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Building Big on the High Plains

SUPPLYING TEXAS CONSTRUCTION FROM 18 READY-MIXED PLANTS

FLEET OF VOLVO ARTICS AND WHEEL LOADERS KEEPS LATTIMORE MATERIALS WELL STOCKED

BIG DEMAND ON THE

TEXAS PLAINS

By **JOE HANNEMAN** / Photos by **CHRIS DUZYNSKI**

MCKINNEY, Texas — It has often been said, “Everything is bigger in Texas.”

With 254 counties and nearly 22.5 million people, it is the second most populous of the United States. A border spanning nearly 2,900 miles contains 268,561 square miles of land and water, making Texas big enough to be its own country.

Texas is known for thinking big — and building big. Its construction market for roads, bridges, residential homes, commercial buildings and public works projects spurs massive

and growing demand for raw materials.

Some of the world’s biggest construction contractors operate on the high plains around Dallas-Fort Worth. Their high-rise buildings, six-lane concrete ribbons and soaring bridges only get built if there is a reliable supply of concrete, rock and sand. Filling that need is a longstanding passion for John Victor Lattimore Jr. and his family-run materials company.

A self-described “road hand” who grew up watching his grandfather and

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father work in highway construction, Lattimore is as much at home in the seat of an articulated truck as he is behind his president's desk at Lattimore Materials Company. He knows construction iron. His company's growing fleet of Volvo machines from ROMCO Equipment Company helps supply a sophisticated network that brings ready-mixed concrete and aggregates to a large part of Texas and Oklahoma.

"Customers know us for delivering consistently high-quality concrete and materials, on time," Lattimore says. "We do that every day with great people, teamwork and smart investment in equipment. Volvo loaders and articulated trucks get it done for us. Volvo has done the job we needed and given us value."

Growing fleet, growing business

Lattimore Materials is one of the few privately held ready-mixed concrete operations in the industry. Founded in 1961 by Vic Lattimore's father, John Victor Lattimore Sr., LMC has been on an impressive growth curve over the past decade. It has become one of the premier suppliers of ready-mixed concrete to the Dallas-Forth Worth metroplex and all of north Texas. The U.S. Geological Survey

ranks LMC among the top 75 sand and gravel producers in the United States.

As LMC has grown, so has its infrastructure, which now includes 18 ready-mixed-concrete plants, four sand and gravel mines, two limestone quarries, four rail terminals and more than 400 10-yard drum-mix trucks and 25-ton rock trailer trucks. Its Volvo fleet includes 13 Volvo A40 articulated trucks, 13 L120 wheel loaders, seven L180s, one L220E and one L330E.

Tom Denton, the ROMCO Equipment salesman who has called on Lattimore Materials for more than 15 years, said the company values the engineering in Volvo equipment. "They like the loaders and artics," Denton said. "They like the longevity. We recently had one of their loaders in the shop for some minor work. It had 36,000 hours on it. That says something."

Lattimore recalled his first encounter with Volvo equipment, and how the machines made a lasting impression. It was on a muddy job site, and even some of the empty articulated trucks were getting bogged down. "The fully loaded Volvo 40-ton artic trucks went right

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**— Vic Lattimore
President and CEO
Lattimore Materials Co.**



Volvo A40D artics haul sand at the LMC sand mine in Ambrose, Texas. At Right: working sand and stone at a rail facility.



around the stuck empty competitor's trucks," he said.

The majority of the materials mined, crushed, washed and processed by LMC go into its own ready-mixed concrete, although the company also supplies rock and sand directly to contractors and other ready-mix companies. Its fleet of GPS-monitored mix trucks delivers concrete to residential building sites, road jobs and civil engineering projects. Lattimore supplied concrete on some of the biggest jobs in recent Texas history.

When retailing giant J.C. Penney built its 1.9-million-square-foot headquarters in Plano, Texas, Lattimore Materials supplied 111,000 cubic yards of concrete for the project. When Fidelity Investments built its 300-acre campus in Westlake, Texas, LMC supplied 80,000 cubic yards of ready-mixed concrete. Lattimore was also the concrete supplier for the 1.5-mile main track at Texas Motor Speedway, with 110,000 yards of ready mix delivered. The company also produces concrete for thousands of residential and commercial building pads and structures every year.

Volvo works in the trenches

Before the concrete mix can flow to construction contractors, the raw materials have to be mined, crushed, sorted and moved. Volvo equipment does a lot of that work for Lattimore Materials.

