



## **Midwest Construction Services: Moorhead Courts Growing Company**

**By Gerry Gilmour  
The Forum**

With a single land sale, the city of Moorhead can bring six companies to its growing industrial park south of Interstate 94.

Midwest Construction Service has offered the city \$84,000 -- and would assume \$350,000 in special assessments -- for an 11-acre site right along I-94.

"The attraction for us is the interstate fronting. It also gives us room for expansion," said Paul Bruhn, president and CEO of Midwest Construction Services.

The Moorhead City Council will consider the sale of the land today.

Midwest Construction Services -- a newly created subsidiary of Fargo- and Fergus Falls, Minn.-based Otter Tail Corp. -- is the holding company for Moorhead Electric, Performance Systems, also of Moorhead, and Aerial Contracting of West Fargo and Alexandria, S.D.

Bruhn said his company wants to collocate those three businesses, and three new businesses that will be announced next month. The six companies, combined, could marshal a work force of more than 400 from the proposed site.

Midwest Construction Services is working with city officials on a financial incentive plan for the project, according to Bruhn and Beth Grosen, the city of Moorhead's economic development specialist.

Midwest Construction Services plans to spend at least \$1.5 million on three buildings on the site, Bruhn said.

He said Moorhead Electric, Fargo-Moorhead's largest electric contractor, has outgrown its three-acre site in Moorhead's older industrial park on the north side of I-94.

"We're just landlocked here," Bruhn said of Moorhead Electric's offices, shop and yard at 2417 12th Ave. S. "We need to update our facility, not only for more offices, but for maintenance and dry storage space."

Acquired by Otter Tail Corp. in 1992, Moorhead Electric today has nearly 325 employees, compared to just half that number five years ago. The company does business in 18 states.

Moorhead Electric is also poised to expand with the emerging wind energy industry in the region. Like sister company DMI Industries of West Fargo -- an Otter Tail company that manufactures wind towers -- Moorhead Electric is waiting impatiently for a congressional energy bill that would extend tax credits for companies that build wind farms.

Moorhead Electric was a subcontractor to FPL Energy for installing electrical wiring on 41 wind turbines now turning between Edgeley and Kulm, N.D., 14 of those producing power for Moorhead Electric sister company Otter Tail Power Co. of Fergus Falls.

Moorhead Electric is the main electric contractor on a 100-turbine wind farm, spread over 25 acres, being built by EnXco, of North Palm Springs, Calif., near Pipestone, Minn.

"Wind is certainly going to be part of our future," Bruhn said.

Aerial Contractors, now at 1226 Main Ave. in Fargo, and at a satellite site in South Dakota, was acquired by Otter Tail in 1991. The company, involved in electric transmission distribution lines as well as telecommunications lines, including underground projects, employs 60 people.

Performance Systems, currently in the Moorhead Electric building, employs 25. The company installs and maintains large irrigation systems, for projects such as sports fields, golf courses and parks.

Bruhn said Midwest Construction Services is developing plans and specifications for facilities to house those three businesses

as well as the three businesses being created.

The six firms combined will increase employment in Moorhead, he said.

"The city has been really good to work with, and we really want to remain a Moorhead company," he said.

Scott Hutchins, Moorhead community services director, said the city will consider an incentive package that could include property tax as well as sales tax exemptions. He said the package could potentially include new incentives available next year under Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty's Jobs Zones project.

Moorhead would be eligible for funding through the project under an application filed with the state on behalf of nine counties submitted by the Fergus Falls-Minn.-based West Central Initiative Fund.

Hutchins said the city expects to know of its Job Zone status early next month.

"We'll know better at that time what we have to work with," he said. "This would increase the employment base, and that's good."

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