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# THINK BIG

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## The Safety Issue

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# Guardian Traffic Services Ltd.

Company keeps western Canadian roadways safe with innovative products, expert service

By Heather Hudson



**C**onstruction roadway safety has come a long way from the early days when a few signs and a row of pylons were workers' only protection.

That's due in no small part to Canadian companies like the ATS Traffic Group. This long-time company with humble roots is committed to cutting-edge safety solutions across the country.

"Our company has been building good relationships with contractors and municipalities in all of our divisions since it was Alberta Traffic Supply in the 1960s," says George Jakeman, general manager of Guardian Traffic Services Ltd. in Regina, a division of the ATS Traffic Group.

"Word of mouth and exceptional service helps us get repeat and new business on road construction jobs. When it comes to traffic control set-ups, our company is usually the first one on-site and the last to leave."

## Where it all began

The ATS Traffic Group got its start in the 1960s with a barricade rental service, operated from owner Lorne Hooper's garage. Since then, the business has grown to become Western Canada's largest traffic sign manufacturer and traffic control specialist for municipal, provincial and federal government agencies.

Today, they have eight offices from British Columbia to Manitoba specializing in traffic safety equipment sales, installation and rentals. Various divisions specialize in different products and services with the engineering services division, located in Calgary, Alta., serving all branches.

## Big presence in Saskatchewan

In Saskatchewan, Jakeman heads up the Regina office with 14 employees. A Saskatoon office employs six staff members and both locations are expecting to take on new staff in the near future.

"Rental and service supply is our main focus in Saskatchewan. We have a north and south office in Saskatchewan that deal with municipal and highway projects," explains Jakeman.

Recently, the City of Saskatoon has begun to allow contractors to take more responsibility for signage and lane closures on municipal projects, which has meant more opportunities for Guardian Traffic Services. Jakeman says sales and rentals are brisk and they call on their engineering division to help design lane closures for bigger projects.

## Major projects

Guardian Traffic Services has been involved in a number of big construction jobs in Saskatoon, including supplying traffic safety products for the Saskatoon Circle Drive South Bridge last year.

"We had different divisions consult on that project, installing and supplying overhead guide signage. And we provided a lot of rental equipment to get it started when we first started to close the road off," says Jakeman.

Handling the traffic safety for bridge work can be complex. Jakeman explains that closing a lane involves two to four people, two to three trucks and trailer equipment like message boards, arrow boards and all the signs and devices required to close the lane.

"A lot of that is based on traffic control manuals we draw up specific to the job," he notes.

Other recent bridge projects include the Lewvan Drive Bridge and Pinkie Road Bridge, both over Highway 1 in Regina.

"We expect that's going to be a busy spot for us with the additional overpass construction that will be necessary to allow large transport access to the hub," he says.

"We do a lot of creating our own opportunities by building relationships. Contractors keep us in the loop of what's going on in the province through contact with our rental/sales service representatives. To provide our customers with quality products and service we make it happen instead of waiting for it to happen."

Another upcoming big project is the Wings for Life World Run on May 4 in Saskatoon, which requires extensive planning. The engineering division has been working on design while Jakeman's division expects to take care of mobilization and deployment before and during the big event.

## Qualifying factors

While some of the larger construction companies have traffic safety-certified staff members, many do not, which is why Guardian Traffic Services and the other divisions have such a full roster.

In each province, all highway projects have similar requirements to have a traffic accommodations supervisor on-site. That person must have taken a certification course every five years. Municipal work requires the certification as well.

"We often work as a subcontractor to contractors when they work with municipalities. We're specialized in traffic safety and really do go the extra mile to assure everything is done right."

Even on the jobs that are handled by the contractors on their own, Guardian Traffic Services is often called on to sell or rent equipment or even just come out and set up lane closures.

## New technology

Jakeman relishes his role in bringing innovative safety products that haven't been seen in the province, including being the first to bring solar-powered message boards.

"One of the best devices we brought to the province is the impact recovery system (IRS). It's a reflective, spring-loaded portable device used to separate traffic in a two-way lane closure. It's more effective and durable than pylons that often get driven over, especially at night," he says.

Other innovations include energy absorption and crash attenuation products as well as the Road Quake Rumble Strip System.



GEORGE JAKEMAN

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– George Jakeman, General Manager,  
Guardian Traffic Services Ltd.

## SHCA's Spring Meeting and AGM

ATS Traffic Group's Chief Engineer, Thorne Forest, presented an education session on the engineering services and traffic plan designs at SHCA's Spring Meeting and AGM, held April 8–9 in Regina. As well, a representative from Plastic Safety Systems gave a presentation on properly installing and using the RoadQuake product, a temporary rumble strip system.

“There were questions from a lot of clients last year, so we need to educate them a bit more on how to install, implement and use certain products better,” says Jakeman.

## Looking ahead

As has always been the case for Guardian Traffic Services, innovation and investment in what makes them successful is on the horizon.

“We want to make sure that we continue to grow. We'll be hiring more personnel and will continue to make improvements to our operations to make sure it runs as efficiently as possible,” Jakeman explains.

“And we're always investing in innovative ideas. We're looking closely at what traffic control devices are coming into the world-wide market and what we can bring to the province to make our highways safer.” 📍



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