



Hugh Gilmore, President and CEO Integrated Wind Energy Services

Cape Girardeau
www.integratedwind.net

Transportation is very big business, especially when you're moving nacelles and blades for the wind industry. Hugh Gilmore, President and CEO of Integrated Wind Energy Services, talks about the move into this important market.

My stepfather had been in the trucking business his entire life. He had the foresight to recognize the impending push for wind energy and the opportunities for specialized transportation. He thought my background in business and sales would serve us well in developing the relationships with wind turbine component manufacturers. So in 2009, we started Integrated Wind Energy Services.

The trucking industry is regulated to begin with, but we're scrutinized even more. And we strive to be ahead of the curve. We're required to have an inspection on every unit once a year – we do it once a quarter. We have our guys fill out maintenance reports every day. Escort trucks are brought together each morning to go over their routes.

And for wind projects, routes for getting components to market are a crucial part of the business, from both a cost and logistics standpoint.

Routes are determined by the limitations of the roads we travel. If we're overheight and there's an overpass on that route, we may have to get off 10 miles down the road and go off through the woods to bypass that one overpass. Or, if there's a bridge and the rating isn't sufficient to support the weight of the truck, we have to go around it. This is a part of our plan way in advance. We average about 30% extra miles when moving these components.

Many times, we are brought in during the R & D phase of a project – years ahead of ground-breaking – where we're asked to provide route surveys and feasibility studies specific to logistics. [Other times] we are engaged at the time the developer or manufacturer is gathering project costs to submit to their respective customers. The sooner those in our field are involved, the better the projects seem to go.

Once we are awarded a particular project, we allocate the necessary equipment considering component sizes, origins, destinations and delivery schedules. We assemble the project management team to meet with our safety department to discuss project specifics. Once the project begins, it is all about the trucks getting the job done in as safe and efficient a manner as possible, coordinating with our dispatch department to work with the customer, the facilities, the sites, the construction companies on site and the project management team. Start to finish, projects can take from a few weeks to several months, depending on the number of turbines.

Because wind farms generally go into rural areas, Gilmore and his team have been faced with some unique challenges and some poignant memories.

Recently our crew had to go 2 miles on project roads, which are just dirt roads. Literally they went in with bulldozers and carved the road out of the wilderness. It was in the middle of nowhere. There was no road there before.

These roads are on the ridge tops because that's where the wind blows. To follow those ridge lines, the roads go up and down. When we get to the point when a truck can't make it on its own, we have to hook up to it with a sling and help it up the hill with an assist vehicle. A lot of times, it's a very steep grade.

Often we go through small towns, and they put us in the newspapers. Last year in Pennsylvania, people brought their lawn chairs and watched.

Transportation companies can set up shop anywhere. Gilmore explains the business assets of operating out of Missouri.

Having our base here in Missouri is a benefit, because most of the wind farms being developed are through the middle of the country on a north-south axis. We often times have trucks coming through this [I-55] corridor.

As far as our transportation system, we are among the national leaders in maintaining the roads. They're always working on the roads, and we need that. As our country developed, the roads got bigger. The further east you go, the older the infrastructure. Anything east of Mississippi is a different world for us.

There are also cost advantages to working out of Missouri. Corporate taxes, fuel taxes and property taxes are very low in the state. Utility costs among the lowest in the country.

I make on average one trip per month visiting customers and jobsites. Those trips typically last 2-4 days. I make the most of these trips and then get back to the office. I love the travel, but I love even more coming back to Missouri, which has been my home all of my life. My family is here. This company is second only to my family.