s more, while the oil boom has calmed down in 2016, Main & Holmes remains busy. Recently, the company had roughly 70 employees at work in the field.

Diversification = Success

Main & Holmes’ leaders have taken the company, in its more than 60 years, from a founding focus on power line work to a diversified approach – in which “inside” work for
Circuit Breakers
Service Entrance and Short Circuit Currents
Testing Standard for AC-Driven LEDs
Construction

Data on Avg. Salaries in 31 Trades
More Jobs in 44 States Over 12-Month Period
Which Industry Has Highest Tax Burden

Alternate Energy
Calculator for Energy Storage Costs
Energy Policy Modernization Act: One Perspective
Making Wind Turbines Safer for Birds
Two-thirds of Solar Installers Don’t Offer Storage

Training Dates

STANDARD CLASSES
July 13-15 (Maryland)
Aug. 10-12 (Arizona)
Sept. 7-9 (Arizona)
Sept. 21-23 (Maryland)

ADVANCED CLASSES
July 28-29 (Arizona)

OSE PRO ONE-DAY CLASSES
July 18 (Arizona)
Sept. 12 (Arizona)

We didn’t do much of the oil-field work directly, but we have done a good deal of the other work - of all kinds

Casey Kvamme, Main & Holmes Electric

However, Kvamme points out: The company still will do overhead power lines for customers, as well as traffic signal and municipal street lighting projects. It even does its own underground work, including concrete coring and pouring, instead of subcontracting that out (this especially comes into play with traffic signal and street lighting).

“A lot of the results of the oil boom haven’t necessarily been positive for this area, especially lately,” Kvamme noted. “The best example (or maybe the worst) that I can think of is our local jails. They’ve been overcrowded here for many years.”

“One project on which we’re working right now involves tripling the size of the (Ward County) jail. They are building a new jail building – which, when it’s done, will connect to the existing facility. That will be upgraded.”

While the Main & Holmes list of capabilities isn’t new, the diversified approach really paid off in the jail project. Beyond the inside electrical work, there is heavy telecom and security involvement (as one might imagine).

Another area for the company: Wastewater plants and municipal water pump stations. “We like to do these,” Kvamme said. “We seem to do well at these projects. We have a group of guys who really dig into these and make them successful for us.”

People are one advantage for the company. According to Kvamme, there are electricians who have worked a full career – from days as an apprentice to, ultimately, their retirement – for the company. And Main & Holmes doesn’t necessarily let go when people with expertise are ready to kick back: At least one estimator is a “snow bird,” who goes South in winter weather, but comes back (and does some estimating) in better weather.

Specialty work, too

One major economic development story in the Minot area is the arrival in town of a food
PLUMBING & MECHANICAL

Dec. 14-16 (Arizona)

Click here for the complete list of upcoming 2016 training dates.

Training can be "suitcased" to your facility. We can tailor our training to your needs. Ask us about customized training at your site!

Call to register for any of the above classes, including those in Maryland: 1-800-444-4890.

We've posted training dates, directions to our training facilities, and registration forms on our Web page. Click the “Education” button on our home page, or click here.

You can no longer delete whole categories from the menu! You have to get rid of all the subcategories before you can delete the main category.

Company Hours
6am-4pm Arizona Time

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processing plant owned by a very large Canadian company.

What brought this company to North Dakota? It was attracted by the availability of a building. It converted the place into a plant that takes peas and turns them into powder.

Where does this fit for Main & Holmes? It's not commercial work. It's not oil-field work. It's not power-line work, or anything related. Yet electrical work at the AGT plant can sometimes require 20 or more of the company's electricians to be on-site . . . sometimes, requiring some or all of them to work upwards of 60 hours per week.

Work involved includes power and lighting, power wiring, data and fiber communication, and more. Various control work includes both unclassified and classified.

“It’s a special environment, with some Class II Division 2 wiring. All different kinds of work - and skills - are required. We have the people who can do this,” Kvamme noted.

Most work of the plant is obtained on a negotiated basis; some of it has been bid. Converting what was - essentially - an abandoned building into a productive processing plant has required everyone at Main & Holmes, from estimators to field people, to keep up a fast pace.

Leaning on the software

McCormick Systems’ software has long been a part of the Main & Holmes success story. But it has become even more important in the 2015-16 time period, as other electrical contractors attempt to compete for the work the company is doing.

