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July 2025

UTILITYSOURCE

Products and Services for Today's Electric, Telecom, and CATV Utilities

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Utility companies can rely on industry-specific rubber track carriers

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WHERE TIRES DARE NOT TREAD



Utility companies can rely on industry-specific rubber track carriers

The convenience of wheel-mounted equipment makes trucks and trailers ideal for over-the-road transport, but they are rendered useless by a utility installation or maintenance job in compromised ground conditions. Rubber track carriers, on the other hand, get people and equipment to utility applications in places wheeled carriers cannot go, such as jobs on soft wet ground or undeveloped or protected environments. The track carrier spreads the load over a large surface area, lowering ground pressure while providing a highly stable equipment platform to work from.

While most manufacturers have designed their track carriers from snow grooming machines, Morooka designed its carriers specifically for heavy-duty use in rigorous agriculture, forestry and construction applications from the bottom up. That same industry-specific dedication is at the core of Morooka USA LLC, headquartered in Ashland, Virginia, since 2005. Morooka is the only manufacturer of rubber track carriers wholly made in America, with models designed and built specifically for use in North American applications.

Now Morooka has added a rubber track carrier line dedicated to the North American utilities industry.

Ken Byrd, president of Morooka USA said the company is always looking at how to meet the unique needs of end-users. "We had looked at what our construction models were doing for the U.S. oil and

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gas industry. So much of that work is installing pipeline infrastructure in remote, undeveloped, hard-to-access areas. We realized the same was true for the utilities industry. Electrical transmission and distribution lines are often in those same types of environments. Our construction models could be retrofitted to meet most of their needs, and there are other manufacturers that do exactly that. But Morooka has always matched its models to the job."

That's why five years ago Morooka USA began working with North American utilities customers to create a dedicated line of Tier 4-compliant carriers, the VDL-series. "We are committed to the utilities industry. We've pushed the limits of what carriers can do for them with the 125-foot bucket reach of the 4500VDL. To be able to go off road in any environment at that size and price point – one client has already told me it's a real game-changer for them."

Utilities-specific

The VDL models have the same robust design of Morooka's construction carrier models, and like them, are made from U.S. steel, by U.S. personnel with U.S.-based customer support. Beyond that, Byrd said, the carriers differ in several key ways.

"One of the primary differences is engine placement," Byrd said. "Construction models have center-frame mounted engines, but utilities companies attach digger derricks and bucket lifts to the carriers. They need room to mount the masts and to lay them down for ease of transport. We keep the center well freed up by offsetting the engine." Byrd noted that the open center well has also been advantageous for attaching personnel carriers and hydro-seeders.





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Another major change has been accommodating attachments common to the utilities industry that require extended frames. "Again, it's because our design and manufacturing facilities are right here in the U.S. Our frames are built right here, so it's easy for us to customize them to North American equipment specifications. We don't have to piece on an extension to an existing frame. We simply build one solid frame to whatever the specs call for." The built-to-spec frame eliminates any

concern for overstressing a weld at the extension, since there is no extension welded on. "Our frames are solid."

Curt Unger, Morooka USA Vice President of Sales, said the ability to build to spec has additional benefits. One is mobilization readiness. Most of the VDL models meet the DOT-approved width of 8 feet 6 inches for permit-free transportation. "Utility companies might need to respond immediately

at any time," Unger said. "When they get called out because a snowstorm Friday evening took down a distribution line, they can't be held up waiting through the weekend to get a permit. With our carriers, they just go."

Byrd said, "We manufacture a good share of our utilities models as OEM proprietary designs," Byrd said. "We'll custom-design and build to the dimensions they specify." Customization is made easier by the new carrier line's mounting frames, which duplicate the mounting frame of a wheeled carrier to easily accept digger derricks and lift buckets without special adaptation. "Other makes of carrier need a sub frame," Byrd said. "Ours does not. One of our OEM clients told me this has been saving installers about 40 to 50 hours of build-time per unit. Fewer man-hours and lower material cost represent a huge savings on every Morooka carrier installation."

Morooka tough

Unger said reliability is critical to utilities applications. "Your track carriers will get you to places that wheeled vehicles just can't go – so that much farther from help if



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you need it. Take the snowstorm scenario again as an example. You need to get your equipment out there on a weekend, and you need to trust that it won't let you down once you're there."

