

# TRAVERSE CITY RECORD EAGLE

## Fall leaves crews busy

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TRAVERSE CITY — Fall is a busy time for construction crews as they push to get work done before ice and snow hit the region.

"This is when we're usually maxed out on our equipment," said Steve Rosell, branch manager of the Traverse City Titan Equipment. "Everyone is trying to get everything enclosed before winter."

DJ Dohm, Alta Equipment's regional rental manager for western Michigan, said the fall's rainy spells

delayed projects. Companies working on many projects at once may rent extra equipment to keep up rather than share their own equipment across projects, which can squeeze rental equipment inventory.

"A lot of people are getting pushed back," Dohm said. "Builders, contractors, earthworks people, this is the time they need to finish their jobs. They're very willing to come in and grab extra machines to put at job sites because they're in a time crunch."

Dohm has worked in equipment rental in the Grand Traverse area for more than 20 years. His father owned Northern Michigan Equipment Company, which Alta purchased in 2012. He said some of his company's competitors left the region during the recession, and Titan entered it in 2006.

He said building and construction has picked up with projects including Hotel Indigo, across West Bay on Grandview Parkway in Traverse City, which means more activity for Alta.

"We've seen steady growth," he said. "In just the rental department in Traverse City, we've seen an increase of 4 percent in our revenue over last year."

Rosell said Titan's rental revenue also is climbing in Traverse City, across Michigan and the U.S. He said it's common for companies to opt for renting equipment instead of owning it in the years after economic recession.

Crews laying asphalt for Team Elmer's are racing to finish before the Michigan Department of Transportation's Nov. 1 deadline for asphalt work. Tonya Wildfong, the company's communication director, said the rainy autumn hasn't helped.

"We're working longer days when it does stop raining, and nights, to make up for lost time when we're allowed," she said. "Typically, it's a day of rest for our crews, but we're even working Sundays on some sites."

Wildfong said the company scored more local work this year, including state and county roads and some privately owned projects. She expects more growth next year, and said Team Elmer's is hiring 24 people.

"We have hired new individuals this year and appreciate the additional help, but we are looking, always, for quality individuals," she said.

It's a tight labor market for contractors. REI Construction Consultants president Jon Laureto said that can make it harder to keep projects progressing.

"If your project's not scheduled well and you get behind they can't just throw another crew on it," he said.

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