

From Quebec to Alberta, huge mobiles lift turbines

With a 100-metre telescopic boom, the Liebherr LTM 11200-9.1 also proves its worth on petrochemical projects

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When you have a machine this big, you share it. At any rate, that's the approach NCSG (Northwest Capital Services Group) has taken with the Liebherr LTM 11200-9.1 telescopic all-terrain crane it purchased for roughly \$10 million in 2009.

With a lifting capacity of 1,200 metric tons (some units calculate to 1,350 tons) and a 100-metre telescopic boom, the LTM 11200-9.1 is widely considered to be world's most powerful of its kind.

Moving around within the group of companies owned by NCSG, the LTM 11200-9.1 first saw duty on a windmill project in New York State in a journey that saw it do stints in states as far flung as Idaho, Montana and Texas.

In early 2011, the LTM 11200-9.1 landed in Edmonton, where it's under the wing of Northern Crane Services.

"When a machine is that big, expensive and specialised, having multiple units isn't always possible," said Hugh Yake, Edmonton branch manager with Northern Crane Services.

Yake says the behemoth was designed with the wind industry specifically in mind. You need a lot of muscle, reach and dexterity, after all, to install a 100-ton generator unit atop an 80-metre pole.

But wind isn't the only trick up the machine's sleeve. Northern Crane Services has put it to work at some of the province's petrochemical facilities, and installing HVAC units on top of very large buildings. Its nomadic itinerary also calls for a side-trip to Saskatchewan for a petrochemical job in 2013.

How long will it stay there, and where will it go next? "With a piece of equipment that big, you don't always



Liebherr LTM 11200-9.1 works in winter on a wind farm in upstate New York. Photo courtesy of Northern Crane Services

bring it back immediately," Yake said. "It can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to move it, so when we take it somewhere we tend to leave it there until there's another job for it to go to."

Yake estimates about a dozen separate jobs annually, but adds that a single job could entail a month or more of work.

In operating mode, the LTM11200-9.1 weighs roughly 500 tons. And, typically, anywhere from seven to 20 trucks are needed to transport it from job to job.

"It depends on the configuration," Yake said. "The crane has many different configurations it can be put to work with."

Transportation costs include permits for special loads and crane support to assemble it on-site.

"It's the absolute pinnacle in evolution of cranes to

date," Yake said. "No other crane on Earth has 100 metres of telescopic boom. It can also work at a very short radius — the wind energy companies wanted that."

Yake said he's heard of only two or three other LTM 11200-9.1 cranes currently active in North America. One of those is in Quebec, where Montreal-based Grues Guay acquired one in November 2011.

The unit didn't even see action until this past March. After all, there was training to do — first at Liebherr's premises in Germany, then at Grues Guay's own yard.

Guillaume Gagnon, assistant to the president at Grues Guay, said the company wanted a heavy-duty lifter for wind farms, bridge jobs and refinery work. Wind farms, in particular, are a big deal in Quebec, with thousands of megawatts going up.

"We were looking for a crane that's easy to move," Gagnon said. "Compared to a crawler it has less truck and trailer, and we get 100 metres of main boom on it. So we save a lot compared to bringing in a crawler crane with more boom tension, more trailer. It (the LTM 11200) is quicker to assemble and needs less space."

The new Liebherr, which complements older 500-ton all-terrain and 700-ton crawler cranes, saw initial duty hoisting a girder underneath a bridge along Quebec's new Highway 30.

"It was a pretty big lift," Gagnon recalled.

Gagnon says the LTM11200 is relatively easy to move from site to site and is quicker to assemble than a crawler.

While Gagnon hasn't actually operated it, he did step inside the cab at the outset and made a small turn.

"It was really amazing. I was sitting in the biggest hydraulic all-terrain crane in the world!"



NCSG's Liebherr LTM 11200-9.1 telescopic all-terrain crane has done duty across North America.

Photo courtesy of Northern Crane Services



Grues Guay of Montreal employs a Liebherr LTM 11200 (left and above) on a wind project at Saint-Ferréol-les-Neiges, Que.

Photo courtesy of Guay Inc.

