

A&H EQUIPMENT





Reliable Solutions,
Trustworthy Service



Written by Claire Suttles



A &H Equipment is a leading distributor of municipal and environmental product solutions. From top quality street sweepers and snow removal trucks to sewer cleaners and sewer inspection equipment, the company sells, rents, and services a wide range of equipment for customers throughout Pennsylvania and West Virginia. ▶▶



- ▶ After featuring the company in March 2017, Focus Media Group sat down with President Tripp Amick again to catch up on the latest news – and the news is exciting. “2019 was the third consecutive record year for the company,” Amick says. Most significantly, after spending 56 years in a 16,000 square foot building, the company relocated its headquarters from Bridgeville, Pennsylvania to a 30,000 square foot facility in Zelienople, Pennsylvania, just outside of Pittsburgh. The spacious new building comes with a lot of advantages. “Our service facility is now three times the size of the old service shop, maybe more,” Amick says. “Our parts department has more than doubled. We also have more usable land around us as well for equipment storage and better parking.”



A&H Equipment has expanded its product lines and markets in addition to expanding its headquarters. One of the most popular additions is the TRUVAC line. Also known as a hydro excavator or HXX truck, this equipment uses either high-pressure air or water for soft excavation. This process allows workers to dig without any risk of puncturing underground pipes. Punctured pipes are extremely dangerous and can cause natural gas explosions, so avoiding them is essential. Typically, construction personnel must call 811 to ensure a safe dig, but with TRUVAC equipment, they can skip that step and get to work. “You’re not going to break any lines, so it gets rid of a lot of the bureaucracy and such,” Amick says. The equipment has been particularly helpful to the region’s oil and gas industries.



The company has also added Grapple Loaders by Peterson Industries to its product line. These trucks have a large grapple hook mounted on them for collecting bulky items that a traditional garbage truck cannot handle, such as trees, appliances and construction waste. In addition, the team now supplies Asphalt Recyclers by Stepp MFG. This efficient, money-saving equipment allows municipalities to create fresh, 300-degree asphalt in any temperature, for a permanent pothole-patching solution. “We’ve also vastly increased our rental fleet size,” says Amick. “We probably have tripled our rental business since the last [FMG article].”

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Of course, the company’s tried and true equipment brands remain available. These mainstay product lines include Elgin Street Sweepers, Vactor Sewer Cleaners, Envirosight Inspection Sewer Equipment, OshKosh Snow Removal Trucks, and the company’s very own A&H Bodies. “We’re still handling all those products,” Amick says. “We are still in the dump body business and we are still in the snow and ice control business.” ▶

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▶ A&H Bodies – the company’s house brand – go far beyond the typical, cookie cutter solution with a limited availability of configurations. These dump bodies are custom built to handle a complete range of uses and demands. This is invaluable for customers such as municipalities that depend on dump trucks to keep busy city streets clear of ice and snow. To them, a dump truck isn’t just a dump truck – it’s critical public safety equipment that needs to be just right for the job, so it is important that these trucks meet certain technical requirements to ensure top performance.

To this end, A&H Bodies are loaded with sophisticated computer and GPS controlled hydraulic systems that can deposit a carefully measured amount of material on the roadway ideal for the weather conditions at the time. These high-tech features don’t come cheap, but the equipment saves money in the long run by controlling material usage and reducing the damage that over-application can create.

When the team finds strong, reliable manufacturers, they maintain the relationship long-term. The company has, for example, represented Elgin Sweeper Co. since A&H Equipment was founded over half a century ago. Other manufacturers have been with the company for 20, 30, and even 40 years, including Vactor Sewer Cleaners, EnviroSight Pipeline Inspection, New Way and Loadmaster Refuse Packers.



A&H Equipment holds on to employees as well. It is common for people to stay with the company for 10 or 20 years. The fact that A&H is a small, family company helps maintain these ties and strengthens relationships throughout the business. Everyone knows one another’s names, and there is communal effort to maintain the company’s goals and philosophies. In short, everyone is in it together.

The team’s commitment to service sets the company apart – and wins repeat business. “We have the ability to service all [our] equipment,” Amick says. “The core of our business has always been in product support, taking care of the customer by taking care of the equipment and keeping it up and running.” This commitment extends to customer service. “We try to be as credible a company as we can to deal with. The base philosophy is just do the right thing.”

The company’s customer base does not fluctuate, so keeping existing customers on board is essential to staying in business. “We’re in a weird market,” says Amick. “They don’t make new municipalities... so we always spend an awful lot of time and effort in customer retention. Because, you know, the city of Pittsburgh is never going to go away and there’s never going to be another city of Pittsburgh where they are. It just doesn’t happen that way. So it’s important to pay attention to the customer, what they want, make sure they’re taken care of.” While this is most critical in the municipality market, the team extends the philosophy to other areas as well. “We do that with every market that we’re in. That’s our main goal.”

A&H Equipment is managing to get through the COVID-19 quarantine relatively well. “We were very fortunate in that we were deemed to be essential,” Amick says. “We never laid anybody off due to the pandemic.” Despite the shutdown, municipalities, airports, the federal Defense Logistics Agency, and other regular customers still need critical equipment and parts, so A&H Equipment employees have been able to keep working. “Our business never really truly stopped, and we have our customers to thank for that because they were truly the essential people. We’re just there to support them.”

Orders kept rolling in throughout the spring because customers tend to order ahead for the upcoming season. “Much of our equipment that was going to be delivered this year has already been ordered,” Amick says. “We have long lead time... Much of our sales have such a lead time that we take an order today and we don’t see it from six to ten months. So we continued to get orders through the initial phases of the pandemic. It did fall off a little bit, but we’re starting to see it ramp back up as people become more used to the much overused term, ‘new normal.’”



As the nation adjusts to this new normal, the team is considering how they can help keep people safe. “We see a potential of using existing – or finding new – products, to be used to clean and disinfect equipment and public spaces,” Amick says. The team particularly wants to help municipalities utilize existing equipment for an efficient, money-saving solution. “Our street sweepers all have water tanks. They all have pumps. And it’s not just us doing it – our manufacturers are also looking at how we can adapt those things so somebody can go out and disinfect a building or a park or a playground or whatever.” The team is also considering adding new product lines that are specially designed to disinfect indoor public spaces such as classrooms or offices. “We’re looking at other products,” Amick says. “Even if [COVID-19] goes away, people are going to be afraid it hasn’t, so we are going to need that type of solution for a while.”

The team is optimistic regarding the company’s long-term future. “I think we’re going to continue to see our rental arm continuing to grow,” Amick says. “I believe we’re going to continue to enter new markets with both existing and new products, both for sales and rental.” With A&H Equipment in business since 1963, and still growing steadily, the stage is certainly set for ongoing expansion. ■



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