



New in Machine Control: Two Releases for Excavator Guidance — one 2D, the other 3D

Owner/operators take note! Trimble has plugged a gap in its product line-up with the new and very affordable GCS600 grade control system for excavators.

In the jargon of the machine control industry, this is a 2D product that could be looked upon as a successor to the earlier BucketPro system, but it's a totally new design with the emphasis on ease of upgrade to 3D, meaning GNSS in the form of Trimble's GCS900 excavator system.

This GCS600 product has the selection of useful features that owner/operators, in particular, will appreciate in a modern 2D excavator system. Many guys we talk to say that this gear can be likened to a dishwasher—you may resist the need to begin with, but when you cough up for one, you don't know how you ever lived without it.

Obviously invaluable for straightforward site levelling to a high level of accuracy, it'll also guide you on flat-bottom or sloping trenches,

batters, and other profiling work. And of course if you have occasion to do any work under water—how else?


The backlit LCD display allows you to set up slopes and store them, and as well as the graphical display has an audible alarm so you can keep your eye on the job when you're approaching target depth.

Most operators who frequently work alone on sites will buy the optional laser catcher that's built into a slope sensor—it re-benches the system every time it passes through a laser beam, which of course could be a couple of times a minute, ensuring constant accuracy on the fly.

Thus the excavator can move around a larger site and get on with a

variety of jobs without needing constant re-calibration. The GCS600 is smart enough to know, when the machine has moved, how the new ground conditions affect its settings. That is, if it's now sitting on a bit of a gradient, fore and aft or sideways or both, that'll automatically be taken into account in the depth and slope settings.

GCS600 can accommodate a tilting bucket and a vertically articulated boom.

Upon moving up to GNSS, the boom, stick and bucket sensors and associated cabling remain in place. A new control box replaces the CB410 used for GCS600, and of course GNSS antennae and cabling are added. 



Contractor to make wider use of Topcon's 3DXi excavator system

Topcon Positioning Systems (TPS) has released an upgraded version of its 3DXi GPS+ excavator grade reference system, featuring an improved user interface.

The upgrade incorporates the new GX-60 colour touch screen control box, and a new generation of temperature-compensated 360° CAN-based electronic tilt sensors.

(The product name '3DXi' relates specifically to excavators rather than other machines. 3D denotes GNSS-based, and the 'i' stands for 'indicate only', referring to the guidance mode.)

This Topcon excavator system became widely available in the first quarter of 2006 and there are now a couple of score of them working around the country, with considerable owner satisfaction.



We spoke to Mick Egan of Egan Plant Hire in Melbourne, who also runs the Topcon mmGPS sister product on the EastLink site.

"The 3DXi system has worked very reliably on projects where we've been engaged as subbies," says Mick, "and has encouraged us to plan seriously for its use on some of our own future jobs. Obviously we'd have to make a further financial outlay for our own base station. The only other issue is the preparation of digital files to run onboard the excavator, and that doesn't appear to present a problem." 