BERNVILLE, Pennsylvania — When Wolfe House & Building Movers takes on a job, it’s go big or go home.

Wolfe recently assisted with the reconstruction of a Pennsylvania Turnpike Bridge by hauling away the older sections – replacing them with pre-built 100-foot long sections, each weighing upwards of 280,000 pounds.

The process, known as “Accelerated Bridge Construction,” was completed over a single weekend. In other jobs, the Wolfe crew moved 200-foot long gas tanks, a 232,000-lb drum cooler on its 16-axle dual lane trailer, and a modular home to the National Mall in Washington, D.C., for a green building competition in conjunction with Habitat For Humanity.

By using specialized technology and industry-leading equipment, featuring a fleet of Kenworth trucks -- including the new Kenworth W990 model - Wolfe is uniquely positioned to transport the biggest loads safely and securely.

"Lifting and moving big and heavy things is the kind of work we do every day," said Jamin Buckingham, president of the half-century-old company. “We need a truck that can move and handle whatever size load that we hook up to it.

“The company ran a variety of brands before I reached a position with the responsibility of deciding which trucks to purchase. Being a former driver, I knew what I wanted,” Buckingham added. “We went with Kenworth because it's a quality product and we've always liked the look and style. Kenworth is also known for its heavier-duty trucks and offers a good variety of options.”

Among the features that made the Kenworth W990 an extremely effective choice for heavy haul applications was increased cooling capacity — the largest radiator found on any of Kenworth’s on-highway trucks, and the PACCAR 20K front steer axle. First developed for the Kenworth T680 and T880, the PACCAR front axle (available with ratings of 20,000- or 22,000-lbs) uses an innovative tapered kingpin roller bearing, which simplifies the design and delivers enhanced steering efficiency with angles up to 50 degrees.
“The majority of our loads are at job sites not set up for trucks and trailers, so turning radius and backing ability are crucial,” Buckingham said. “We've had very positive feedback from our drivers that they are surprised with how well the W990 turns,” Buckingham said. “The transmission is also very smooth, and backing as well as starting off is phenomenal — it's very precise.”

The transmission, which Buckingham speaks of highly, is Allison's 4700 RDS 7-speed automatic transmission with a two-speed Eaton auxiliary. The Allison delivers a lower first gear ratio and a second “deep reduction reverse” gives the needed “oomph,” particularly on steep grades and in tight settings. A perfect example is the recent move of a 226,500-lb transformer from a rail siding, up a steep incline, and then five miles to a substation.

“The driver can manually select the first gear on the Allison and also be in the low side of the auxiliary transmission and the truck will crawl around at half a mile an hour,” pointed out Matt Zelinsky Jr., the account manager with Kenworth of Pennsylvania, who helped in the spec’ing process.

Other vocational specs include Dana double reduction 46,000-lb rears, Holland FW70 extra capacity fifth wheel and Watson & Chalin 20K lift axles. According to Zelinsky, Wolfe’s newest Kenworth W990s are rated to pull 240,000-lb gross and are set up to the maximum that Kenworth will build without upgrading to a planetary axle.

Wolfe House & Building Movers trims out its trucks with custom fenders and a headache rack. The W990s are fitted with 40-inch sleepers, which are best suited for shorter hauls that do not require multiple nights. Smaller is better from the driver's perspective. Visibility is at the top of the want list for safely maneuvering oversize loads.
The 40-inch sleeper features a 24-inch liftable bunk, ample storage and coat hooks specifically designed to hold hardhats as well as coats. There are two standard toolbox doors and three optional windows available on the back of the sleeper to help provide maximum visibility.

The oldest truck in the Wolfe fleet is a 2000 model, but most were manufactured between 2006 and 2020. The majority of the hauls are in regional states east of the Mississippi River, plus Iowa and Missouri, and trucks roll up 60,000 to 120,000 miles annually.

“We don't have any set rules as to when we trade them in,” Buckingham said. “Kenworth are well-built, dependable trucks. They last and don’t let us down.”

The team at Wolfe has gained experience by successfully completing thousands of moves and lifts. One could say they are proud to carry the weight of the world on their shoulders. Imagine picking up and relocating a 200-ton brick masonry train station, 100-foot tall concrete farm silo or an entire five-story timber frame hotel weighing in at 1,750 tons. For their biggest jobs, Wolfe utilizes custom-built and engineered Buckingham Power and Coaster Dollies “driven” by hand-held remote control.

“There's a significant amount of change with equipment upgrading, integrating new technology into the equipment. Being into heavy haul, there's just a natural gravitation in that direction,” Buckingham said.

“Utilizing the newest trucks, such as the Kenworth W990 within the fleet, has allowed us to diversify our market,” Buckingham added. “Kenworth definitely provides big advantages in terms of optimal performance and dependability.”

To view some of Wolfe’s more innovative moves, visit the company’s website (www.wolfehousebuildingmovers.com).

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