

Top Metal Roofer: A-Lert Grows With Strong Leaders

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This year, MCN's Top Metal Roofer contest was counted by square footage and steel tonnage. This new calculation led to two winners of the contest. Advanced Roofing and Sheetmetal took first in terms of square footage and A-Lert Roof Systems, who also won the title of Top Metal Roofer last year, ranked first in tonnage.

Founded in 1975, A-Lert Roof Systems, a division of Centurion Industries Inc., serves the south central, southeast and mid-west United States. Headquartered in New Braunfels, TX, the metal roofing contractor has another location in Erie, KS. This year A-Lert Roof Systems took top honors in the roofing contest purchasing 1,499.38 tons of metal roofing. In 2003, the company used 1,736.53 tons. The company estimates that 30% of its projects are design/build and 70% are bid/spec. Of those, 20% are commercial/industrial, 25% are institutional, 35% are re-roof/retrofit and 20% are self-storage.

Berry noted, "A-Lert Roof Systems is a part of a family of construction-related enterprises owned by Centurion Industries Inc. Centurion's beginnings have roots from the rural, southeast Kansas region. Having already established themselves in the metal canopy and heavy industrial construction industries, in the mid '80s Centurion decided to venture into the standing seam metal roof business because of the tremendous market potential it seemed to have over traditional roof solutions. That turned out to be a well timed decision and a great addition to their already successful operations. 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."

A-Lert's parent company, the Centurion organization, offers architectural metal canopies and walkway covers, fascia systems, wall panel systems, soffit systems and aluminum composite materials. Berry stated, "While we do a significant amount of new construction and architectural applications what we do better than anyone are retrofit roof projects. That's our real bread and butter and that's one of our foremost areas of expertise.

"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 steadily grown into a multidivisional corporation providing diversified metal fabrication and industrial construction services throughout the U.S. That growth has included a much greater 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. And finally, 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."

A-Lert takes training and safety very seriously for each and every employee. Berry said, "Clearly the way we bring out the best in our employees is for the leadership to model what they expect in the form of work ethic, conduct and relationships. What separates A-Lert from the norm is we believe in formal training from top to bottom. Every employee is critical to our mission and without being properly equipped, we know we cannot successfully reach our growth objectives.

Training is one of our critical commitments."

A-Lert also has its own, in-house safety department, and a well-developed, OSHA- approved system of training. Berry noted, "Our experience sort of speaks for itself, but we're very proud of our safety record, and are committed to a safe workplace as a good business practice."

The company also invests in its key managers through a corporate in-house training program called Centurion University, or CU. Although the training is focused on developing stronger leaders, CU also provides intensive training in a variety of areas, such as project management, customer service, liability issues, human resource issues, contract law and more.

Berry explained, "While we conduct supervisor training in some of the more critical human resource areas, 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, like many successful companies, gives its customers good value and great service and works very hard at meeting those goals. Berry said, "I'd have to say that the reason we've been so successful is our commitment to our core values. 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 core values and to being known for doing the right thing, the first time, not just the expedient thing. To that end, we incorporate our core values (integrity, employees, partnerships, unrelenting customer service) in every aspect of our operation. We consider integrity to be the mother of all our core values and are totally committed to being known as a company of integrity. 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. And finally, no successful venture is built without some mention of good old fashioned hard work."

Keeping customer's happy means giving them a product they want that fits their needs. This may be why the company estimates that 35% of its business is from repeat customer and 30% comes from referrals. Berry said, "We are big proponents of metal roof solutions, and metal construction products in general, because of their durability, longevity and long-term value compared to traditional building materials. So we emphasize those features at every turn, at client presentations, in marketing collateral, on our website and so on. An additional benefit that continues to become a critical factor is the energy savings potential.

"We feel we are unique in that we are a 'one-stop-shop' for standing seam metal roof solutions. We use our own people to design and fabricate the project, and our own field crews to install them. We think that's important, and 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 now 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, better quality product."

Berry explained, "Our core values are the hallmark of our company and the foundation on which we have built our customer base. We believe customer satisfaction begins with a quality product. That means doing things right, the first time, every time. 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, must come first. But it certainly doesn't end there. We really emphasize to our people the importance of communication, of following up, of staying in touch with the customer at all phases, even well after the last panel is laid. Our service and our people are our source of competitive advantage.

"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."

How does the company attract new customers? The company has a website, alertroofsystems.com. Berry noted, "The website is a great marketing tool to showcase our products and services. However, we know that it is through personal contact that leads prospective customers to that website. The website gives an opportunity to see project photos, review the major features of our roof system, and become more familiar with the strengths provided by our corporate parent."

He continued, "We have an extensive marketing plan which works media opportunities, including advertising, promotions, event marketing and membership in various organizations. Our key tool is the sales representatives and the relationships they build with our customers. Additionally, nothing replaces performing what we say we are going to do. To be number one, you have to perform to that standard. Talk is cheap, but performance speaks volumes."

A-Lert is currently making it possible to service more customers. Berry noted, "We have just moved to our new location in New Braunfels, TX. We worked closely with the New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce in securing our new 48,000 sq. ft. facility. This will really improve our capacity to serve our customers by allowing us to carry more inventory and to enhance our manufacturing operations. We are adding 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 new facility will provide us with the opportunity to showcase our products in actual use on the 10-acre site."

To date, the company has 71 contracts to be completed for 2005, with a backlog of over 40. The company expects sales to increase by 25% over the next year.

Berry explained further, "Since we are not limited geographically, we're excited about the market and the opportunities we see, and we're committing more resources to it. We have expanded the number of crews we have available, increased the number of products we manufacture, as well as dramatically increasing our presence in new markets. Yes indeed, we envision significant growth both within the company as well as in the industry."

Berry concluded, "It was a great honor to be recognized #1 by MCN in 2004. To continue in that position for 2005 is an even greater honor. We must share the spotlight with those who have helped make us number one: our customers. 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."

A list of project recently completed by A-Lert follows:

Charles Page High School, Standing Springs, OK:



A-Lert provided a long-term solution to retrofitting this metal roof, without changing the shape of the school buildings, with a 41,860 sq. ft. roof.

Malakoff High School, Malakoff, TX:



The Malakoff project consisted of a 93,360 sq. ft. retrofit job that is an example of the impact a

new standing seam metal roof can make on an existing structure.

Pensacola NAS, Pensacola, FL:



Hurricanes have devastated the Gulf Coast over the past two years and Naval Air Station Pensacola was one of the victims. Building 3460 is a 12-acre training facility that received extensive damage. A-Lert, in conjunction with Broadmoor Construction, completed the 69,560 sq. ft. of repair one month ahead of schedule and has received no call backs even after the building endured subsequent hurricanes. According to A-Lert, the customer is very pleased with the results.

Booker ISD, Booker, TX:



The 93,990 sq. ft. Booker ISD retrofit project features a dramatic change in appearance. A-Lert utilized a new product, Alpolic, to construct the new mascot sign for the school.

Jefferson County Hospital, Waurika, OK:



Function and beauty were imperative to the Jefferson County Hospital project. Though technically difficult to install, the results were worth the work. Both the architect and the hospital administrator were pleased with the results.

Cimarron High School, Cimarron, OK:



The 42,933 sq. ft. retrofit standing seam metal roof changed the appearance of the Cimarron High School. A-Lert worked in partnership with architect John Buckley, who was pleased with the results.

Balko High School, Balko, OK:



The 35,000 sq. ft. Balko High School was another successful A-Lert project. A-Lert used unique framework to provide a lightweight, durable and attractive standing seam metal roof.