

LONG OIL HEAT

Long Oil Heat expanded into propane, in part, by acquiring a company that had tanks in the field, said Bob Long Jr., operations manager for the company in Albany, N.Y.

Some of the acquired company's propane tanks were with Long Oil's existing fuel oil customers. Long then marketed to its other oil heat customers who were already getting propane, but from other suppliers. That effort succeeded in building up the propane business because, Long said, customers "like to get everything from one company" if possible.

"When we first got into propane, we were selling tanks left and right," he said. Today, after about 10 years in the propane business, approximately 95 percent of Long Oil's fuel oil customers that also have propane get it from Long Oil, he estimated. Most such customers are in areas beyond the city of Albany and use propane for cooking, hot water and for fireplaces.

Long Oil was established about 60 years ago and runs about 10 oil trucks and 10 service vans. It sells diesel and gasoline to a variety of customers, including farms, orchards and golf courses.

Last year, for the first time, the company started supplying biodiesel to a couple of customers, including Tierra Farm, a certified organic producer and roasting company in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York that specializes in nut and seed roasting and dried fruits.

Long supplied B5 and B10 blends for the farm's trucks through last winter and the vehicles functioned without problems, he said. Now in the warm weather the trucks are running on B20. As for whether he expects biodiesel to grow, Long said it would depend "on what type of tax incentives and rebates the government offers." Tierra Farm, as an environmentally friendly company, is willing to pay a little bit extra for biodiesel, he pointed out.

Long Oil has also installed and repaired air conditioning for the past 15 years and is now expanding into the duct cleaning business. "So we're trying to find other niches," Long said. Looking ahead, he predicts installing solar panels might be an opportunity for the company.

One of the challenges in any expansion, Long said, "is the service end of it"—finding qualified people to work on today's sophisticated equipment.

"My father and my grandfather only had to know how to work on an oil burner," Long said. "Now our top techs can work on the older oil burners and the new oil burners, which are completely different." Different skills are needed to work on air conditioning systems, propane and to do plumbing—the last of which can be useful for installing solar equipment, Long noted.

"It's nice when a homeowner can call one company to do almost anything they need done, short of actual construction," Long said. | F O N

Amthor International Continues to Grow, Expand and Position Themselves to Sustain These Tough Economic Times



Though these tough economic times have put a strain on many businesses in our industry, Amthor International has been able to grow and expand and not feel that strain that unfortunately everyone else is experiencing. This has been due to their business plan of product diversification and having a growing worldwide distribution network.

"When people ask us how busy we are and I tell them, they think that I am trying to make up stories to make things seem better than they really are for our company," states Brian Amthor, Marketing Director. "To be honest it's the truth." The reason that statement is true is a two-fold answer one is their diversified product line that expands well beyond tanks for refined fuels, it also includes tanks for propane, septic, portable restrooms, water, waste oil, fire, grease traps, bio-fuel, and well-drilling plus specialized units that include extruded bodies, trailers, and specialized flatbeds. On top of that all of these products are available in steel, stainless and aluminum. This allows Amthor International to service numerous industries at once. "With our diversified product line it has helped us because during tough economic times

when sales were down for a certain product there has always been another one to pick up the slack, maybe not to an equal degree but enough to keep things going at a steady pace." "I credit that to my father's intuition and foresight to be able to know what it took to make this company successful over the years, and I look forward to continuing his vision."

The second area that has helped them grow is their distributor network which expands from California to New Hampshire to Puerto Rico and many areas in between and now internationally. "To be able to grow our company, I knew we needed to begin to think beyond the borders of our country and investigate new areas to add to our distribution network." "For years and up to as soon as last month we have been selling tanks through different intermediary's internationally, so we decided to take matters into our own hands and begin to setup a direct distribution network in Europe, Asia and South America." One thing that is helping Amthor with their worldwide expansion is their acceptance into the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. This partnership has helped Amthor pursue new business

opportunities overseas by helping them with research and finding possible companies and areas to setup distribution centers.

Beyond all that Amthor has been and will be recognized this year for their success, hard work and growth within these industries. Recently they were presented with the Fantastic 50 award by the Commonwealth of Virginia, in May by being one of the top 50 fastest growing companies in the state. On top of that Amthor will be presented an award this Fall from Inc. Magazine for being one of their top 5,000 companies in the United States. It is rumored that they are in the 3,000-3,500 range. Both of the awards that Amthor received were in recognition for their increased sales and employee growth over the past five years. "All of these awards are a tremendous honor for and tribute to my parents and everyone who works for Amthor." "A lot of hard work has gone into our company to be able to achieve this level of success and we want to thank everyone that has helped get us there." ■

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