Unger said that's why Morooka carriers make such good vehicles for the utilities industry. The line of carriers shares the robust build of all Morooka lines. One key area is tread and carriage. The aggressive, straight bar tread pattern favored by the construction and oil and gas industries gives utilities customers the same benefits: increased traction, reduced tearing and wide ground pressure disbursement to track easily over muddy or sandy soils.

"That's one of the most common concerns I hear about rubber track carriers, tread life," Unger said. "How does rubber hold up? But all our tracks were made specifically for long life under rigorous use." Morooka tracks feature its Continuous Steel Core technology. Their helically wound steel cords have no inside joints to fail. The one-piece design also prevents stretching and derailing. "CSC eliminates about 95 percent of the traditional causes of rubber track failure," Unger said.

"Our treads also have a greater number of contact points than other makes." Greater contact with the ground, Unger said, lowers ground pressure, placing less stress on any given contact point with the treads and contributing to a longer service life. "Overall our units average ground pressure is less than a man's footprint."

The footprint of the average human male exerts a ground pressure of about 8.0 psi. The MST1500VDL model with 225 hp Tier 4 Cat engine exerts a ground pressure of only 2.6 psi, though the unit is 23 feet 8 inches long with a width of 8 feet 6 inches and weighs 21,660 pounds. Fully loaded to its 20,000 pound maximum capacity, its ground pressure is only 5.0 psi.

The largest of the 8 foot 6 inch wide Morooka models to date is the MST2500VDL with 250 hp Tier

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4 Cat engine. At 27 feet 6 inches long, it weighs 29,000 pounds and exerts a ground pressure of 2.6 psi. With a 30,460-pound maximum load, its ground pressure is still just 5.1 psi.

Morooka carriers are easy to maintain, and excellent parts availability minimizes downtime for service and repair. All engines for the North American market feature top brand-name, Tier 4 engines from Cummins, Cat and Kubota. "And the fuel tanks, the cabs, the frames – 95 percent of everything on our carriers is made right here in the U.S., so we have excellent in-stock availability of the most commonly needed parts, with total parts availability for our carriers rated at about 88 percent at any given time."

Operator safety and comfort surpass standards for the North American market. Units feature ROPS-certified frames and cabins, Danfoss® joystick controls and easy-to-read digital display, backup cameras, and heated remote mirrors.

Morooka USA rubber track carriers have hydrostatic transmissions and come with a one year, 1,000-hour warranty. Morooka's industry-leading dealer, parts and service network ensures coast-to-coast after-sales product support throughout North America. The new line of purpose-built machines gives utilities end-users a rubber track carrier dedicated to the unique work they do that they can count on wherever and whenever they need to do it.

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Tips for Longer, Safer Power Tool Battery Life

Power Tool Institute identifies easily employed best practices

Power tools and their batteries are rugged instruments designed to perform tough jobs, but they still require care to maintain safe, optimum performance. There are steps users can take to extend tool and battery life, and help keep power tools operating at peak performance for a longer life cycle.

The Power Tool Institute has compiled a list of best practices for safer use of batteries and power tools.

Safe handling

Start by reading the manufacturer's instruction manual – and only use original manufacturer's system components of tool, battery and charger. Do not impact or damage a battery (for example, do not use it as a hammer), use it solely for the defined purpose as specified by the manufacturer. If a battery has received a sharp blow, been dropped, or is damaged, discontinue use.

Regularly inspect batteries for signs of damage, such as crushing, cuts, or punctures. Be mindful of abnormal battery behavior, such as failure to fully charge or hold a charge, longer-than-usual charging times, noticeable drop in performance, liquid leakage from the battery, or melted plastic anywhere on the pack. These are indications of an internal problem.

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Never modify, disassemble, or tamper with the battery because the performance can become unpredictable and dangerous. As a general practice, it is best to unplug battery chargers and remove battery packs from them when not in use.

Safe storage

Do not store batteries on their chargers. Always use and store the battery within the temperature limits stated by the manufacturer. Do not store in a closed location where sunlight may cause elevated temperatures, such as near a window or inside a vehicle. Do not store or transport the battery in a container with loose metal objects, such as coins, keys or nails, which may contact the terminals.

