

Brian Hansen - Dustrol

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

From a lonely highway in Montana to a busy interstate near Bristol Motor Speedway in Tennessee, there are highways being repaired by a business which is the largest rotomilling company in the United States – and that company is headquartered in rural Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Brian Hansen is President of Dustrol Inc., this innovative asphalt maintenance business. Brian explained that the company was founded by Ted Dankert more than 40 years ago.

Ted Dankert served in the Army. After retiring from the military, he went to work for his father-in-law who had an asphalt paving business in El Dorado, Kansas. In 1973, he went out on his own and founded his own company to sell emulsions for sealing asphalt and controlling dust. Because it worked so well in controlling dust on roads, he named the business Dustrol.

Ted Dankert expanded the business over time. In 1975, the company began using rented equipment to recycle asphalt in order to complement its pavement maintenance operations.

1979 was a big year for the company. Dustrol got its first contract to do patch and crack sealing along Interstate 70 in northwest Kansas. Brian Hansen, a Colby native, along with Tim Murphy, joined the company at that time. In that same year, Dustrol purchased its first cold milling machine, one of the first in the state of Kansas. The company began focusing exclusively on asphalt recycling and resurfacing and has expanded through the years.

Today, Dustrol is a leading independent provider of asphalt recycling and related highway maintenance services. It is believed to be the largest rotomilling company in the U.S.

Rotomilling, also called cold milling, is a process of removing the surface of a roadway so as to prepare it for restoration and repair. Asphalt picked up during the milling process can be recycled for use on the same job or on future paving projects, which can provide a major savings.

The company was also an innovator in a process called hot-in-place recycling. In this process, the road surface is heated, milled, windrowed, treated, laid back down and paved. A series of big machines in a row make it possible to rejuvenate a road and have it reopened in a matter of hours. Dustrol's process is called MARS – Mobile Asphalt Recycling System. "Our process is energy efficient, cost effective, and one hundred percent recyclable," Brian said.

Dustrol Inc. headquarters moved to Towanda in the early 1980s. Brian Hansen worked his way up through the ranks and became President in 2013. Tim Murphy is current CEO. Ted Dankert retired and is now Chairman Emeritus. Brian noted that the company is now organized as an ESOP so is one hundred percent employee-owned.

Ted Dankert and a handful of other innovators in this business got together and created a trade association called Asphalt Recycling and Reclaiming Association. Ted went on to become President of that association, as would Brian Hansen years later.

“Our company is kind of a hybrid, because we manufacture equipment and also do contract work for road repair,” Brian said. “We build the majority of our equipment ourselves.” For example, Dustrol manufactures those huge, 1,100 horsepower milling machines which a person will see working on highways. “We continue to improve our processes and our equipment all the time,” Brian said. When it comes to doing roadwork, Dustrol is typically a subcontractor for other companies.

Today, this company, which began as a one-man shop consisting of Ted Dankert by himself, now employs some 260 people. Dustrol’s trade territory goes from Louisiana to Montana and Tennessee to Arizona. The company has even done road repair as far away as Juarez, Mexico.

It’s a remarkable record for a company based in the rural community of Towanda, population 1,319 people. Now, that’s rural.

For more information, go to www.dustrol.com.

Whether it is a lonely highway in Montana or a busy interstate headed toward the speedway in Tennessee, it is good to see that it is being repaired and maintained by a company from Kansas. We commend Brian Hansen, Ted Dankert, and all those involved with Dustrol Inc. for making a difference with innovation and entrepreneurship. I hope their road ahead is a smooth one.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.