

THE KINETIC ENERGY OF KUNSELMAN ELECTRIC

"Small" Packs a Lot of Power for this Northwest Pennsylvania Contractor

by Steve Freeman



Rick Kunselman, Owner of Kunselman Electric Inc., prepares to head to an emergency service call.

Rick Kunselman energizes any building that he and his company enter—be it a house, a candy store or even a fortress.

His company, Kunselman Electric Inc., has been bringing energy to residences, offices, factories and businesses in the state's northwest corner for nearly 35 years. His firm, based in Harrisville, Pa., north of Pittsburgh, provides full-service electrical contracting for new construction, renovations, tenant improvements, service upgrades, exterior, interior and landscape lighting, retrofits and service installations.

"From design to finish, our experienced estimators, project managers and technicians provide the expertise to ensure an electrical project is completed on time, on budget and up to code," Kunselman says. Recent projects include a candy store and a fortress.

The George J. Howe Co. of Grove City, Pa., called on Kunselman to upgrade lighting in an old warehouse where it made and housed its beloved line of tasty candy, coffee and nuts. The company's leadership wanted more than just new lighting—they wanted energy-efficient lighting to reverse a historically high electric bill for the plant. Kunselman recommended and ultimately installed efficient and energy-saving LED lights. The switch from 300 traditional light fixtures to 200 LED fixtures wound up reducing the electricity bill by a third.

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Tim Kilian of Kunselman Electric Inc. installs parallel runs of rigid conduit for a new feed of 2,400-volt power to a new area of Iron Mountain in Boyers, Pa.



As part of the company's community service efforts, Kunselman Electric Inc.'s Colin Morris installs 400-amp electrical circuits in a new church building in Slippery Rock, Pa.

The fortress that Kunselman's firm served is Iron Mountain, Boyers, Pa. Kunselman's "ready, willing and able" approach to service calls has resulted in a 17-year relationship. His team has installed new services, run electricity to new customers' suites, installed conduits for lighting, laid fiber/data cables and performed other services for the high-security subterranean site that encompasses 1.8 million square feet.

"It's an underground city, and a key customer," Kunselman says. "We're pleased to be called by them frequently."

SEEING THE LIGHT

Electricity, in many ways, is the "first among equals" when it comes to the big three of MEP (mechanical, electrical and plumbing) and other utility additions to any structure. Occupants wouldn't do without any of them for very long, but electricity lights our desks, powers our machines and computers, cools and heats our environment, runs our aquariums, secures the premises, ensures our constant communications, entertains us and feeds us.

Recognizing this, Kunselman has shaped his company to be diverse and scalable to handle large or small, complex or simple jobs. One of his crews might check parking lot lighting one day and on the next day, test and activate fiber optic cable.

The company's services extend from residential to commercial to industrial. Kunselman's 14 employees are experienced and well trained. He instills in them the same standards he embraces: personal attention to quality, professionalism and skill.

He sees great value in the efficiency and scalability of "small."

"Small to me means you do things well. Our overhead and costs are lower, compared to bigger companies," he says.

Aspiring to be a "one-stop shop," the company he oversees does project estimations, dispatches project supervisors to job sites and takes ongoing training and certification seriously.

"Small" can often be misunderstood. Kunselman thinks small even while tackling big jobs, and the results earn the company kudos.

Recently, Kunselman's team provided extensive electrical installation at Safe Harbor Behavioral Health in Erie, Pa., as part of a major improvements program when the facility joined the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center network. Kunselman's team dug trenches from the main service area to the new building and ran high-voltage lines, put up panels and installed and tested lighting.



At Iron Mountain, a fortress-like underground data security and storage facility, a Kunselman Electric Inc. worker prepares to drop multiple fiber optic inner ducts down a bore hole entering the complex for future expansion efforts.



Work at the new Safe Harbor Behavioral Health center in Erie, Pa., involved installing the electrical underground duct bank for the new two-story building.

"We did everything and they just turned the light switches on," Kunselman says.

POSITIVE CHARGE

From the start, Kunselman yearned to run an electrical company his way and do it "right." Early in his career, he was hired by an electrical contractor who operated under the notion that a businessman could not be both successful and "good and honest," a philosophy Kunselman didn't embrace.

"I believe that if you set a fair price and do the job well, you'll always find work," Kunselman says. And he did, starting his own business in 1984 and "doing it right" ever since.

Similar to the business axiom that being great is akin to doing what's right, Kunselman easily demonstrates his company's philosophy by taking on apprentices to learn the trade, and slashing the bill for a house call for senior citizens who offer up a batch of delicious chocolate chip cookies or an apple pie in the process.

When it comes to personal contributions that advance others in his field of expertise, Kunselman's commitment to future generations is in line with the trade's philosophy. Most electricians gain their skills from a mix of tech school and on-the-job training. A future electrician must come up the ranks by meeting standards and achieving skills as an apprentice and then journeyman before earning required certification through credentials set by the Associated Builders and Contractors and the state of Pennsylvania.

"I'm big on mentoring because I was mentored," Kunselman says. "I'm committed to instill good workmanship in the next generation. No matter what I do, it's always important."

In his groundbreaking book "Good to Great," author James Collins admonished the business world with similar words: "Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice."

Such service illustrates the company's motto: "Professionalism with Pride." 🐾

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