

Demo and disposal



Contractor Bill Schaab, left, started American Demolition & Nuclear Decommissioning Inc. in 2004. The firm began its growth spurt in 2006 when Schaab's cousin, Bill Sundeen, right, joined the company as majority owner. Today, the firm employs 14 full-time workers.

Tear it down. Build it up.
That's the type of work performed by American Demolition & Nuclear Decommissioning Inc., a young Western New York-based contracting firm in the midst of explosive growth.

Led by two cousins, the firm performs mostly public sector work in states such as New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Missouri. It specializes in demolition and disposal services, including asbestos removal, nuclear decommissioning and environmental remediation.

All of which means hard hats are a must on job sites.

"Do work safely and do it right," said Bill Schaab, a longtime contractor whose early start-up company transformed into a family business when his cousin, Bill Sundeen, joined the group.

The two men lived a mile apart while growing up on Grand Island. Working together is a natural extension of their close-knit family.

"It helps from a trust standpoint," Schaab said. "Bill (Sundeen) knows what he does ... and he trusts me to go out into the field and run operations. Sometimes we don't have to call each other up because we know what the other's thinking."

What's going on: There's a lot of growth happening at American DND. The company is bringing in more workers and more revenue every year as it branches out to other sites and states. While it will spend its summer working in the Western New York area, the firm is actively seeking jobs in states such as Tennessee, where it hopes to get work at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Its current job at a local university entails demolition, asbestos removal, the removal and reinstallation of mechanical equip-

ment and wrapping up the project in dry-wall and tile.

The growth at American DND led to being named No. 1 on Business First's 2009 Fast Track 50 list. According to sales and employment figures verified by Gaines Kriner Elliott LLP, American DND's growth rate over a three-year period was 483 percent.

Who's who: Sundeen and Schaab handle top-leadership duties, but they get help from senior project manager Mike Furner and project managers Todd Giolando and Mike Hayes. Furner, who lives in Ohio, commutes around the country for American DND jobs.

History: Schaab started American DND in 2004 with the intention of being certified as a minority-owned, veteran-owned or national service-disabled veteran-owned small business. Being qualified in one of those categories would lead to greater job opportunities, Schaab said.

But first, he had to find a partner. Following two years in business – with little sales or revenue coming in – an apparent partner came along when Sundeen decided to retire from the U.S. Navy after 22 years of service. Sundeen, who has been deployed to Afghanistan, Kosovo and the Persian Gulf, formerly managed security and safety for 69 explosive sites, three small arms ranges and one demolition range.

Schaab had found his partner.

"(Sundeen) needed a job and in 2006 he became the majority owner and shareholder of American DND," Schaab said. The firm, in turn, qualified as a national service-disabled veteran-owned small business due to service-related disabilities sustained by Sundeen.

Today, the work primarily falls into two categories: self-performing work and management work, which means American DND staff will design deconstruction jobs,

Cousins combine in firm that does 'deconstruction' work

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hire managers and oversee the project.

The office: It doesn't exist. Sundeen, Schaab and their crew carry laptops to job sites and, once settled at the job site, they plug into networks supported by a third-party IT provider. So far, the set-up works for the company. "We don't have to have an IT guy," Schaab said. "Plus, this gives us a great deal of mobility to go anywhere in the country."

Employees: Right now, 14 full-time employees work for American DND. As recently as 2006, there were just three employees.

Revenue: \$3.8 million in 2008. That's more than double 2007 revenues of \$1.5 million, which significantly topped 2006 revenues of \$500,000.

Biggest challenge: Getting construction bonding and securing financing, Schaab said. "When you're a new company, it's very difficult to get bonding and financing to grow," he said. The firm eventually managed to secure bonding from The IBCS Group Inc., a risk management company based in Virginia, while it got a line of credit from First Niagara Bank, Schaab said.

Impact of economy: Like other contractors, American DND has been adversely affected by the slumping economy. Private-sector jobs have dwindled and bids have dropped, Schaab said.

"It's made getting jobs very difficult and the prices for the value of the work has been driven down," he said.

During a recent walk-through for a job in Connecticut, Sundeen said he was part of two buses of contractors looking at the same \$1.2 million job. More than 20 bids came in for that job, which normally would have received four or five bids, Sundeen said.



American DND president Bill Sundeen, stands in the company's job trailer. Sundeen's company has ramped up its revenue intake in recent years, from \$500,000 in 2006 to nearly \$4 million in 2008.