

PAVING CONTRACTOR WITHSTANDS ORGANIZED RESISTANCE TO OWN FIRST ASPHALT PLANT

Tarheel Paving's Milemaker™ 225 Plant



John Pace, owner of Tarheel Paving, Inc., is a second-generation paving contractor and as of last year, a first-generation asphalt producer, as well. Located on the outskirts of picturesque Hendersonville, N.C., Tarheel Paving encountered fierce and emotional opposition to Pace's plan to take control of his business by buying and operating his own hot mix plant. Working with an experienced plant manufacturer, Pace persevered through the community resistance whipped up by outside organizations, the county and state approval process, permitting, start-up and air quality testing processes. Today, Pace is successfully proving the soundness of his business plan and demonstrating that his paving business is a community asset, not a liability.

Lack Of Control

Started in 1979, Tarheel Paving has competed on smaller street, parking lot and driveway projects within 50 miles of Hendersonville. The company generally prospered and kept its grading and paving crews busy, but Pace knew from the beginning that he was not in total control of his business. Buying asphalt mix from the area's only producer gave the supplier, not Pace, control of the types of mix, delivery scheduling and availability that were crucial to his business. "It just got to the point where we couldn't control our own destiny," says Pace. For instance, Pace notes that with his former asphalt supplier producing more Superpave for state work, larger aggregate was showing up in his batches of I-2, the state's surface mix, making quality finish work on small jobs more difficult.



John Pace, Owner, Tarheel Paving, Inc.

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Separate drying and mixing drums give Tarheel Paving's ADM plant long drying times and clean operation.

supplier ended up purchasing a different plant based on the company's corporate goals, Pace's business has been transformed by his ADM plant. "It was an odd turn of events, but they referred me to ADM," recalls Pace. "Once we traveled across the country and looked at a few ADM plants, we decided that this would be a great plant for us."

For 15 years, John Pace dreamed of buying an asphalt plant to supply his own needs. And as a small paving contractor, he was confident that with his experience and the right plant, he could also profitably retail the exact mixes so badly needed by other small independent contractors. Ironically, it was Tarheel Paving's hot mix supplier, and frequent competitor, that told Pace about Asphalt Drum Mixers, Inc., the Huntertown, Ind.-based manufacturer from whom he would buy his plant. The competitor had conducted thorough research in preparation for adding a second plant in the area and told Pace that ADM is the best buy for the money. Although his former



The plant passed the state's air quality test with emission levels lower than any seen before from an asphalt plant.

Facing The Opposition

Forces soon rallied to fight Tarheel Paving's planned asphalt production operation. A lifelong Hendersonville resident, Pace understands the importance of a pristine environment to the tourism that contributes to Hendersonville's economy. Pace declined to be drawn into an emotional public debate that could never be won on the merits of facts alone with his neighbors, local media and outside environmental groups. Instead, he did his homework, presented the true facts and laid the groundwork for the most environmentally responsible production operation possible. Pace's plant manufacturer, ADM, backed him at every step by supplying emissions data for existing ADM plants and by attending town meetings with him to help answer questions and concerns.



Tarheel Paving's Milemaker 225 is equipped with five 30-ton cold feed bins, a bag house and a 25,000-gallon AC tank.

Finally, ten months after John Pace submitted his application, the state air quality permit was issued and Tarheel Paving Company's ADM Milemaker™ 225 was opened for business. The plant site selected by Tarheel Paving lies just outside the city limits and is surrounded on three sides by industrially zoned properties. Nestled into a hollow well below the highway, not even the silos are visible to drivers passing by the facility. The plant passed the state's air quality test with



emission levels lower than any seen before from an asphalt plant. “The neighbors found out about these tests, and it makes them relax a little and makes them accept me more,” says Pace.

Tarheel Paving makes asphalt with an ADM Milemaker 225 counterflow drum mix plant rated at 250 TPH. The plant features separate drying and mixing drums and is equipped with three 100-ton silos with transverse conveyors, five 30-ton cold feed bins, a double-deck inclined screen, a bag house with primary chamber and a 25,000-gallon AC tank.

