



(Left) Ryan Monteleone Excavation, Inc.'s new Cat D6R Fire Dozer purchased from Johnson Machinery. (Above) Ryan Monteleone, Owner, Ryan Monteleone Excavation, Inc.

RYAN MONTELEONE EXCAVATION, INC. PUSHES THE ENVELOPE WITH EVERYTHING FROM FIGHTING FIRES TO GRADING HOUSE PADS

Written By: Brian Hoover

Working everyday as a bulldozer and excavator owner/operator is tough work. Now try doing it while surrounded by a blazing California wildfire. This is exactly what Ryan Monteleone does for approximately 30 to 60 days each year. He and his two other operators sit confidently behind an enclosed cab, with almost zero visibility, protected only by fire curtains. Much of wildfire confinement can be attributed to heavy machine operators like Ryan Monteleone, who can work at preventing wildfires at an astounding 1,000 yards an hour. Crawler dozers are often dispatched, as the first line of defense and CAL Fire's bulldozer operators are a vital tool in that they are used to cut dirt lines around wildfires.

Having the ability to operate a crawler dozer is just one of the many skills that a dozer firefighter must have. He must also be able to operate his approximately 35 to 45 ton machine on unstable soil or rocky landscapes, all while pushing brush and debris at grades of up to 75 degrees. To even be considered, they must attend CAL

Fire's bulldozer training program located at the Clark Training Center in Riverside, California. Applicants come from both the fire service and the construction industry. Crews and individuals from all over California must become certified and then renew their certification every year. This intense training is necessary due to the obvious dangers associated with this trade. Like with any firefighter, serious injury or death is always an ongoing concern. These men and women are called on by the California Department of Forestry to protect over 31-million acres of California's private-owned wildlands. Firefighters, fire engines, heavy machinery and aircraft respond to an average of 5,600 wildland fires that burn more than 172,000 acres on average each year.

In addition to plowing fire lines and firebreaks, dozer operators also work at cutting contingency lines around towns and housing communities in areas where the fire is simply approaching too fast. The firefighters can then start a back-burn in the area between the contingency lines and the fire to eclipse the inferno, effectively

fighting fire with fire. After all fires are extinguished, the dozer operator is then called upon to rehabilitate the previously bulldozed areas to protect against mudslides. Here dozers are utilized along with excavators to cleanup and move debris for both cosmetic and erosion control purposes.

Ryan Monteleone of Ryan Monteleone Excavation, Inc. further explains his interesting niche further, "We are contracted through the U.S. Forestry Service and CAL Fire as Fire Ready Bull Dozer operators. When called upon, we either meet up with the State to pickup their specially equipped dozers or we bring our own certified dozers directly to the fire to be utilized as an initial attack detail. This year has been fairly quiet, but in 2009 we were called out to Mariposa to fight a fire that was heading towards Yosemite National Park. We spent three weeks there and then another 60-days that year fighting the station fire in Los Angeles. In 2008, we spent 45-days at the Chico fire. The 12 to 24-hour shifts are grueling, but I truly enjoy the work."



(Above & Below) Ryan Monteleone and other Fire Ready Bull Dozer Operators are called on by the California Department of Forestry to protect over 31-million acres of California's private-owned wildlands. They respond to an average of 5,600 wildland fires that burn more than 172,000 acres on average each year.

When not getting called out on fires, Ryan is kept busy grading house pads, doing underground utility work or even an occasional septic tank. He has an annual contract with the City of Temecula that keeps him busy performing everything from street maintenance to channel cleanup and erosion control. Ryan's brother, Mike Monteleone Jr. works with him when needed, as does his friend, Clay Borel. Both men are also certified Fire Ready Bull Dozer Operators and work with Ryan fighting fires as well.

Like so many other California owner/operators, Ryan learned from his father. Mike Monteleone Sr. started his company, Monteleone Excavating back in the 70's as an owner/operator working primarily with a small dozer and a skip loader. Ryan grew up in the business and comments, "I worked with my dad during summers and after high school. He taught my brother

Mike and I to operate equipment at a very young age. We did everything from underground utility and septic system work, to custom house pads and work in and around track home developments. My dad decided to retire around 10 years ago so that he and my mom could pursue a wedding and special events business at their ranch in Murrietta called Monteleone Meadows. They have 25 acres of land and a great indoor and outdoor facility where they cater to weddings, corporate events and other occasions. My older brother and I took over the construction business and we worked full time together until things started to really slow down a few years ago. My brother Mike decided to start his own marketing company and I received my A Contractors License and changed the name of the company to Ryan Monteleone Excavation, Inc. Today with the sluggish economy, my work

has become very diverse and I take any work I can get, anywhere in the state of California. Most of my work however remains in and around Temecula and Murrieta. For instance, we are going to be in San Diego next week grading and installing a silt basin and the Geogrid keystone walls that go with it. Normally, we don't get involved with material construction, but these days we happily get off of our tractors and do what it takes to survive. I do have expansion plans that include adding more machinery and operators after these hard times subside. The equipment operating business has been good to me over the years and I plan on sticking around to see what the future holds."

Ryan Monteleone Excavation primarily relies on Caterpillar equipment and they own a Cat D8N dozer, a Cat D8K dozer and a new Cat D6R dozer. In addition they own





(Above Left) Ryan Monteleone Excavation, Inc.'s Cat 247 track skid steer. (Right) Ryan Monteleone operating his Hitachi EC200 excavator.

and operate a Cat 247 track skid steer and a Hitachi EC200 excavator. Ryan has this to say about his equipment fleet, "I purchased most of our equipment from Johnson Machinery, our local Cat dealer, with the exception of the Hitachi excavator, which we bought from Heavy Equipment Rentals out of Corona. Heavy Equipment Rentals has really helped grow and sustain my business over the years. I became

friends with co-owner, Hayden Porter when he first came to town and built a personal and working relationship with him. Then I met his brother Kent Porter and we also became good friends. As a matter of fact our wives are also good friends and spend a lot of time together. HER has a huge variety of late model, well maintained top name brand equipment, as well as outstanding customer service. When I call up and need a machine,

they have it to me the next day. I just can't say enough about Heavy Equipment Rentals, their crew and their equipment."

For more information on Ryan Monteleone Excavation, Inc. and their services, call 951-538-6537.

To learn more about CAL Fire and the California Department of Forestry, please visit www.fire.ca.gov/about/about.php. **Co**

(Left) Ryan Monteleone Excavation, Inc. relies on Heavy Equipment Rentals, Inc. in Corona and Los Angeles for all of their heavy equipment rental needs.

