

A-Lert Recognized As MCN's Top Metal Roofer Of '03



[Click to enlarge projects completed by A-Lert Roof Systems](#)

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After finishing near the top for the past two years, A-Lert Roof Systems, a division of Centurion Ind. Inc. is *Metal Construction News' Top Metal Roofer* of the year. The Seguin, TX-based company installed 4,814 tons of steel in 2003, a 47% jump from the 3,273 tons installed in 2002.

Founded in 1975, A-Lert primarily serves the south central, southeast and midwest areas of the U.S.A. An additional location in Erie, KS, aids the company in serving the region. The firm is owned by Kenneth Tharp, Randy Shinkle, Loren Troyer and Brad Parish. Neil Berry, division president, oversees the 110-employee company.

A-Lert Roof Systems is part of a family of construction-related enterprises owned by Centurion Ind. Inc. Centurion's beginnings date back to the mid-1970s with roots in rural, southeast Kansas. After establishing itself in the metal canopy and heavy industrial construction industries in the 1980s, Centurion decided to venture into the standing seam metal roof business due to its market potential. That decision turned out to be well-timed and a great addition to the firm's operations. Division president Neil Berry commented, "From there, we've basically grown right with the metal roof industry and we are certainly blessed to find ourselves where we are at today."

Berry continued, "Since becoming a part of the Centurion family, A-Lert Roof Systems has continued to play a vital role in the company's overall growth. Centurion has grown into a multidivisional corporation providing diversified metal fabrication and industrial construction services throughout the USA. That growth has included an emphasis on safety, and we're proud of the fact that we now have a dedicated team of safety professionals, a solid program and an excellent safety history.

"We've also deepened our technical and architectural bench strength by putting some in-house engineering resources in place," Berry said. "I think we've grown our people more by training them to be leaders, to be better communicators, and to be specialists in managing projects and taking care of the customer."

Berry stated that the values of giving a customer both great value and service has remained at the company's core since the beginning and up to the present. He commented, "For one, we believe that if you want to field the best team, you've got to have the best players. So we work hard to surround ourselves with good people and then to grow them to be even better. We're also

committed to being a company of integrity, and to be known for doing the right thing, not just the expedient thing.

"Relationships are extremely important to us, and we want to cultivate strong and lasting partnerships not only with employees, but also with our customers, suppliers and other important players," Berry explained. "No successful venture is built without some mention of good, old-fashioned hard work. Many of our employees come from areas and backgrounds with strong work ethics and understand that opportunity comes with hard work."

The customer is the focus of A-Lert's business, which may be the reason why 35% of the firm's business comes from repeat customers, and another 30% come from referrals. Berry stated, "We believe customer satisfaction begins with a quality product. That means doing things right. If you've produced a solution that you and the customer are both proud of, that builds credibility and trust. So a quality product and quality workmanship, along with a safe jobsite, have to come first."

Berry realizes a job does not end after installation. Berry continued, "We really emphasize to our people the importance of communication, of following up, of staying in touch with the customer at all phases, well after the last panel is laid.

"Sometimes customer satisfaction means mobilizing a crew on short notice to remediate an emergency situation. Thankfully that does not happen very often, but when it does, we're committed to responding and doing the right thing, and we have the 'quick strike' capability to do so," Berry commented.

A-Lert works on a variety of project types. Approximately 35% of its projects are reroof and retrofits. Another 25% are institutional while commercial/industrial and self-storage projects each account for 20% of the firm's project types. Approximately 70% of the firm's business is bid/spec with the other 30% being design/build.

"While A-Lert Roof Systems is a metal roofing contractor," Berry said, "I think it's worth noting that our Centurion organization offers other significant metal construction experience in such areas as architectural metal canopies and walkway covers, fascia systems, wall panel systems, soffit systems, and aluminum composite materials. A-Lert Roof Systems does a significant amount of new construction and architectural applications, but is primarily known for retrofit roof projects. That's our real bread and butter.

"We feel we are unique in that we are a 'one-stop shop' for standing seam metal roof solutions," he continued. "We use our own people to design and fabricate a project and our own field crew to install them. We think that is important and very few retrofit metal roofing companies can offer that type of turnkey capability. Another hallmark of that capability is the onsite, portable rollforming system we've been using for many years, which allows us to produce custom length, lap-free panels. Our customers really like this because it reduces the opportunity for water infiltration and we believe it produces a better looking, quality product."

