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City company plays big role in hybrid tug project

Designs control, propulsion systems for revolutionary craft

Posted By Maria Canton

Posted 1 day ago



Neale Kemp with an image of a new hybrid diesel tug recently launched in Long Beach, Ca.

James Masters

Owen Sound engineering firm Aspin, Kemp & Associates has earned bragging rights after the world's first hybrid tugboat was unveiled recently in California, a \$2 million endeavor that has the company leading the pack in clean marine technology.

AKA provided the propulsion and control systems for the "Carolyn Dorothy," a new tugboat designed to reduce emissions by up to 44 per cent under optimal operating conditions.

"The tugboat lends itself perfectly to a hybrid engine because it needs a lot of power for short periods of time and the rest of the time it's idling," said Neale Kemp, the chief operating officer of AKA.

"Idling on the main engines results in high emissions, the whole point here is not to have a tug running on main engines all the time."

AKA engineers were already working on a hybrid engine design for a yacht when they were approached by Seattle-based Foss Maritime and asked to review their designs for the hybrid tug. Upon inspection, AKA determined the plans to be inadequate and went on to redesign, engineer and usher in the project.

All of the engineering staff in the Owen Sound office, located downtown in the Old Post Office, were involved in the project, while the manufacturing was done at the company's P.E.I. facility.

The tug is powered by electric motors that draw power from batteries and auxiliary generators. When full-power is needed the stout boat uses its main engines.

Tugs are considered the workhorses of the water world and are often used to assist large ships and for towing and moving freight and equipment. While the "Carolyn Dorothy" is a new boat, Kemp says the company has been inundated with queries from ferry companies, boat builders and governments around the world since the tug was launched in Long Beach, Ca almost two weeks ago.


"There's a big push from around the world to make harbours cleaner. A lot of our inquiries have been about retrofits as people move toward the green side," said Kemp.

In addition to lower emissions, the hybrid tug is already realizing up to 30 per cent savings in fuel costs and it is also cutting down on noise pollution.

Foss Maritime is seeking a Green Passport certification for the "Carolyn Dorothy" from Lloyd's Register of North America, a marine standards organization.

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"Right now we're still the only ones out there, but others will eventually catch up," said Kemp.

AKA is headquartered in Owen Sound, but has offices in Dartmouth, N.S., Stratford, P.E.I., Houston, Texas, and Singapore.

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