



PGH Excavating Depends on Kenworth Vocational Trucks To Move Business Forward

ENUMCLAW, Wash. – For Chris and Nick Thornhill, owners of PGH Excavating, moving dirt runs deep in their DNA. By watching their father own and operate a successful hauling business that served excavating companies, the two brothers learned how the industry worked at an early age.



Chris Thornhill of PGH Excavating and Kenworth T880S Dump



“When my brother Nick and I each turned 18, we went to work for our dad,” said Chris Thornhill. “I drove a Kenworth dump truck and delivered material to backfill jobsites. My brother helped contractors grade jobsites to create level surfaces. We learned so much through the years, we decided to start our own company.”

In 2007, Chris and Nick founded PGH Excavating. Before the Enumclaw-based company could haul its first load of dirt, it needed to acquire heavy equipment, as well as a few trucks and trailers. Chris and Nick’s first purchase was a Kenworth long-hood from their father.

“From the days of operating a Kenworth truck myself, I knew first-hand that a Kenworth would run for years,” said Thornhill. “My dad was a Kenworth customer for more than 40 years and he was keen on running equipment that would be reliable, while at the same time, offer drivers trucks they would be proud to drive.”



From left, Kenworth W990 and two Kenworth T880S models

Since that first purchase, the company has steadily grown its fleet to include 15 heavy-duty trucks, primarily a mix of Kenworth long hoods and vocational models. The company operates two Kenworth T880s and two T880S models equipped with PACCAR MX-13 engines rated at 510 hp. The company also has a W990, Kenworth’s new long-hood model.

“Kenworths have always been reliable. The performance we’re getting from our T880s is especially high,” said Thornhill. “In the past four years, our T880s have only missed two days of work. That speaks volumes to the quality of the PACCAR MX-13 engine. We’re a dependable company; minimal downtime keeps our drivers on the road, delivering for our customers and making money. It’s a win for us across the board, so we plan on adding more Kenworth T880S models with MX-13 engines.”

PGH Excavating fitted one T880 and one T880S with super solo dump bodies, capable of hauling 25 tons. The other T880 and T880S are equipped with Sturdy-Weld dump bodies that can haul up to 17 tons.

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Kenworth T880S Dumps

The company’s T880s and T880S trucks deliver material to jobsites that require extra material for grading, or they can take excess straight to the dump site. PGH Excavating offers grading services at the locations where it removes material and can also deliver grading product fresh from one site to another.

“We’ll often drive up to 90 miles through the congested city streets in and around Seattle, so it’s important to us to maximize each payload,” said Thornhill. “Some jobsites will take a week or less to clear and grade. Others, like massive neighborhood developments, can take more than a decade. We’ll typically send our super solo trucks to areas with heavy traffic, so we don’t have to make as many runs to that area. The PACCAR MX-13 engine gives our trucks plenty of power even with the added weight.”



Kenworth T880S



Kenworth W990

To transport the company’s excavating equipment to and from jobsites, PGH Excavating relies on their new W990 purchased through Papé Kenworth Northwest – SeaTac. So far, the truck has surpassed all expectations.

“When the W990 first became available, we wanted to be one of the first companies to own one,” said Thornhill. “We did our research and placed an order with Ray Lute, salesman at Papé Kenworth Northwest, who worked with our dad for a number of years. Since we began operating the W990 earlier this year, it’s been performing flawlessly.”



Kenworth W990

The Kenworth W990 is equipped with a 605 hp engine and an 18-speed Eaton Fuller manual transmission. The W990 pulls a 5-axle lowboy trailer; the company expects it will put on 60,000 miles in its first full year of operation.

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“We get plenty of comments on how clean and beautiful our trucks look, but the W990 in particular, has received a lot of attention,” said Thornhill. “I’ve always been a fan of the traditional long-hood. As we phase out some of our older rigs, the W990 will replace them.”



Kenworth W990

High driver turnover can sometimes be an issue for fleets in the trucking industry. For PGH Excavating, driver retention has never been an issue.

“Many of our drivers have been with us from the very beginning,” said Thornhill. “Our driver retention is well above the industry average, thanks in large part, to the equipment we own. Our drivers really enjoy the enhanced comfort provided by the wide Kenworth cabs, as well as the enhanced visibility.”

Thornhill will be the first to admit that PGH Excavating doesn’t drum up new business from the looks of its excavation equipment. Its Kenworth trucks, however, are a different matter.



“People recognize us for the Kenworth trucks we have on the road,” said Thornhill. “They are a great marketing tool for us, and help us establish the image we want to portray to potential customers. We strive to put the best trucks on the road, and Kenworth continues to be that truck.”

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