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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Moving Up. It's Easier than You Think

Self-storage owners and developers are looking closely at VRCs versus Elevators as a lower-cost solution for facility expansion

By: Hue Schlegel – Director of Marketing, Wildeck, Inc.

Owners and developers looking to build or upgrade self-storage facilities today are deluged with details, decisions, permits, and many other concerns. To be successful they are rethinking their operation and overall facility design, and looking for a competitive edge that will attract new rental tenants. One solution that is becoming increasingly more attractive is to expand first floor units for recreational vehicle storage which includes boats, trailers, motor homes, collector cars, golf carts, all-terrain vehicles, and more. With larger main level units providing increased revenue, a second level can be added to a portion of these facilities to provide safe and convenient access to smaller, more affordable rental units. Adding a second level can be very cost effective since it utilizes existing real estate and can also offer the increased security that comes from key-controlled access. Many facility owners, however, cringe at the thought of moving up because of all the hassles and costs associated with an elevator installation. The reality is that none of that may be necessary.

For many years, suppliers like Wildeck (Waukesha, WI) have provided customized self-storage VRCs (Vertical Reciprocating Conveyors). These freight-only or material lifts offer a lower cost alternative to elevators for easy access to a second level. According to Wildeck, the total cost of VRC ownership can be up to 3X less than an elevator and can be installed in a fraction of the time. Since people can not ride on a material-only lift packed with materials, the VRC becomes a safer and more cost-effective solution for transferring a tenant's belongings to the second floor where rental rates are typically less than ground level units. Today's VRC controls also make operation virtually fool-proof with intuitive, easy-to-read lift status lights and built-in safety features. More about that later.

There are a number of things to consider when comparing the two.

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Choosing VRCs vs. Elevators for Self-Storage Expansion:

Description	VRC	Elevator	Advantage
Total Cost of Ownership	Much Lower	Higher than a VRC	VRC
Installation Time	Typically 1-5 days	7-10 days (or more)	VRC
Installation Costs	Much Lower	Higher	VRC
State Permits & Licensing	Simpler	More Complex	VRC
Cab Sizes / Capacity	Larger	Smaller & More Costly	VRC
Operation	Intuitive Control with Key Lock & Status Lights	Familiar Up & Down Pushbutton Controls	EQUAL
Equipment Construction	Rugged (Industrial Grade)	Lighter (Designed to move personnel)	VRC
Equipment Room / Penthouse	Not required	Required	VRC
Telephone & Alarm System	Not Required	Required	VRC
Operator Controls	Robust/Industrial Design (Lower Cost)	Complex/Expensive	VRC
Car-top Controls	Not required	Required	VRC
Over-speed Governor	Not required	Required	VRC
Power Consumption	Lower	Higher	VRC
Required Maintenance	Lower (Routine maintenance only)	Higher (Costly maintenance contract required)	VRC
Fire-Rated Shaft-way	May be required	Required (with load bearing walls)	VRC
Shaft-way Lighting, Electrical Outlet & Sprinkler System	Not required	Required	VRC
4 ft Pit / Sump	Not required	Required	VRC
Annual State Inspections	Typically not required	Required	VRC

Tenants typically arrive at a facility to carry boxes or bulky items to their unit. Moving their materials to a second level 10 ft. x 10 ft. or 10 ft. x 20 ft. rental unit is straightforward. After checking in at the front desk and acquiring a safety key, they can unlock the VRC operator control, which on Wildeck's EZ Pro™ Operator Station, has a bright green LED light that glows when the lift is "ready-to-load." Wildeck's ArmorCar™ VRC cab or carriage interior is lighted and fully enclosed with rugged diamond-plate wall and floor panels that can take just about anything the user can dish out. The interior is virtually maintenance free

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and once loaded, a roll-up gate safely secures the tenant's belongings. The hinged outer door is then closed which signals the user that it is safe to send the loaded VRC up to the second level. The tenant can then unlock the stairwell access door and go up one flight to meet the VRC for unloading. When two users are involved, the second individual may already be stationed at level two and can push the 'Up' button to call the VRC. The person at level one can also 'Send' the VRC up.

Whether one or two individuals are available, a VRC typically has a larger capacity than an elevator which means that more materials can be moved at one time. The VRC transfers material only so the risk of injury from falling boxes in an elevator car is also reduced. When safety, efficiency and cost are compared, installing a VRC instead of an elevator can show up quickly on your bottom line. Just ask Jim Gearhart at AAA American Storage.

According to Jim Gearhart, owner of AAA American Storage in Groveland, Florida, "Adding a VRC that is both functional and looks good was very important. It gives our newly expanded facility a competitive edge and cost a lot less than a large elevator. It is also secure and well lit, which customers like."