As with many new asphalt plant owners, John Pace is exceeding the mix production that he originally planned because of a growing retail trade and his own company’s increased efficiency since it has the mix it needs when it’s needed. Pace says that establishing his business as a new asphalt supplier in the area started slowly, but is

growing. “We’ve tried to make a mix that is compatible with small driveway and parking lot jobs to help out the small companies, so their workers don’t have to work quite as hard and the asphalt joints look better,” says Pace. “It’s starting to pay off. They’re coming back here more and more.”

Plant Ownership Puts Contractor In Control

Pace is also pleased with his own mix availability. “You can get mix at five o’clock in the morning, if you want, or you can get mix at eight o’clock at night,” Pace says. “It makes the whole operation a lot smoother, and the labor cost actually drops, too. You end up doing more work with less labor.”

Of course, the level of growth that Tarheel Paving is experiencing has meant adding about ten people to the company to staff additional paving crews and a new fully furnished laboratory. Pace has moved the company to the next level by bidding on state projects and he is excited to land his first sizable contract, which calls for applying overlay to 44 miles of highway with 44,000 tons of Superpave mix. As of February, Tarheel Paving had 80,000 tons of asphalt booked to produce so far this year, a sizable increase above the 60,000 to 70,000 tons per year normally put down before it owned a plant.

Big Production With Simple Operation

Yet even production of this scale is simple with the ADM plant. Dennis Edwards, Tarheel Paving’s plant operator and industry veteran, keeps the plant producing along with a single loader operator. “I’ve run batch plants and drum plants and everything,” says Edwards. “This plant runs cleaner and quieter than any plant I’ve ever run.” John Pace recalls the day that Edwards had to leave work early and he ran out of mix. “This plant’s a breeze to operate. I just pulled out the manual, turned to the operation start-up page, fired up the plant and made asphalt.”

The three 100-ton silos are in constant use. Pace explains that in retrospect, he should probably have installed 150-ton silos, but he has room on the scale for a fourth silo when it’s needed. “We figured that with three silos, we could make the mix that we needed to get our crews started in the morning, and we would have one or two silos available for customers, in case they need a different type of mix.”



TAKE
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WITH

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Above left: With three 100-ton silos, Tarheel Paving can supply different mixes to its own crews and to its customers.

Below: Dennis Edwards, plant operator, has run all types of plants and says, “This plant runs quieter and cleaner than any plant I’ve ever run.”

With ample mix production and storage, mileage from the plant to the job is now the limiting factor. Pace is looking forward to adding a plant either to the east or west of Hendersonville to expand his bidding territory. A 40- or 50-mile haul is quite lengthy, Pace points out, especially in the mountains, where a rain storm can pop up while he has 30 loads of asphalt on the road.



John Pace's investment in his asphalt production site includes an attractive building, pavement and landscaping.

An Attractive Operation, A Winning Future

In addition to the plant, Pace is investing proudly in his property's appearance. Even though customers and visitors must drive around a bend and down a hill to reach his operation, Tarheel Paving is beautifully landscaped and spotlessly clean. The control room and lab are housed in a new two-story block building with decorative facing and a dark green standing-seam steel roof. All drives and parking areas are paved and striped, and the aggregate stockpile area sports a shiny asphalt surface to keep the stockpiles drained and clean. Concrete curbing surrounds islands planted with trees and shrubbery. The few neighboring residents able to actually see the plant from their houses, especially in the winter months when the trees are bare, see nothing resembling the eyesore that so often springs to mind when asphalt production is mentioned.

As a successful business owner and employer, Pace is making Tarheel Paving an asset in his community. "Owning a business is an expensive thing, I'll tell you," Pace reflects. "Sometimes it seems like spending money never stops, but it's a heck of a long-term payback." Investing in the right asphalt plant manufacturer is giving Pace a great shorter-term payback, in addition to the high production and quality that is making him competitive and profitable in his market.

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*John Pace, Owner
Tarheel Paving, Inc.*



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