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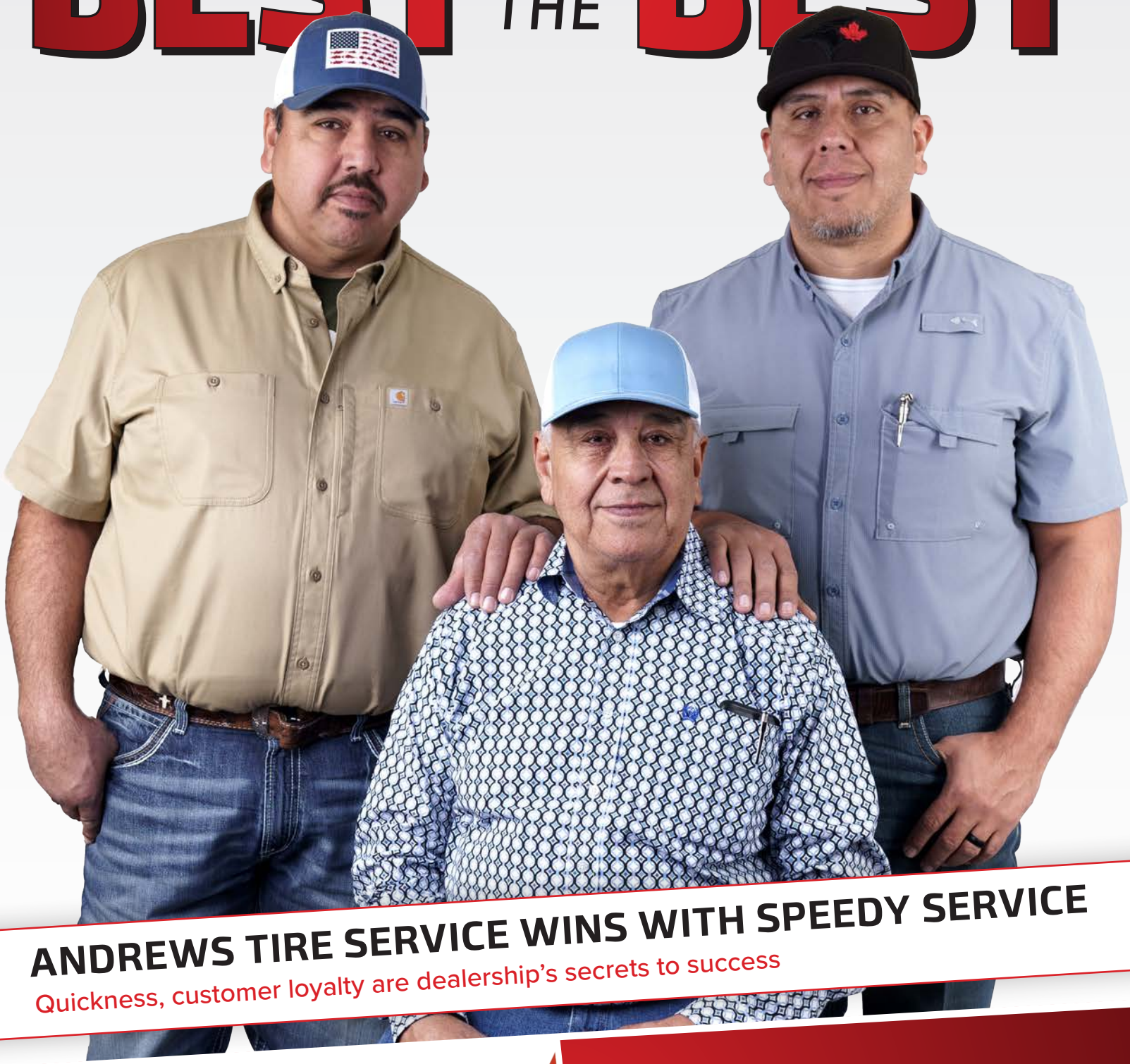

ANDREWS TIRE SERVICE WINS WITH SPEEDY SERVICE

Quickness, customer loyalty are dealership's secrets to success

MR. TIRE BIG 3 TIRE

COMMERCIAL TIRE DEALER OF THE YEAR

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MR TIRE BIG 3 TIRE

COMMERCIAL TIRE DEALER OF THE YEAR

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Congratulations to Nate Bustamante, Victor Bustamante and Nate Bustamante Sr. and the entire Andrews Tire of Andrews, Texas family on your selection as the winner of the 2023 Mr. Tire / Big 3 Tire Commercial Tire Dealer of the Year!