Gearhart's 87,000 sq. ft., multi-level self-storage facility was completed in November 2006, and is one of the largest self-storage operations in Florida. It boasts some of the latest innovations and equipment available today for safe, secure, and efficient material handling and storage.

"The Groveland area continues to grow and expand," says Gearhart, "as many people are realizing the affordability, accessibility and quality of life that is evident here."

With people either on the move or just settling in, the area really needed an up-to-date self-storage facility that could provide both temporary and long-term secure storage for their personal property. After considerable site research and discussions with local community officials, Jim selected a location just off the main thoroughfare that conveniently connects Groveland with surrounding communities. Jim had previously been involved with building 8-9 other self-storage facilities having some 600 to 700 rental units each and this experience was instrumental in helping his plans for Groveland move forward.

"Partnering with experienced suppliers was essential," States Gearhart, "because it allowed us to achieve the quality and state-of-the-art facility that we needed to attract tenants." AAA selected U.S. Door & Building Components of Orlando for self-storage facility construction and purchased a new VRC material lift from AME Vertical in Troy, MI, a long-time representative of Wildeck products manufactured in Waukesha, WI.

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Initial work on the Groveland facility began in June of 2000 with site preparation and construction of three buildings, including offices and on-site living quarters for Jim. Work soon proceeded on some 200 rental units positioned for easy access around the perimeter of the site. Rentals of these standard units moved quickly so plans were finalized to build additional units and to build up, not out.

The addition of 400 new rental units in the center area of the facility included a second level with 200 units served by a handicap-accessible elevator, two stairways, and a 2,000 lb. capacity Vertical Reciprocating Conveyor (Material Lift) from Wildeck with a 6 ft. wide x 8 ft. long x 7 ft. high carriage.

During construction of the final center section, which was completed in November 2006, AAA installed the VRC lift first and used it to move building materials up to complete the new second level. “The VRC worked great,” states Jim, “and saved us a considerable amount of money on crane rental. I would certainly recommend it to anyone looking to add a second level.”

Attracting new tenants also meant offering deluxe, climate-controlled rental units which are in demand throughout Florida due to the warm climate. Units in the interior of the lower center section are ideally suited for climate control since they are more insulated from the sun’s rays and therefore less expensive to cool.

“We have (3) buildings that are now air-conditioned,” states Gearhart, “and the largest units are 10 ft. x 45 ft. They can store rooms of furniture, cars and even a nice fishing boat.”

The self-storage industry continues to provide opportunities for entrepreneurs like Jim Gearhart to expand, and as he proved, moving up was easier than you may think. There are some 10,000 facilities in the U.S. today and Florida ranks #3 behind Texas and California with the most establishments. “I enjoy the business” states Jim, “and am satisfied that we are providing an essential service for families and companies who are looking for safe and secure storage. Do I want to build another? I have no immediate plans except to service my Groveland customers the best way I can and to spend a little time with my (6) grandchildren.”

With some nice fishing lakes just down the road, we know where to look for Jim.

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Self-Storage VRC with Elevator-style Pushbutton Controls



The new ArmorCar™ VRC (Vertical Reciprocating Conveyor) with user-friendly EZ-Pro Operator Station from Wildeck, Inc. (Waukesha, WI) provides quick, easy and safe movement of personal property to upper level self-storage rental units.

For more information on self-storage material lifting, contact Wildeck, Inc. at 262-549-4000 or visit www.wildeck.com.

Background on Self-Storage VRC Manufacturer:

Wildeck, Inc., headquartered in Waukesha, WI, is the largest U.S. manufacturer of mezzanines, vertical lifts and safety guarding products for safe and efficient handling, storage and movement of materials. For more than 30 years, the company has grown through a dedicated and experienced network of customer-service-oriented dealers and systems integrators, nationwide.

For more information on the ArmorCar™ Self-Storage VRC and the complete line of Wildeck products and services, visit www.wildeck.com or e-mail info@wildeck.com

New ArmorCar™ VRC with EZ-Pro Operator Station at Newly Expanded AAA American Storage in Groveland, FL



Jim Gearhart operates Wildeck's user-friendly EZ-Pro VRC control. Clearly marked buttons and bright LED lights instantly signal lift status and inform the operator when the lift has been off-loaded for return to ground level.



The VRC carriage is lighted and covered with reflective diamond-plate wall and floor panels that enhance illumination and protect property from damage. The durable ArmorCar carriage interior never requires painting.

**VRC Location and Aerial View of Facility
During 2nd Level Final Construction Phase
at AAA American Storage**



The ArmorCar VRC was installed through the roof and then used to move building materials up for final construction of the second level.



Aerial view of site during expansion to add a second level at AAA American Storage.

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