As the oil-field boom flattens out, contractors crowd in to pursue the electrical construction opportunities that still exist.

‘You can rely on the labor units that are included in the McCormick software. You don’t have to get a book and look them up’

Casey Kvamme, Main & Holmes Electric

Kvamme and three other full-time estimators at Main & Holmes use the estimating software because, he says, “you can rely on the labor units that are in the software, you don’t have to get a book and look them up.”

“This saves time. In fact, we’ve found that we can, using the software as it is, be accurate.”

Recently, the estimating department uploaded a new database from McCormick, after previously relying on an older set of numbers. “It’s easier now to find what you need, and get the work done fast,” Kvamme added.

For the company’s purposes, the software has to be diversified and reliable . . . just like Main & Holmes itself. “I’m proud of the fact that this company can provide electrical construction work to anyone, anytime - whatever they want. And we can do that, whatever it is, while at the same time providing a very high quality of work.”

“Our people have developed and retained the knowledge. When we come across something that might be new to an estimator, or a foreman, there always seems to be someone inside the company who has done that type of thing before. You can’t put a price on that!”

McCormick Systems has a new Webpage!
McCormick systems has streamlined our webpage to make it easier for you to get the information you need, faster! Integrated Videos allow you to check on program advancements before you upgrade, or check out features of programs that interest you!

Get UP To Speed Quickly On V12 - With These YouTube.com Videos

Eight videos are posted – total run time more than one hour of training & education for McCormick Systems users. Access them via the URLs below -
Where To See McCormick - Live & In Person

Participate in demos, get one-on-one attention, ask questions - at these events. Please add one or more to your schedule.


BOSTON, OCTOBER– we’re exhibiting at The NECA Show, which takes place Oct. 8-10. Find us in booth #1011. Show hours: Sat. Oct. 8, 11:30am to 5. Sun., Oct. 9, 11:30am to 4. Mon., Oct. 10, 9:00am to 1. http://www.necashow.org
SAN ANTONIO, OCTOBER – see us at the IEC CON – event dates Oct. 26-29.  
http://www.ieci.org/iec-con


See also our Training Schedule – here:  http://mccormicksys.com/education.html

PLUMBING & MECHANICAL

APPLYING YOUR LABOR DOLLARS:

You can use McCormick’s estimating systems to manage your Labor, Burden and Overhead costs. These costs must be recovered – or the job is headed for a loss.

Let’s start with your Employees’ wages and the different ways to cover the productive and non-productive Labor, using McCormick’s Bid Summary.

When Bid Summary is opened and the Top Sheet shows a red box and Sell Price, the Labor Hours don’t equal the “Adj Hours as shown below.
The “Labor” Tab allows the User to apply Labor hours and dollars the way needed for their various Jobs. The screen shot shown below should help explain how the Labor sheet works.
Select the Labor Group here.

These Labor Classes may be used by clicking the black tab arrow.

"Adj Hours" are the hours used in the Bid Summary.

"Adj Material" dollars are the dollars used in the Bid Summary.

Did you know?
That the "%" and "$" or "H" for both Material and Labor are available.

Go to Bid "Summary", "Selection Setup" before Version 11, or the "Bid Summary" Ribbon, "Additional Columns" in Version 11.

Either "Adj Material" or "Adj Hours" may have those the last minute adjustments needed easily made.

Did you know?
That these columns may be added to the Bid Summary.

Go to "Edit", "Options" in Version 10, or "Configuration", "Additional Columns" in Version 11 and check the box for "View extension fields for Bid Summary.".
Select the Labor classes needed for the Job. Labor classes may be brought over from more than one Labor Group.

An example would be bringing a worker over from more than one Local Union for Union Contractors.

A percentage of the "Total Labor Hours" or "Hours" may be entered.

The "Remaining" box will be red and there will be a red box on the top sheet if the total labor hours used don't equal the "Total Labor Hours".

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**Trainer's Tips**

Review: The Jobs Ribbon
It’s not the yellow ribbon that was tied to a tree in the song made popular during World War II or the yellow ribbons seen on our vehicles since 9/11, or the red ribbon in her hair, but it is a ribbon nonetheless. Anyway that’s what Microsoft calls it.

**Ribbon:**

The Ribbon is shown below clicking the arrow on the right hides the Ribbon.

![Ribbon image](image1)

The Ribbon is hidden below clicking the arrow on the right shows the Ribbon.