As an ideal representative of our industry, you are being presented with this award, which is sponsored and supported by Roadmaster Tire. You and your team were selected for this recognition based on several notable factors: Your dedication to providing a fair deal to everyone, your pledge to make sure every customer has an enjoyable experience, and your trustworthy and reliable service. Congratulations to everyone at Andrews Tire on behalf of everyone at K&M Tire.

The hard work and dedication by you and your team is appreciated and noticed. Considering the many great dealers within the Mr. Tire and Big 3 Tire programs, choosing a winner for the 2023 Mr. Tire / Big 3 Tire Commercial Tire Dealer of the Year was a difficult decision. Your team's pursuit of excellence helped propel you to the lead.

We are honored to be doing business with such an exceptional family-owned and operated company! Andrews Tire of Andrews, Texas you are among the Best of the Best, and are worthy of the honor of being the 2023 Mr. Tire / Big 3 Tire Commercial Tire Dealer of the Year!

Sincerely,



Ken Langhals
CEO
K&M Tire, Inc.



Cheryl Gossard
President
K&M Tire, Inc.

K&M TIRE

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Andrews Tire Service was founded by Victor Bustamante, left, his brother Nate Bustamante Jr., right, and their father, Nate Bustamante Sr., center.

ANDREWS TIRE SERVICE WINS WITH

Speedy SERVICE

Quickness, customer loyalty are dealership's secrets to success

By Joy Kopcha

Photos By Liliana Flores

When brothers Victor Bustamante and Nate Bustamante Jr. opened the doors of Andrews Tire Service Inc. in April 2000, they were just 25 and 19 years old, respectively. Victor, the older of the two, had spent the previous eight years selling and servicing tires at another local shop when he and Nate decided to give their own business a try.

But it wasn't easy.

"We went to the bank and asked for a loan and they denied us because we were too young," says Nate.

They didn't give up. Instead, "we brought in the big guns," Nate says now with a laugh. With their dad's credit backing, the bank took another look.

Ultimately, the two brothers were awarded a $25,000 start-up loan from the Small Business Administration.

That money helped them rent a small shop in Andrews, Texas, and the brothers got to work. Victor's customers who had encouraged him to go out on his own did as they had promised and started ordering tires from the brothers and calling them for tire service.

But after a couple of months, the Bustamantes only had enough money in the bank for two more paychecks. "After that, if we didn't get any more money that people owed us, we were going to have to shut down and go work somewhere else," says Nate

That Friday, as if right on cue, the first customer payments arrived.

Since then, Andrews Tire has grown from that scrappy, two-person business into a company with customers scattered across the plains of west Texas and eastern New Mexico. The busy dealership's service territory stretches 100 miles beyond its hometown of Andrews.

The business is made up of a team of 12 employees. The Bustamantes operate two service trucks and regularly service a list of 100-plus commercial customers. And they're expanding their retail business.

But commercial tires have been an important part of Andrews Tire since day one and the Bustamante brothers insist that will continue. That focus has earned them the 2023 Mr. Tire/Big 3 Commercial Tire Dealer of the Year Award.

OUTLASTING THE COMPETITION

A year after Andrews Tire opened its doors, the company welcomed its third employee — Nate Bustamante Sr. The "big gun" who helped his sons get started left his job in the oilfields of west Texas to work full-time in their dealership. (He's since retired, but remains an equal owner.)

Those early years were rough, but over time the brothers established Andrews Tire as a reliable, fast and fair business.

"In the beginning, it was just me and my brother and we did everything," says Nate. "We were answering phones, going out on service calls, changing oil and changing tires."

Victor remembers when another longtime tire dealer cautioned him that Andrews Tire likely wouldn't survive. There were four other tire dealerships in Andrews at that time and the other dealer was blunt: "There's not enough work out here."

But the Bustamante brothers persisted. And as it turned out, the tire dealer who issued the warning to them eventually closed his doors. Within 10 years, all four local competitors went out of business.

Andrews Tire eventually bought the shop it initially leased, but by 2018 the business had outgrown it. That year the company moved to an 8,000 square-foot space on the outskirts of Andrews, a city of about 18,000 people and the lone incorporated city in Andrews County.

Located on a truck route, the new five-bay service center is easier for trucks to maneuver in and out of as they crisscross the plains south of the Texas Panhandle.

OIL LEADS THE WAY

Andrews is in rural west Texas and sits atop the Permian Basin, the epicenter of Texas' crude oil production.

