

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION



THE SPEED, FLEXIBILITY AND DIVERSITY OF
RYERSON'S NETWORK ARE PUT TO
THE TEST IN CRUNCH TIME.

Each year, roughly 7,700 wildfires sweep through the state of California, destroying on average more than 705,000 acres of land. In a way, you can call 2018 a record year in which, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the National Interagency Fire Center, more than 1.4 million acres of land have been lost to these natural disasters.

So, it came as no surprise to Jay Claeys, president of Husky Portable Containment, that he would be fielding an inordinate number of requests from the U.S. Forest Service this year. His Oklahoma-based company ships portable water tanks to the service's holding site in Denver where they are used by firefighters to combat wildfires.

Typically, there are no issues with meeting demand. But that all changed with one phone call.

"They needed 74 tanks, and needed them delivered in one week," says Claeys. "And that definitely caused some concern; concern that we might not be able to fulfill the order, which could mean that we could lose out on the business to one of our competitors."

His uncertainty about the order came down to a simple case of supply and demand. Each month, Husky receives a shipment from Ryerson of roughly 3,000 feet of carbon round tube. The material is used for making a range of equipment, including water tanks for the U.S. Forest Service.

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- Jay Claeys, Husky Portable Containment

But for this order, it would require a total of 11,000 feet. This is more than Husky typically consumes over the course of three months.

"We had a mill order for about 10,000 feet of tube, but it wasn't due in for another few weeks," says David Zahner, Ryerson general manager. "But even if that came in, we would still be about 1,000 feet short of what he needed for that order."

Zahner couldn't find the 3,000 feet in 20-foot length tubes—the length that Claeys had been ordering from Ryerson for more than 10 years.

But that gave Zahner an idea; one that would set off a domino effect across multiple locations throughout Ryerson's interconnected network.

ATLANTA

Initially, Claeys thought there was no way that he could meet the requirements of the U.S. Forest Service. But literally, timing was everything.

“I was on my way to visit Jay for a talk about current market conditions. During this time, I was seeing a string of emails between Jay and our guys, so I knew about the situation,” says Zahner. “All the while, we are working on a potential solution behind the scenes. So, now I am able to walk into his office that day and tell him that we had a potential solution to his problem.”

That potential solution was based on one simple modification to his standard order: 24-foot tube lengths rather than the typical 20-foot order.

That was the simple part. Locating the material and getting there in time? Now, that would be a different story.

Inside Sales Representative Clark Lineback and Inside Sales Manager Bryan Burris started working the phones. They found the material they needed in Atlanta. But, as Burris recalls, “We needed almost all of what they had on the floor in Atlanta and we needed it that same day.”

The recipient of the request from Burris was Jhannio Lopez, Atlanta’s operations manager. And right away, he could sense the urgent nature of the request.



“We run about 1,100 lines a day, and we see our share of urgent requests, but nothing to this magnitude,” recalls Lopez. “We were talking about taking my entire inventory on one item; but I could tell right away that this wasn’t your typical special request—you could sense in the tone of the email that this was a true emergency.”

After a quick sign-off by his sales manager, Lopez was prepping all 11,000 feet of carbon round tube, grade 1008/1010, in 24-foot bundles—for a trek to Tulsa. Typically, there is a slim chance that a special request that comes in at lunchtime is leaving the facility later that day. But this is where Atlanta’s Outbound Traffic Coordinator Robert Padgett worked a big of magic.

In addition to its large North American fleet, Ryerson partners with several third-party logistic companies to transport products. This opens up the pool of resources and helps execute on urgent requests such as this one from Husky.

“When we get special requests, they aren’t typically of such a great distance. And a delivery to Tulsa only occurs once a week,” says Padgett. “So, I sent out an email to our network of carriers, and one replied back right away saying that they had a truck available. And we moved quickly to make the arrangements.”

In just a few short hours, the material was its way to Tulsa. “We get a truck from Atlanta once a week,” says Burris. “But here we are talking about less than 24-hours, and across multiple locations. That really opens up your eyes on the potential what we can do with the network.”

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-Bryan Burris,
Inside Sales Manager



THREE STOPS TO TULSA

The next day, Zahner received another call from Claeys. His order from the U.S. Forest Service for 74 tanks turned into 111, literally overnight. And with it, he needed an additional 7,000 feet of product. No problem, right?

The group once again huddled up to talk about resources.

- Where would they get the additional 7,000 feet? Omaha.
- How would it get to Tulsa? “Here’s where it starts to get a bit crazy,” adds Zahner.

With a large fleet of trucks, Ryerson is in most markets nearly every day, which can help control the delivery. But that requires someone who can strategically map out the most optimal route to ensure delivery as expected by the customer—even when that path isn’t necessarily a straight line.

Enter Katie Thomas. Long ago, the inside sales manager out of Kansas City raised her hand to help navigate the ordering and shipment details between locations to streamline the order.

“First I contacted the outside sales rep out of Omaha to ensure we could get the material,” recalls Thomas. “A shipment goes out of there every Thursday—and unfortunately today was Thursday and we missed it. But that’s when David told me we had a bit more time to figure out a solution ...”



So they got creative. First, a call was placed to both Omaha and Des Moines. It turned out the Kansas City team had a route that day would put them near the edge of Des Moines. The request was for the Des Moines team to pick up the material from Omaha and hand it off to the truck from Kansas City. From there, it would be brought back to Kansas City, and subsequently shuttled to Wichita, Kansas the very next day. Then, a truck from Tulsa would make the pick up from Wichita, and finally on to Husky in Tulsa.

As she describes, “Our network is very strong, and essentially there is a way to route anything to any location. It’s all about not being afraid to figure out who to call or what to do.”

CALIFORNIA

“You’re looking at probably about 12-15 different individuals working to make this happen,” adds Zahner. “That is a lot of moving pieces in a network that is not built to do what we did and in the timeframe we did it; but we did something special by working together.”

When caught in a crunch, there are always options. But those options come together only with an infrastructure that is expansive and easily adaptable.

In this instance Ryerson’s nationwide service centers, wide breadth of inventory and expansive pool of shipping options was on full display to help one company subsequently help thousands.

Adds Claeys, “Ryerson’s ability to find solutions in a time-crunch scenario allowed us to serve one of our customers who was in need, which ultimately helped save communities in California.”



RYERSON

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