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ON THE COVER

The KOBELCO SK230SRLC-3 working onsite at a quarry with a heavy-duty rock bucket.
Photo provided by KOBELCO Construction Machinery USA.

Blurring the Lines Between OEM and Aftermarket Parts

Over the past 60 years, the acceptance of replacement parts suppliers for engines used in the heavy-duty construction industry has evolved significantly. Today, the quality, availability, coverage, and warranty of products from branded aftermarket suppliers are increasingly rivaling those of their OEM counterparts.

This trend, largely motivated by the goal of producing consistent and high-quality parts, and thus eliminating the one “knock” on aftermarket parts, is the result of the increasingly blurred line between OEM and branded aftermarket supplier.

In fact, many leading branded aftermarket suppliers are increasingly acting like OEMs, whether adopting advanced manufacturing and quality assurance programs, incorporating lean manufacturing techniques, or offering products individually, as well as in kits and sets to facilitate engine overhauls.

Decades of manufacturing experience and access to modern production tools have given sophisticated aftermarket suppliers the capability to consistently match exacting OEM tolerances. Precision quality assurance tools are used to ensure tight consistency; in some cases, gaging instruments are installed at various locations right on the product production line.

Like their OEM counterparts, aftermarket suppliers have also increased marketing and customer support services, providing excellent availability, comprehensive warranties, and even parts research capabilities. Once available only from OEMs, these services are of significant value to heavy-duty fleets, parts resellers, and service shops, and are another incentive for them to source replacement parts from aftermarket suppliers.

EXPEDITING EQUIPMENT REPAIRS

Republic Diesel sources engine parts for Caterpillar, Detroit Diesel, and Cummins engines from an array of trusted aftermarket brands. The company has been serving the diesel engine market with machining services since the industry's inception.

Services typically involve disassembling engines that have been removed from heavy-duty equipment used by customers in the construction, mining, and natural gas industries. In addition to typical machine shop services, such as resurfacing cylinder heads or welding and refinishing crankshafts, Republic Diesel also notifies customers about which engine parts should be replaced. In most cases, the customers purchase those parts from the machine shop and install them when the engine is returned.

“Most of our customers in the construction market use Caterpillar equipment,” says Hal Hamilton, an inside rep for Republic Diesel. “When those engines require replacement parts, we normally recommend parts or kits manufactured by IPD, which covers a lot of different engine models, and has a lot of inventory stocked at distribution warehouses.”

IPD, headquartered in Torrance, California, manufactures and distributes a broad range of replacement parts for Caterpillar, Cummins, Detroit Diesel, Volvo, and Waukesha engines. Products include such popular items as pistons, cylinder liners, valvetrain, engine bearings, and gaskets.

Hamilton says the sale of engine parts has become a significant source of added business for his company. “With today's challenging economy, many of our customers don't carry spare parts or engines, so our machining and parts supply services are vital to them getting up and running as soon as possible.”

It is also vital that service shops such as Republic Diesel retain its customers' trust and confidence. Hamilton says that sourcing engine parts from suppliers such as IPD helps to meet that need, mainly because of the consistent quality and ready availability of products.

ENSURING QUALITY PARTS AND SERVICES

Love Machine Co., a machine shop and engine parts reseller headquartered in Salt Lake City, also has a stable of branded aftermarket suppliers. The company serves a wide variety of heavy-duty equipment applications in Utah, Idaho, and parts of Nevada.



**FOR MORE
INFORMATION**

For more information about IPD and its aftermarket parts, call 310.530.1900, email sales@ipdparts.com, or visit www.ipdparts.com.

“Unplanned downtime is a killer for many of our customers in the construction market,” explains Love Machine’s general manager, Peggy Novasio. “Sometimes they’ll pay staggering freight charges to get the engine to us faster. So, we try to give them the fastest service possible, yet with the high-quality work that our shop has always been known for.”

When it comes to identifying and selling replacement parts for Caterpillar engines, IPD is one of Love Machine’s primary suppliers. Novasio says not only are these parts equivalent and interchangeable with OE parts, but they are also readily available.

“It is often critical that we get needed parts to customers quickly,” Novasio explains. “IPD has a warehouse in Portland, so they can usually deliver the parts we order within 2 days. That way, by the time we’re done with the machine work, we have the parts to complete the job. That makes our customers happy and enables us to be a one-stop shop.”

Sometimes getting detailed engine information is difficult, even for experienced parts resellers such as Love Machine. “We occasionally service Caterpillar engines that are so old that it is difficult to get parts information from on-line resources,” Novasio says. “It is really helpful that we can rely on our longtime aftermarket suppliers to provide that information such as parts and applications data via the IPDNet database, and failure analysis assistance such as from IPD Technical Bulletins and Technical Series videos.”

Some replacement parts suppliers market their products aggressively, and try to get business based on a lower price. “I always insist on quality and availability over price,” says Novasio. “But, if they don’t have a strong warranty, I’m not interested. My suppliers have warranties that are similar to the OEMs. I rarely see any warranty claims against their parts, but when I do, I get excellent service. That’s very important to our customers. Also, that warranty is good wherever our customer goes.”

ADVANCING MANUFACTURING METHODS

Some aftermarket suppliers achieve brand name acceptance through quality that results from incorporating innovative methods on the production line. At IPD, for example, the company has completely redesigned its steel piston and cylinder liner production processes,

incorporating lean manufacturing concepts and new production methods that ensure consistent quality, speed production throughput, and cost savings.

“All of this is part of our lean enterprise program,” Martins says. “This program optimizes production, reduces waste, minimizes work-in-progress and labor, and provides tremendous overall

quality improvement.” Martins also notes that IPD shares production processes improvement concepts with suppliers, helping them improve and maintain consistent quality and control costs.

This trend of branded aftermarket suppliers pushing the boundaries to ensure they have comparable product is sure to continue. ■

