

# CASE STUDY: MOVING CARGO, MOVING FORWARD

**CUSTOMER**  
Associated  
Terminals

**LOCATION**  
Convent, LA

**CAT DEALER**  
Louisiana Cat

**PRODUCT**  
Cat App, VisionLink®,  
and Cat Marine Engines

**INDUSTRY**  
Cargo

## RELATIONSHIP WITH LOUISIANA CAT® GIVES ASSOCIATED TERMINALS A COMPETITIVE EDGE

Grain. Sugar. Minerals. Fertilizer. Steel. Name a product or raw material than comes into the United States, and chances are good that Associated Terminals has moved it. The stevedore and terminal operator, based in Convent, Louisiana, handles 25-30 million tons of material on the lower Mississippi River each year.

That requires a big fleet. The company's 15 derrick barges are equipped with large-capacity cranes and buckets for transloading cargo. Each crane is supported by up to four pieces of mobile equipment, as well as power systems to maintain operations.

Recently, Associated Terminals began transitioning that fleet from multiple brands of equipment to an all Cat® lineup: Cat marine engines, Cat wheel loaders and excavators, and Cat generators.

Why?

"The biggest thing keeping you up at night in this industry is the complexity of the operation. So much has to work together," says Curtis Blank Jr., Director of Maintenance and Engineering for Associated Terminals. "Any weakness creates a vulnerability in not being able to serve customers. I sleep well at night knowing I have Caterpillar behind me."

### ABOVE-AND-BEYOND SUPPORT

A big contributor to that peace of mind is the support Associated Terminals gets from Cat dealer Louisiana Cat — both before and after the sale of any product.

"The level of engineering and field support has been amazing," Blank Jr. says. "Any goal we set, there is a team of people at Louisiana Cat that can meet us in the middle, take the ball and run with it. If I need someone on site to diagnose an issue, there's always someone available. If something comes up unexpectedly, there's always a solution."

Here's just one example: In November 2021, Associated Terminals experienced a power systems failure on a derrick barge. It wasn't a Cat product, but Blank Jr. called Louisiana Cat to talk through the issue.



“Before the competition even had a quote for a replacement, we had a unit from Louisiana Cat on site and installed,” he says. “A failure like that could have cost us a week of downtime. Instead we had the vessel back in operation in 24 hours, which really helped with our contractual operations.”

## UPTIME: THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

The data available through Caterpillar and Louisiana Cat also helps Blank Jr. keep the Associated Terminals' fleet up and running. He uses both the mobile Cat App and VisionLink®, a web-based fleet management tool, to monitor equipment operation and maintenance.

“I can be offsite having coffee, pull up my phone and see the fleet, utilization and what's happened over a specific time period,” Blank Jr. says.

In addition, many of Associated Terminals' Cat marine engines and generators are hooked up to Product Health Connect®, an exclusive condition monitoring service developed by Louisiana Cat. Cat ET, short for Electronic Technician, also lets Blank Jr. and his team plug into engines on site and easily troubleshoot problems.



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AND ENGINEERING FOR  
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“Issues we used to struggle with — things that used to persist for a long time — we can predict those now,” Blank Jr. says. “Often I get a call from the dealership being proactive, and we'll go out to a certain vessel to make a change or a fix before I even experience an issue.”

## SAVING MONEY, SAVING LIVES

Fixing problems before failure helps Associated Terminals keep costs down. So does the ability to rebuild Cat equipment.

“We're saving money with Cat engines, and I can quantify it,” Blank Jr. says. “We can achieve a second life out of an engine or machine that otherwise would have been a throwaway. Buying new is a high cost of acquisition. At a fraction of that cost, we can rebuild Cat equipment.”

Even more important than cost savings is safety. Associated Terminals' commitment to meeting its customers' high standards for safe operation delivers a competitive advantage — and Cat equipment plays an important role.

“Caterpillar has technology that allows the removal of an employee from a volatile operation,” Blank Jr. says. “Their equipment can be staffed remotely or offsite.”

## A RELATIONSHIP THAT SETS NEW STANDARDS

Ultimately, though, the decision to move to an all Cat fleet comes down to relationships. Since its founding in 1990, Associated Terminals has worked with a number of original equipment manufacturers. None, according to Blank Jr., can match up to Caterpillar and Louisiana Cat.

“There's no one else we've dealt with like Caterpillar and Louisiana Cat that bring to the table an environment so conducive to advancement,” he says. “It's more than just product availability and reliability. They're willing to invest in engineering with us, to try new things that aren't the industry standard yet, and that has allowed us to take a big leap forward. You don't get that everywhere.”