"We live and die by the oilfields," says Nate.

Andrews County produced more than 35 million barrels of crude oil in 2022, making it the state's eighth-largest county for oil production. (As a point of reference, that means Andrews County produced more oil in 2022 than the entire state of Louisiana produced in 2021. And Louisiana ranks No. 10 on the list of top U.S. oil-producing states, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.)

Of course, oilfields don't stop at the county line. The Permian Basin spans more than 250 square miles, which means Andrews is surrounded by other oil-rich counties.









Andrews Tire is picking up more light truck tire business.



"We've got good people," says Nate.

Nine of the state's top 10 producing counties are near Andrews, according to oil production statistics maintained by the Railroad Commission of Texas.

All of that oil adds up to a lot of service calls.

"When the oilfields are down, we try to hold on and make ends meet," says Nate. "When it's good, it's real good."

At the end of 2022, Nate's assessment was that the local oil market's production ranged between average and above average. "We're staying pretty steady. Oil companies are spending a lot of money right now."

As a result, those customers are opting for top-tier tire brands. If business slides downward a bit, Nate says oil industry customers might downgrade to a mid-tier product.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

With such a bounty of oilfield customers, there's stiff competition to sell tires to oil company fleets. But Andrews Tire has made its mark by offering both sales and speedy service.

Nate says that Andrews Tire "can get stuff done a lot quicker than (the competition.) There have been times we have gone on location and someone else has called (another dealer.) The customer asks how long will it take to do six tires or eight tires. The other guy will say, 'Two or three hours.'

"We'll beat them on that time and say we can get them done in an hour and (the customer) will let that other truck go home.

"We've got good people who know what they're doing.

"We make sure that the guy in the field is

pretty knowledgeable in what he's doing. It is possible to do that work" in the span of an hour.

Nate admits it's not the norm for two competing tire dealers to arrive on the same job site, but sometimes customers are so desperate to find someone they'll call in back-ups.

"When it's busy, you can call for a service truck and they'll never show up. So companies will call a couple guys to see who gets there first."

The Bustamantes say they've learned it's absolutely critical to offer reasonable response times and to show up and do the work, as promised.

"If we say we're going to be there in an hour or 45 minutes, we're going to be there," says Nate. "Some of these guys (at other tire dealerships) will get dispatched out and it will be two hours until their truck shows up at a location. We're pretty good that if we say we're going to be there in a certain time, we're there."

Here's the unwritten rule: "We don't lie to the customer."

"If I'm backed up, I'm going to let him know that 'I've got two jobs ahead of you, but I've got you down and we'll be there,'" says Nate.

In those instances, a customer might say he has another option who can get to him quicker. But Andrews Tire's best customers say, "I'll wait for you."

Victor says that loyalty has been built over the years.

"We've been here 20 years and we've got some loyal customers who have moved up the ranks in their companies. They've stayed faithful to us and we've stayed loyal to them. That's how we beat the competition."

BATTLING THE HEAT

In west Texas, beating the competition often means coping with the summer sun and blistering heat.

"When it gets hot here, tires start blowing out and our service trucks will be out all day," says Nate. "They'll come in and pick up a tire and go to the next job and then to the next job. Sometimes we'll even hot-shot tires to where they are or meet them halfway. It's about being proactive and making it work."

When oil service companies need to move their rigs from one site to the next in the summertime, the heat can be especially brutal.

"They'll have equipment that hasn't moved in two or three months. When they move it, (they'll) start having blowouts left and right.



There are times you're laying on that asphalt and it's melting on you while you're trying to jack up a 50-ton compressor.

"I remember being on a service call back when I was running the truck," says Nate. "There was a big compressor that was as wide as the road. They would have to pull out to let trucks in and out and they blew out three tires. The trailer had 30 tires on it.

"I got there and they had a patrolman shut down the road for about an hour-and-a-half until I got those tires changed out, because there was nowhere else to pull over. It was the middle of the day. It was a bad deal."

DOOR OPENS FOR RETAIL GROWTH

The oil industry also attracts plenty of other commercial customers, according to Nate. "We have a lot of over-the-road trucks that are (bringing) supplies to these oil fields. We do a lot of over-the-road trucks going through town."

And while Andrews Tire hasn't ventured into servicing national accounts, the business has found steady demand for well-priced medium truck tires. "One of our biggest brands is Roadmaster," says Nate. "It's a good tire. The price is right and we stay pretty competitive with other name brands in that area."

