



# REDUCING TODAY'S HIGH COST OF DOING BUSINESS

FONTAINE CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION

THE  
UPHILL  
BATTLE

Fontaine Construction Corporation recently completed an asphalt street paving project in the Robinson Estates, a new residential subdivision development near Greer, South Carolina. There were several streets in the development that were far from straight and level.

"It was an uphill pull right from the get go, but we were up to the challenge. The paver had enough power to make it, pushing our loaded trucks in the process. Once we got to the top of the 1700-foot long street, there was a Cul-de-Sac and we pulled that, too. In our industry that's what separates the men from the boys. Anybody can pull a straight and level road," said Paving Superintendent Ray Turner.

"Fontaine Construction Corporation is a comparatively small company with aspirations of growing in a highly competitive field. We are very interested in doing anything we can to reduce today's high cost of doing business. This, however, must be done without sacrificing the high quality of work that our company is known for," said Rex Rice.

"This includes investing in new modern equipment that helps hold the line on the ever rising costs of labor and materials. Anything that gives our crews a competitive edge increases our overall efficiency.

"Our reason for using the Mauldin 1750-C asphalt laydown machine was to upgrade our paving fleet. The first paver we purchased was a small Neal with a manual 8-foot screed. Our next acquisition was a Cedar Rapids with a 10-foot screed. We needed a machine with a small screed that was capable of handling mid-sized projects with increased efficiency, less manpower and a lower operating cost, all without loss of quality. That's a tall order, but one that is essential to staying competitive," continued the company founder and president.

Fontaine is an outgrowth of the Rice-Cleveland Construction Co. founded in 1984. Since its inception in 1996, they have specialized in site development turnkey projects that include earthwork, underground utility installation and road and street layout, construction and asphalt pavement. The company works in about a 60-mile radius from their Greenville, South Carolina headquarters. This includes the up-state area to the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and Asheville, North Carolina.

About 85% of their annual dollar volume comes from the private sector with 15% coming from the public sector. Fontaine has also done some small state jobs as a subcontractor along the I-85 inter-

state corridor.

Recently there has been an increased emphasis on the paving aspect of their operation. Specifications on the Robinson Subdivision called for the Fontaine crew, who were using the new Mauldin paver, to put down close to a thousand tons of SCDOT Surface Type III mix.

The new mat was 2.5" thick, placed on a tack coated asphalt base course. The first street in the subdivision called for an estimated 800 tons of HMA. The second street in the complex called for the remainder. Asphalt was pur-

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chased from Sloan Construction Co. because Fontaine does not have its own asphalt plant. It was, however, brought to the project in company-owned quad axle dump trucks, each carrying approximately 21 tons of asphalt.

"It is because we do not own an asphalt plant that we must seek out the more complex projects that call for creative paving solutions. Anybody can come into a job, dump a bunch of asphalt down, spread it out and go on home. It takes a professional, highly experienced paving crew using modern equipment to make money doing the more challenging jobs," said Vice President and co-owner Ron Webb.

Two major factors, which differentiate the 1750-C Mauldin from its competitors, are the Symphony screed and its factory-ready acceptance of automatics. Both of these features add to the paver's

ability to put down a higher quality mat with less effort.

The GradLine automatic grade and slope controls, which are the factory standard, permit a more accurate placement of the asphalt mat, which impacts its ability to drain runoff more readily. This is important because standing water contributes to asphalt degradation. The automatics also aid in the accurate placement of the specified depth of the asphalt 'automatically'. This reduces the possibility of inadvertently putting down too much material, and also reducing manual labor needs. The sonic sensor enhances the placement of correct quantity of asphalt to the screed.

The screed, at 4,200 pounds; weighs almost double that of its nearest competition. This adds significantly to the mat consolidation and final quality.

The purchase price of the Mauldin machine is in the range of any top of the line utility class paver and yet the 1750-C offers the capabilities close to equaling those of a small highway class paver.

"To survive as a viable asphalt contractor in the marketplace today, a small company needs to work both ends of the business. We must do the small jobs economically and we must undertake and complete the mid-range projects without losing our shirts. It's a tough business and only the well prepared will survive. We'd like to think the new Mauldin paver can help us do this," concluded Rex Rice.

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