At LMC's rail distribution center in Melissa, Texas, a Volvo L180E wheel loader helps move more than 3,000 tons of material each day. Equipped with a 6.3-yard general-purpose bucket, the L180E feeds two hoppers that supply silos in the ready-mixed plant with sand and 1-inch rock from nearby stockpiles. Thrust into the pile, breakout and lift power are important loader features on this task, as is smooth hydraulic control for feathering the loads into the hopper.

The L180E also loads rock into 25-ton bottom-dump trailer trucks for transport to other LMC ready-mixed plants or to contractors. Cycle times are crucial to keeping the trucks moving, so the loader's drive into the pile, lift ability and smooth transmission help ensure full buckets and quick load-out.

Paul Rouse, vice president of concrete operations for Lattimore Materials, said the mere makeup of the company's wheel loader fleet speaks to the confidence



An L180E loads the hopper to the ready-mixed silo, then fills 26-ton trailer trucks.



Below right: Thousands of yards of conveyors move material through processing.



LMC has in Volvo equipment. "Ninety-five percent of our loaders are Volvo loaders," Rouse said. "They really work well for us."

Rouse said the new railhead facility at Melissa — which gets its supply of rock from the LMC quarry in Stringtown, Oklahoma — will eventually move 600,000 to 750,000 tons of material each year. "The demand is good," he said.

Sand mines, crushers, quarries

At its heart, Lattimore Materials is a mining company. It blasts and excavates its own raw materials at quarries and sand mines in north Texas and southern Oklahoma.

At the sand plant in Ambrose, Texas, Volvo articulated trucks haul the lion's share of sand from the mining area to a processing plant a mile across the site. Due to soft ground conditions, the mining is done with a dragline. Sand dug from the site is loaded to the A40D artics in two or three passes. The A40s haul the sand across site and dump it for screening and washing.

With temperatures routinely above 100 degrees, this work site can be brutal. Soil with the consistency of talcum powder covers the site, and even walking through it kicks up incredible clouds of dust. This poses extra challenges for the equipment on site.

Once the A40s dump the sand into the hopper, a Volvo L180C cleans up, pushing all of the sand down into the hopper, where it is fed to a conveyor belt. The sand enters a labyrinth of conveyors and screeners, where it is sifted and cleaned.

At Lattimore's limestone quarry near Bridgeport, Texas, a Volvo L220E wheel loader is used to move stockpiled rock into crushers for processing. The Bridgeport facility is a network of crushers interconnected by conveyors. Blasted rock from the quarry is dumped by a mining truck into a primary crusher, which breaks it down from 48-inch size to 8-inch size.

At the end of the first conveyor, the Volvo L220E loads the stockpile into a secondary crusher for further processing. In often-muddy conditions, the loader's firm footing helps it attack the pile and pull out with full buckets. With outstanding power, the loader climbs a nearby ramp to load the secondary hopper.

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Volvo A40D articulated haulers are the prime movers at the Lattimore Materials sand mine in Ambrose, Texas.

Hands-on leadership style

One of Lattimore Materials' advantages as a privately held company is the hands-on leadership of its president. Vic Lattimore makes his own equipment purchase decisions, based as much on taking care of employees as anything else. For instance, LMC was one of the first in the industry to specify automatic transmissions on its fleet of cement mixer

trucks — a premium that pays off long-term dividends in driver recruitment, retention and productivity.

When it's time to purchase mixers, on-road rock trucks, loaders or artics, Lattimore makes the final decisions. When he needed a piece of mining equipment, Lattimore flew to Houston with ROMCO salesman Tom Denton to personally check out the unit before

inking the deal to buy it.

"He likes to be very hands on," said Connie Boucher, vice president of corporate development at Lattimore Properties, LMC's sister company. "It allows for more control, and the kind of long-term vision that has served the company so well."

Denton said he and ROMCO have earned Lattimore's trust through the performance of the equipment and support from the dealership. "I consider it quite an honor to be an equipment salesman he'll let into his office," Denton said.

Working with the best dealer

Lattimore says he puts Volvo machines on his job sites because "they stay on the job" and have earned respect from LMC's competitors. ROMCO, he said, provides outstanding support.

"We have had many years of working with ROMCO," Lattimore said. "They are one of the best equipment houses."

As for his future with the Volvo Construction Equipment brand, Lattimore said "the best assessment is they are machines we keep going back to buy." ❧



Lattimore's 22 Volvo wheel loaders are reliable workhorses, in rock or sand.