

CONEXPO, the world's 3rd largest construction equipment exhibition, held in Las Vegas in March, provided Volvo with the first, major, public gathering at which to show its latest pipelayers.

The PL4608, with its tipping capacity of 80 t, was one of many innovative, new products on display on the stand itself, and it certainly attracted a lot of attention.

A design consideration for these machines was not only the ability to convert them to a standard excavator configuration – a process that can be achieved in just a few hours – when not in use for pipe laying, but also their ability to provide a heavy lift capability in a number of different applications. One particular application, and of interest to more than one customer seeing these machines for the first time, was to deal with railway derailments, of which there are hundreds each week within the US alone.

When railway cars derail, for whatever reason, a Volvo pipelayer can be moved in quickly. The crawler excavator manoeuvrability and massive lift capability – up to 150 t tipping capacity for the largest model, PL7015 – and their ability to lift in any position of the 360° upper structure swing, provide a much more versatile solution to side boom pipelayers and cranes that have traditionally performed this work.

The PL4611 – 110 t tipping capacity – and PL7015, the largest pipelayer ever built – were also on display in Las Vegas at Volvo's Diamond Nights event, alongside other Volvo products, for almost 4000 customers especially invited for the occasion.

The full range of five models has been well considered to provide what the customers need, depending on the project. Fixed undercarriage widths for the two smaller models, PL2102 and PL2904, maximise excavator convertibility while ensuring no issues with machine transportation. The intermediate model PL4608 features a hydraulically variable undercarriage, ensuring a highly stable working platform on site, but which can be narrowed for transportation purposes. A hydraulic elevating cab is featured on all three of these models. This feature ensures optimum operator visibility in the raised position while reducing to standard excavator cab height for transport.

On the two largest models, PL4611 and PL7015, a special purpose lower frame and track frame system provides a highly stable, nearly square working platform, optimising stability throughout the full 360° swing and on grade conditions up to 35°. The heavy weight of the lower frame and counterweighted track frames lower the machine's centre of gravity. This also minimises stresses on the upper frame and swing bearing.

On the two largest models, the track frames are hydraulically pinned to the lower frame for ease of removal. These two models can effectively self-

disassemble their side frames and rear counterweights to reduce the overall machine size to roadable weights and width, and achievable in approximately one hour. Once onsite, the process is simply reversed. ●●



Volvo pipelayer innovation on public display at CONEXPO.



A special purpose lower frame and track frame system on the larger models provides a nearly square working platform, optimising stability: 5.5 m wide for the PL4611, 7.1 m for the PL7015.