Some clients need more information about metal roofing. When approaching clients with the use of metal construction products, the company emphasizes advantages. Berry explained, "We are big proponents of metal roof solutions and metal construction products in general, because of their durability, longevity and long-term value. We emphasize those features at every turn, at client presentations, in marketing pieces, on our website and so on."

The company's website, alertroofsystems.com, allows the company to reach prospective clients. Berry explained, "We are starting to see increased traffic on our site, especially following the recent devastation that's been occurring in Florida and the south. The website gives an

opportunity to see sample project photos, review the major features of our roof system and become familiar with the strengths of our corporate parent, Centurion Ind. Inc."

A-Lert uses other methods to generate business as well. Berry said, "We encourage our sales team to get involved in their communities, to develop relationships with contractors and to be proactive to network with various associations and potential customers. While we're taking active steps to do more web-based marketing and other creative things, we still feel our best sales tool is to just keep putting out a quality product and quality service and let that reputation sell itself."

Another distinctive quality about the firm is its in-house safety department and an OSHA-approved system of training. Berry stated, "Our experience and performance sort of speak for itself, but we're very proud of our safety record, and are committed to a safe workplace as a good business practice.

"We also invest in our key managers through an in-house training program we call Centurion University, or CU," he continued. "CU provides intensive training in a variety of areas, such as project management, customer service, liability issues, human resource issues, contract law and a lot more. But at its heart, CU is focused on developing stronger leaders."

Berry noted other training takes place as well. "We've been conducting supervisor training in some of the more critical human resource areas, and we're really focusing on taking this to another level. We want to equip all our supervisors, new or veteran, to be able to lead people and manage projects to the best of their ability."

A-Lert is expecting a 25% sales increase in the next 12 months. Berry commented, "Overall, we're excited about the market and the opportunities we see, and we're committing more resources to it." The firm has 61 contracts completed for 2004 with over 30 more projects to begin before the end of the year. Perhaps, part of this expected increase could be attributed to a possible upcoming relocation.

Berry stated, "We are currently evaluating a move to expand and relocate our Texas facility, which we're pretty excited about. This will really improve our capacity to serve our customers by allowing us to carry more inventory and to enhance our manufacturing operations. As part of that, we're also evaluating additional equipment that will allow us to exert more control over the manufacturing process and to meet the needs of unique projects and unique designs."

The distinction of being the number one roofer has the company congratulating its employees. "We just consider it a great honor to be recognized like this by MCN and we appreciate the opportunity to share our story," Berry commented. "Of course, any time success comes your way you have to look to the contributions of those who have helped to make that happen. In the final analysis, people truly do make the difference and we've been very blessed to have a team of such good people in our employees, as well as some really solid relationships with our customers, suppliers and others. We're grateful for those relationships and for the trust people have placed in us and we are committed to continue earning that trust."

Some recent A-Lert projects follow:

Brooks County ISD, Falfurrias, TX: The 28,000 sq. ft. junior high school gymnasium has a barrel roof and varying roof slopes. A-Lert used 16"-wide, 24-gauge radius panels with a ridge cap. The continuous roof panels cover the ridge to the eave with no overlaps.

Many Elementary, Many, LA: The uniquely-shaped elementary school is 40,000 sq. ft. The building consists of multiple hexagon-shaped areas with multiple directions of existing roof slopes. The eave height was 20' and the new roof has a 4:12 slope.

Shreveport National Guard Armory, Shreveport, LA: A-Lert installed a complete retrofit roof over this 31,840 sq. ft. armory and basketball court. The 4:12 slope roof also features vinyl-faced insulation installed over new roof purlins.

Jackson Barracks Building #35, Jackson, LA: The existing building had a shingled mansard that determined the 5:12 roof slope of the 16,390 sq. ft. project. The previous roof had been flat tar and gravel membrane. The new roof slope was created with light-gauge metal red iron framing. New roof insulation consisted of 3", R-10 vinyl backed insulation over the new purlins and 8", R-25 fiberglass batt insulation placed on the existing roof deck.

Robert G. Cole High School, San Antonio, TX: The 80,000 sq. ft. high school has a 4:12 retrofit roof with decorative radius panels at the front entrance.

Bayard Elementary School, Bayard, NE: A-Lert installed a retrofit roof for the 36,200 sq. ft. elementary school building.

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