



WOLVERINE CRANE | FOUNDERS BREWING CRAFT BEER BREWING

CASE STUDY

R&M SUPPORTS CRAFT BEER BREWING SOLUTION

An overhead crane from R&M Materials Handling is helping one of America's leading craft breweries with a custom beer-making process.





THE APPLICATION

Created in 1997, Founders Brewing now ranks among the top 10 largest craft breweries in the USA. It is located in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan with an additional brewing facility and taproom in Detroit.

The company, which is famous for its complex, in-your-face ales, with huge aromatics and tons of flavor, wanted a lifting solution that would support its unique way of delivering hops into the brewing process. It turned to a local crane and lifting specialist, Wolverine Crane, for assistance.



THE CHALLENGE

Founders designed and commissioned the fabrication of its own vessel specifically for the task of dry hopping. This vessel holds around 1200 lbs of hop pellets that are tipped into beer. The company needed a crane that could easily lift and position the vessel, enabling Founders to dump the hops into the beer tank. The crane also needed the capacity to periodically move giant stainless-steel tanks to enable cleaning and other maintenance tasks, such as overhauls for the centrifuge and lifting items to upper-level storage.





THE SOLUTION

Founders Brewing called on Grand Rapids-based Wolverine Crane for its lifting expertise. Wolverine specializes in the design, manufacture and installation of overhead bridge cranes and the runway structures to support them. Established in 1994, it provides 125 cranes per year to clients across North America and for export.

Wolverine supplied Founders with a 20 ton crane from R&M Materials Handling, Inc. This crane package included the Spacemaster® SX6 wire rope hoist and bogey trucks for ease of installation.



“We chose this route specifically to perform the task of dry hopping profusely that we are known for. We didn’t want to choose the common solution of pumping the hops in the tank, nor a ‘hop cannon’. We wanted to drop the hops in the top of the tank and designed the crane specifically to do this.”

ALEC MULL

VP of Brewing Operations Founders Brewing Co.

Craig Maclean, who has been with Wolverine Crane for 25 years, said:

“It has a full-length foot lock on the bridge because it is so high up, the ceiling is 70ft and the crane sits right at the top so you don’t want to be working off an aerial lift up there. You can stand on the platform to easily and safely access the control panel and all the electronics and wiring, for ease of service.”





THE RESULTS

The crane continues to provide Founders with a lifting solution for its preferred method of delivering hops during the brewing process.

Alec at Founders added: “The bridge crane was purchased to move our tanks around the facility and as a novel way to dry hop. The crane has been incredibly helpful to many facets of our job. The crane works wonderfully, and the annual inspections done by Wolverine have been timely and professional.”

Craig at Wolverine added: “R&M has a fine product line that covers a wide range of applications. We felt this was an application where R&M would excel in providing a long-lasting solution for the customer. It has held up very well, requiring only regular inspections and servicing as you’d expect, but no issues at all.”