

**REPEAT  
BUSINESS**



**Company wins 2009 AEMP Fleet Master Award**

By Preston Ingalls

In 2004, Barriere Construction, a Metairie, Louisiana-based heavy civil construction services company, won the Association for Equipment Management Professionals' (AEMP) Fleet Masters award for general excellence in fleet management within the construction industry. Barriere was specifically recognized for the outstanding performance and management of its construction vehicle fleet and rated the best private construction company in the country.

While the respected recognition was granted more than 5 years ago, nothing has changed for Barriere in the "general excellence" department. Thus, despite a brief setback in maintaining their own exceptionally high standards after the unprecedented impact of Hurricane Katrina, it should be no surprise to their industry brethren that Barriere has won the award once again for 2009.

It should also come as no surprise that the implementation of Total Process Reliability (TPR) has played a significant role in the company's superb record of above-standard performance. In fact, it was the very practice and principles of TPR that allowed Barriere to get back on track after Katrina.

**GETTING BACK ON THE ROAD**

Ben Tucker, who accepted the award in 2004 on behalf of the more than 50-year-old, family run business, says that for a company to succeed like Barriere has using TPR, they need to be ready to embrace change. In a recent interview, Mr. Tucker expands on that thought.

"A company has to have the will to change and be systematic." For Barriere, the commitment to change is better translated as the will to always be better. Total Process Reliability has certainly helped in that regard by creating a sense of employee ownership in company equipment, in turn making operators more knowledgeable about what goes into keeping the machines properly running.



The company has proven that it can recognize operational inefficiencies and that it is quick to correct them. In 1999, Barriere contracted with a consulting firm to implement Total Process Reliability. Among many other company improvements that came as a result of TPR, the company cut maintenance costs by 52 percent and improved fleet utilization to more than 95 percent. Emergency rates in 2000 were tracking at 90 percent of total maintenance activity and in 2009 are down to 4 to 5 percent, a rarity in the construction industry.

But after Hurricane Katrina decimated Barriere's geographic center of business, the company's focus understandably slipped slightly from the principles that the 1999 TPR integration helped fortify.

Since TPR is designed to engage all levels of an organization in change implementation, when it was time to breathe new life into Barriere's original initiatives, one of the company's third-generation owners got on board. With help from Senior Vice President Bert Wilson, the concepts and practices of TPR were re-introduced.

Working closely with the company's consultant and the supervisors who were hired after the initial TPR implementation as well as re-organizing the steering council, which became a great fit for the leadership

of Mr. Wilson, Tucker was able to improve maintenance and equipment reliability. A company-directed TPR Steering Council is one the primary pillars of the program, organized to provide ongoing direction and feedback.

One of the biggest challenges to fully adopting TPR is the understanding of how such a complete reformulation of operating procedures can be of long-term value to the company. In other words, installing TPR is a difficult sales process.

Tucker found it problematic to get production to shut down so they could begin training. "It was a major challenge, to get 33

**ABOUT the AUTHOR**

Preston Ingalls is the president and CEO of TBR Strategies, LLC, a Raleigh, North Carolina-based maintenance and reliability firm specializing in the construction and oil and gas industries. For more information, please visit [www.tbr-strategies.com](http://www.tbr-strategies.com) or e-mail [pingalls@tbr-strategies.com](mailto:pingalls@tbr-strategies.com).

crews out of production. It's expensive. We made the commitment and it paid off." This time around, however, things went more smoothly for Barriere. "We didn't have to struggle during the second go-round because they understood the value—they had seen it before."

As TPR ramped up again, it also included a Root Cause Failure Analysis program that was designed to pinpoint areas of distress within operations. As Mr. Tucker put it, the effort helped locate specific "links" that were breaking along the chain of improvement. Routine tracking of "culprits" or "bad actors" using Pareto Charts has impacted breakdowns tremendously.

"Each production crew is led by a foreman, and then a superintendent, and then a project manager. Basically, we monitor our operators and equipment to make sure that it's getting inspected. How many pieces of equipment were inspected this week? Did the operator do a quality inspection? What percentage [overall] of our equipment was inspected by our operators? Did the superintendent inspect his equipment?"

#### A SMOOTH OPERATION

Total Process Reliability has helped the company cut costs and preserve equipment value. "Our operating costs have gone down drastically, maintenance costs are down and reliability is way up," according to Tucker.

"When we first started the process, I had a maintenance facility of about 40 people and we had about 180 pieces of equipment off road and probably 200 on-road. Now we have 30 on-road and a maintenance shop of only seven and I sub out my maintenance. Vendors can do a better job and we get quality repair."

The maintenance and operational improvements had a significant impact on the company, Tucker explains. "In 2000, we were doing \$60 million worth of work and now we are doing about \$190 million worth of work with the same fleet, due to massive improvements in reliability, skills, planning, and scheduling."

Instead of just driving the equipment, operators were willing to perform daily and weekly preventative maintenance while maintenance personnel handled the monthly equipment updates. In that very agreement lays the heart of Total Process Reliability, an equipment upkeep initiative that involves the full array of company individuals who interface with business-critical equipment, not just

those charged with fixing it. It is an asset management process.

The ability to internalize a commitment to improvement often makes the difference between business success and failure. A company that is unable to recognize the need to change is typically quick to become a statistic. There is no doubt that the business intelligence displayed by Barriere in

regard to re-energizing their TPR plan in 2006 is what has made them one of the nation's most recognized heavy highway paving and construction contractors.

Just like their 2004 award, Barriere Construction's winning of the 2009 AEMP Fleet Masters award is not a matter of luck. It's a matter of discipline and gifted, family-oriented leadership. And a lot of TPR. ■

**BARRIERE**  
CONSTRUCTION CO., L.L.C.

**AEMP**  
Fleet  
Masters  
Award  
2004

**AEMP**  
Fleet  
Masters  
Award  
2009

**...how did they do it?**

By utilizing  
**TOTAL  
PROCESS  
RELIABILITY,**  
from

**TPR**  
**STRATEGIES**

[www.tbr-strategies.com](http://www.tbr-strategies.com) p. 919-341-1387