



BLUE DEVIL SHOWS VERSATILITY IN IDAHO

Zato's twin-shaft shredder has allowed United Metals Recycling to increase its processing capacity not just for ferrous scrap but also tires.

In business since 1972, United Metals Recycling in Caldwell, Idaho, has used a number of different types of shredding equipment for processing ferrous scrap, including single- and dual-shaft models, mobile shredders and wire chopping lines.

But, according to owner and CEO Brett Ekart, adding a Zato Blue Devil twin-shaft shredder to the 10-acre yard in November 2024 has helped the company process more material and diversify its offerings to customers.

For ferrous material, United uses the Blue Devil to shred skeleton plate and low-residual scrap to make busheling or prime grade material for domestic steel mills.

Uniquely, however, the shredder has given the company the ability to shred oversized tires as it continues to build out its tire recycling operation.

Between the metal and various types of tires the yard accepts, including those found on agricultural equipment or large wheel loaders in addition to more traditional cars and trucks, Ekart says the Blue Devil has increased the company's processing capacity considerably.

"A lot of people in the tire recycling industry use mobile shears to right-size tires down," Ekart says. "Because of us having the Zato and having the capacity—it can far out-produce what we can purchase on the low-residual prime grade material and the skeletons—we have the capacity, and we can use it to shred those oversized tires. It's been great for that."

Ekart says that while the Caldwell yard isn't necessarily a high-volume processing site, the Blue Devil has given it room for growth on the tire and the scrap sides.

United entered the tire recycling space in 2021. Between the company's nine yards throughout Idaho and Oregon, the company collects as many as 2,000 tons of tires per month.

"We've always been able to think outside the box in terms of what tools are out there that can be multi-purpose for us so we can get the most bang for our buck," he says, "because we don't necessarily have the volume to shred just low-residual and skeletons scrap. But, if we combine that scrap processing with our need for downsizing oversized tires, then all of a sudden [the Blue Devil] makes sense for us."

While Italy-based Zato's shredder has boosted United's capacity, its service also has made a big impression. Ekart notes that the machine had a short lead time from purchase, and once it arrived on-site in November of last year, it was shredding material within days.

The Blue Devil has performed as advertised.

"It's efficient and it's low-maintenance," Ekart says. "I want to buy a piece of equipment that's going to last me

15, 20 years, and I'm pretty hopeful this will do that and be a good piece of the puzzle for us."

When considering the purchase, Ekart says, "Everybody I talked to that owned one seemed very happy with it. That's always reassuring when you're talking to other people in the industry who own that piece of equipment."

He recalls that Zato also took a customer-centric approach to its dealings. Though the company is based in Italy, Zato also provides parts and service from its U.S. office in Hebron, Kentucky.

"They've been great," he says. "If they've said it, they've done it. You can sign all the contracts in the world, but if people don't do what they say they're going to do, that contract doesn't matter. I'm a big believer that if you say it, you do it, and you stand behind your stuff. They've stood behind their machine from the very beginning."

"You're always going to have pain points with equipment. That's the nature of the beast of what we do. We process metal on metal all day long, so you're going to have issues. It's not if, it's when. But when you do have issues, are the people who sold you the machine going to stand behind it or are they going to move on to the next sale? One thing I've really appreciated about Zato is they've stood behind the shredder, every nut and bolt."

Another benefit of the Blue Devil is its ability to serve

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— Brett Ekart

as a backup option at the yard if other equipment goes down. Ekart says that if his shear needs maintenance, for example, he can run material through the shredder.

"We're never without the ability to process scrap," he says. "The Zato can, by far, process more material than we can buy, and that extra capacity gives us a nice built-in backup for if our traditional guillotine shears go down."

As Ekart points out, downtime is a killer in the scrap processing industry.

"The less time you're down, that means you're able to get parts, service or an answer to a question, [and] that all matters because every day is an expensive day if you can't run," he says. "Extrapolate that over a stretch of time, and whatever money you thought you were making you could be losing in downtime. You want to make sure you have a company that stands behind their equipment and their ability to service it, which includes parts and people. With Zato, you can get parts and you can get people to help you out."

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