While the commercial tire segment remains the dealership's focus and represents 60% of its total sales, commercial tire sales have also led to growth on the retail side.

"We do a lot of commercial fleets," says Victor. Over time, those customers have started bringing their personal vehicles to Andrews Tire for tires and automotive service. Nate says customers who live in Midland, which is 40 miles away, or Odessa, which is 28 miles away, will drive from those larger cities to Andrews to have a new set of tires installed on their personal vehicle.

"They'll run through here on their day off to put tires on because they don't want to sit for three hours" in a tire shop closer to where they live.

Recently, a customer called from Odessa and asked if the tires he needed were in stock. He made an appointment for Friday morning and was out the door and on his way home again less than an hour later. A few days later, the man called about tires for his wife's vehicle. She made the same trip.

"That's the kind of deal that we do quite often," says Nate.

The region is also home to a lot of transplants and Andrews Tire sees those new residents as another avenue to expanding its retail business. The company recently set up a website and is experimenting with advertising to attract retail customers.

Andrews Tire started offering alignments in 2019 and has slowly added to its menu of automotive service for passenger and light truck customers.

A HEALTHY WORKPLACE

On both the retail and commercial side, Andrews Tire is making a name for itself as a speedy service provider. But the Bustamante brothers acknowledge it can be tough for employees to remain motivated



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and hustle for every single customer. One of their secrets is to "have plenty of guys in the shop," says Nate. "Growing up, when we worked at tire shops, there were two shop guys and two service truck drivers. It was tough to stay motivated because you were doing all the work and didn't have help.

"We have more people, so it's not as hard to get the job done."

The Andrews Tire team also has two other secret weapons — owners who aren't afraid to get their hands dirty.

"They see us out there (in the shop) with them," says Nate. "We're not sitting in an office, watching them work. We see that the bays are full and we work with them."

Employees have told them they've never had a boss bust a tire or lend a hand when work piles up before.

"When there's work, we get down and go to work with them," explains Nate. "The guys see we're all a team. We're not going to point fingers and say, 'You're not done yet?'"

Camaraderie and supporting each other is one thing, but that's only one piece of the puzzle in retaining employees. Texas added jobs to its economy steadily in 2022 and the state's unemployment rate is below 4%. Add to that the high-paying jobs available in the oil industry and it can be tough to compete.

"If you want a good hand, you're going to have to pay them good money," says Nate. "We've had to learn that."

Sometimes, the lesson plays out right in front of their business.

An oil company has an office across the street from Andrews Tire and a worker there noticed the good work ethic of one of the Bustamantes' employees. He offered him a job while he was on the job.

"It's the middle of the day and he's trying to take my employee! You have to step up your game."

An entry-level employee with no experience starts at Andrews Tire with a wage of $14 an hour. Those with experience can walk in the door and earn $17 or $18 an hour. All are eligible for overtime. The most experienced technicians handle service calls and earn even more, including a $150 bonus after they complete three service calls in a day.

Nate says Andrews Tire pays employees "better than most" and also works to "make them feel like they're not just an employee.

"We'll cook for the guys. We give them bonuses. Sometimes, the brothers will shut the doors, cook a meal and the whole team will enjoy some downtime together.

"It's tough. The oilfield is big money and it's tough to compete with these guys who pay (workers a big) amount of money and retirement and benefits and insurance. That's probably one of our biggest problems that we face every day."

DREAMING FOR THE FUTURE

The Bustamante brothers are proud of what they've accomplished, but they still see room to do more in the future.

"Hopefully, we'll open up another store down the road," says Victor. "We'd like to open in another town and branch out and make this shop our main warehouse."

It's not just a matter of dreaming of getting bigger. The brothers see expansion as a way to secure the business they've already established and better protect their employees from the ups and downs of the oil patch.

"In this part of the country, it's hit and miss," notes Victor.

"When oil shuts down, it shuts down completely. That's why we're trying to service more of the public" and increase the business' share of the local retail market.

Opening in another community could also open the door to serving farmers. As it stands now, Andrews Tire is "very light" in agriculture tires, says Nate.

But if it had a store even 25 miles to the north and closer to Lubbock, the dealership's customer mix would be much more heavily tilted toward agriculture.

Another avenue to future growth is adding mechanical truck services. A large truck stop nearby shut its doors about six months ago and Nate says there's great demand for even minor truck repairs like brake work and changing out air bags.

Truck alignments could be another profit center. "We use a Hunter alignment machine. And there are some adapters, so we could use the same machine we have and do truck alignments."