![Ribbon image](image2)

**File:**

File includes the Logout and Exit Icons.

![File image](image3)

**Takeoff Ribbon:**

Multiple Item “I” and Assembly “A” windows may be opened just by clicking on the Icon with the number of windows needed in the Open Item Windows or Open Assembly Windows Headers.

Workspaces, Labels, Power Probes, Multiplier, and the Database Utility (Copy, Move, Range Edit, and Insert) may be opened by clicking on their Icon in the Launch header.

The Standard Audit Trail or the Advanced Audit Trail may be opened by clicking on their Icons in the Audit Trail Header.
**PlusMinus** and the **Multiplier** may be changed right on this screen in the **Settings** Header.

The **Toolbar** and **Labelbar** may be shown or hidden by checking their box in the **Toolbars** Header.

The Takeoff window **Tabs** may be clicked on in the **Tabs** Header. Items, Assemblies, Audit Trail, and Workspace Reports may be printed by clicking the **Print** Icon in the **Print** Header.

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**Jobs Ribbon:**

The **Jobs**, **Export**, and **Price Updating** windows may be opened in the **Job Functions** Header.

If the **Job Details** or **Job Notes** need to be modified, or if the **Paste** information needs to be modified, click on those Icons in the **Edit Jobs** Header.

You can now attach **Word**, **Excel**, **PDF**, **Photo**, **Audio**, **Video** and **Powerpoint** files to a **Job** using the Icons in the **Attach Files To Job** Header.

The **Jobs** report and **Job Details** report may be printed using the **Print** Icon in the **Print** Header.

You may **Logout** or **Exit** the program using the Icons in the **Exit** Header.
Estimator's Corner

If Our Estimate Wins this Job, Will the Company Benefit?

In today's marketplace, selecting which jobs to estimate can be very important. Estimating a job is very expensive and should be done only if it will produce positive results for the company. Use the following questions to help you in making the decision of whether to estimate a project. As the economy picks up, we will all need to keep in mind that there will be a shortage of qualified help.
Does our company have the estimating resources to complete an accurate and competitive estimate within the time allotted?

How will this project affect our company’s cash flow and/or credit? Does the payment schedule fit our company’s finances?

Will this project meet the company’s goals? How will it affect the company’s future?

Will we have difficulty collecting for this project? Who approves the payout, and what is our relationship with them? What is their history with past projects? Is the money available for this project, or will it be gone before the project’s completion? NOTE: The crash of 2007 shows us how quickly the financing for a project can disappear.

If our bid goes to a General Contractor, will they still be around to complete the project? What is their history of payment, job progress, cooperation with sub-contractors, safety record, clean up, and job completion? How will the final punch list be treated?

If our bid goes to the owner or owner’s representative, what is their history of payment? How will they treat the final punch List?

Is the workforce available to complete the project within the allotted time and budget? Are there completion penalties? Can my Company meet the required schedule?

Does my company have the skills required to complete this project within the project’s scope?

Is engineering needed? If it is, does my company have that capability? If we don’t . . . is there an outside source available?

If bonding is needed, is this level of bonding available to our company? How will this project affect our company’s bonding limits, and will it limit our ability to estimate a better job in the future?

Are the proper tools and equipment available for this project? Will we have to rent the equipment needed? Can we include those costs in the estimate and still be competitive?

How many of our competitors will be bidding this project? Are they good competitors? Will there be some bids below our cost? One of the valuable parts of the pre-bid meeting is seeing who the competition is.

What is the cost to the company of completing our estimate – versus the likelihood of obtaining the project?

Could we better use our estimating resources on a different project that is better suited for our company?

Does the company’s long-range plan include projects of this type and duration?

Will change orders be required – and can they be profitable? Can we use higher prices and labor for the change orders? How will future change orders affect the completion time of this project? Will we be able to collect for the change orders?

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**Perspective**

Architects See First-Quarter Construction Upturn
April Put-In-Place Construction Forecasts

There was an outsized percentage gain in industrial/manufacturing construction last year, +44.4% versus 2014. Such a torrid pace can’t be sustained. Assembly line jobs are being repatriated from outside the country and cheap oil and gas are keeping transportation costs low.
Nonresidential Momentum Index Down a Bit in March
FMI Predicts 6% Growth in '16
13.5 Gigawatts of Solar to be Installed in U.S.

(global projections from Mercom)