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Varel Expands Large Diameter Bit Manufacturing

Varel International Monday, January 09, 2006

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Varel International, the world's largest independent drill bit company, has made a substantial capital investment to increase its manufacturing capacity for large diameter roller cone bits measuring 16" to 36" in size. This significant investment, one of the largest in the company's 59-year history, will triple Varel's monthly manufacturing capacity for large diameter bits.

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"Our decision to increase our manufacturing capacity for large diameter bits is a direct response to the

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increased global demand for bits ranging in size from 16" to 36", said Chris Byrd, Vice President of Varel International's Roller Cone Business Unit. "By tripling our output, we believe we can meet industry demand for these products even with the high drilling levels we are seeing presently."

"In general, the use of large diameter bits is driven by well geometry and well depth," said Jim Nixon, President and CEO, Varel International. "Many of the wells drilled in the Eastern Hemisphere are deep and use bits up to 36" in diameter for drilling the surface hole. The deep gas wells drilled in the Middle East use 26", 28", 34", or 36" bits for drilling the surface hole followed by a long 16" or 17½" intermediate section. Therefore, by expanding our capabilities and capacity we can meet the increasing demand in key markets around the world."

The New Equipment & Installation Process

A key part of increasing large bit manufacturing capacity was the purchase of a 48" numerically controlled vertical turret lathe (VTL) with programmable shuttle tables for Varel's Matamoros, Mexico plant. This lathe is the single largest piece of equipment in Varel's global manufacturing arsenal. The VTL provides the company more capacity to machine precision bearings on large diameter head sections. Additionally, the lathe is being used to machine threaded connections on 20" and larger diameter roller cone bits.

"The installation process for the 48" VTL was an awesome project," said Byrd. "The foundation for the machine required us to excavate a hole more than six feet deep, install reinforcing steel, and then fill it with concrete. Due to the thickness of the foundation, the concrete was cured for one month before we could begin installing the lathe. Shipping the machine to our plant required four flat bed semi trailers. The lathe then had to be reassembled on site. The entire project, from the start of site preparation to starting

production took eight months."

In addition to the installation of this massive lathe, Varel has added considerable resources in welding steel tooth hardfacing, cone bearing machining, and large bit assembly. As a result of these combined efforts and other changes, Varel has been able to triple their previous output of large diameter bits.

"We are proud of the contributions, commitments, and delivery made by our engineering and manufacturing teams to complete the expansion," said Nixon. "The scope effort and investment made in this project clearly demonstrates the ongoing commitment Varel is making to deliver solutions to meet our customers' drilling needs."

About Varel International

Founded in 1947, Varel International is the world's largest independent supplier and the fifth largest company operating in the global oil & gas drill bit market. Headquartered in Carrollton, Texas, Varel services oil & gas, mining, and industrial markets with its comprehensive suite of roller cone and fixed cutter drill bits. The Company employs 1,000 people and has manufacturing facilities in Carrollton, Texas; Houston, Texas; Matamoros, Mexico and Tarbes, France, as well as sales offices throughout the world. Varel's proprietary design capabilities, efficient manufacturing, and global sales force uniquely positions the Company to provide high-quality drill bits that deliver excellent performance and value to its customer base. For more information about Varel International, please visit: [Varel International](#).



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