All of those things are possibilities for the future, the brothers say.

CONSISTENT AVAILABILITY

One key to the dealership's cash flow and profitability has been establishing relationships with reliable tire distributors. Rural tire dealers in any market learn how to manage inventory and the flow of deliveries from warehouses that aren't just a few miles away. All of Andrews Tire's deliveries come from warehouses 100 miles away in Lubbock.

Andrews Tire keeps fewer than 300 tires in stock on any given day, including about 80 commercial tire units and about 150 passenger and light truck tires. Everything else comes via daily deliveries.

"Our distributors really help out a lot with that because they deliver to us on a daily basis," says Nate.

"It helps me. I'm not having to keep all that money tied up in inventory."

Nate says that over time, Andrews Tire has learned what tires to keep on-hand to answer customers' most pressing needs. Beyond that, most tires are available the next day.

"We know what people need out here. That is the stuff that we keep. We don't lose sales because we don't have the product. We've managed to really bear down on what people drive and what are the most common sizes."

Andrews Tire orders the bulk of its commercial tires from K&M Tire Inc. and says the distributor is especially good at maintaining access to the same tires over the long-term.

"You have people who say they can service you, but they don't have the product," says Nate. "Or you order from them and they can't get the (same) product anymore. K&M has always been really good about having



"We're trying to service more of the public," says Victor.

their ducks in a row and being able to service us right.

"When you sell a customer a set of tires and they want more or they blow one out, you need to make sure you can still get (the same tire.) They do a good job of that."

ALWAYS ANSWER THE CALL

Just like Andrews Tire relies on its distributors to perform, the dealership's commercial tire customers depend on the Bustamante brothers and their team. And that dependency doesn't end at 5 p.m.

"They don't care what time of day it is," says Nate. "If they call at 5:30 and you're closing down, they expect you to do the job and do it right now. They work 24-hour shifts, seven days a week. You always have to answer the phone.

"If there's a $300,000 piece of equipment on the side of the road, they need it moved right now. It doesn't matter what time of the day it is. We're going to be there.

"I think that's part of the reason we've been successful. Out here, they expect you to do that. It's not, 'Let's see when we can get you in.' It's 'We need it now.'"

And over the years, those demanding customers have spread the word, says Nate, who adds that they tell their peers. "Go to Andrews Tire. They'll take care of it, no matter what time it is."





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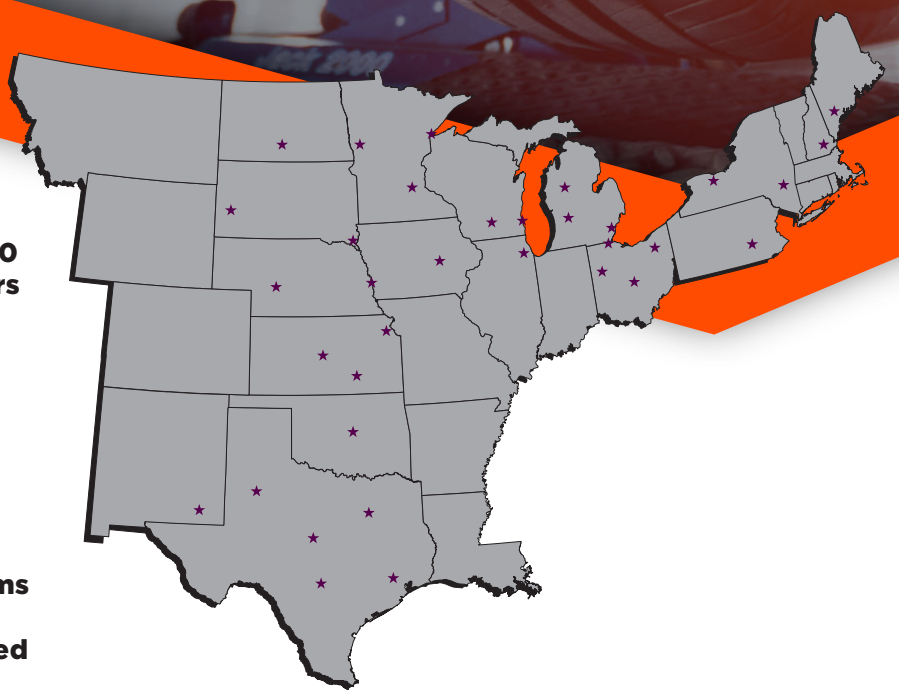

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