Safe response to overheating

Though batteries and chargers are safe to use when operated properly, in rare instances a battery may overheat. If the battery is exhibiting signs of overheating (flames, smoke, smoldering, or melting), immediate action is required. If connected to a charger when exhibiting signs of overheating, always unplug the charger first. After unplugging the battery charger, then pour copious amounts of water on the battery and then submerge the battery (including any attached tool or charger – do not directly touch/disconnect the battery) in a sturdy container filled with water. When transferring the battery, avoid direct contact with the battery (use a long-handled shovel) and use appropriate personal protective equipment to protect face, hands and body, since there is a risk that overheated batteries may vent, explode, or emit flame.

An advertisement for Sellick equipment. The top features the logo 'SELICK LIFT, LOAD AND DELIVER WITH SELICK!' in bold yellow and black text. Below the logo, a yellow forklift is shown lifting a large white box. To the right of the forklift, there is a block of text: 'Whether you need to deliver a skid of blocks to a jobsite or move a 16,000 lb. load of steel, Sellick has the forklift that is right for you. We have been engineering and manufacturing rough terrain forklifts for over 50 years and our nationwide dealer network offers superior support for all your parts and service requirements. Call toll-free or e-mail us today for all your material handling needs.' At the bottom, another yellow forklift is shown lifting a pallet of wooden crates. The contact information '1-877-SELICK (735-5425)' and 'sales@sellickequipment.com' is displayed in bold black text at the bottom left.

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If the battery is exhibiting flames, continue using copious amounts of water until the flame is extinguished, then submerge the battery (including any attached tool or charger) in a sturdy container filled with water. If water is not available, dirt, sand or a conventional ABC extinguisher may be used in an attempt to smother and cool the battery until water is available.

Keep the battery submerged, in a well-ventilated location, for at least 24 hours and at least 15 feet away from any combustible items. Contact the manufacturer for guidance on proper disposal.

For more information about extending the life of power tools and their batteries, visit www.PowerToolInstitute.com •

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DEWALT Partners with SkillsUSA to Support America's Future Tradespeople



- Since 1999, DEWALT has contributed more than \$1.7 million in tools and donations to SkillsUSA
- Access to tools is a key barrier for pre-apprentices joining the trades, according to a recent DEWALT survey; this is why DEWALT and SkillsUSA will be donating tools from this year's competition to aspiring tradespeople across the U.S.

DEWALT, a Stanley Black & Decker brand and leader in total jobsite solutions, and SkillsUSA, the largest student-led workforce development organization in the U.S, today announced a partnership to help support America's future tradespeople.

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As part of the partnership, DEWALT will be donating \$100,000 in tools to The SkillsUSA Championships, the largest longest-running gathering of America's future skilled workforce, taking place this week in Atlanta. At the event, 6,800 career and technical students will compete across more than 100 skilled categories including carpentry, plumbing and welding. DEWALT will also collaborate with SkillsUSA to distribute the tools utilized during the competitions to aspiring tradespeople across the U.S.

"According to DEWALT's most recent survey, more than one-third of pre-apprentices lack access to the tools that are needed to support them as they embark on their career journey," said James Oh, President and General Manager of DEWALT. "At DEWALT, we are relentless in our commitment to removing these barriers for future tradespeople who are meeting the rising demand for skilled labor.* DEWALT launched a partnership with SkillsUSA because of our shared commitment to champion aspiring tradespeople. Together, we are supporting the new generation of tradespeople as they become leaders on the jobsite."

"We're grateful to DEWALT for their continued partnership and commitment to the skilled trades," said Chelle Travis, Executive Director of SkillsUSA. "This generous donation not only supports the students



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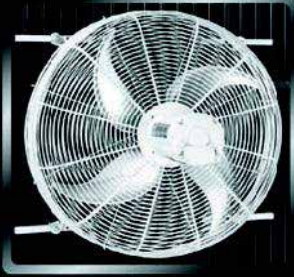
Since 1999, DEWALT has contributed more than \$1.7 million in tools and donations to SkillsUSA.

Grow the Trades

The SkillsUSA partnership is part of DEWALT's Grow the Trades initiative, a \$30 million commitment by 2027 to close the skilled trades gap by helping provide greater accessibility and resources for trades training. To date, DEWALT has awarded nearly \$20 million in scholarships, grants, tools and other resources. To learn more about DEWALT's Grow the Trades initiative, visit: www.dewalt.com/growthetrades

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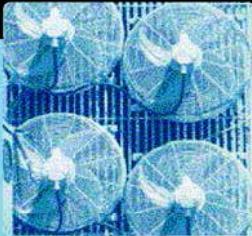


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