

VELOCITY VIDEO CASE HISTORY

A DC VELOCITY SPEED CHALLENGE

Rock solid performance

Opustone relies on a fleet of dependable Toyota forklifts to move heavy natural stone slabs throughout its Florida facilities.

FEW PRODUCTS ARE AS UNWIELDY AS NATURAL stone slabs – the kind used for countertops, flooring, landscaping, and other decorative products. Some can weigh as much as 2,500 pounds, and they can be quite awkward to handle. It's the type of product that Miami-based Opustone specializes in.

At Opustone's three showrooms in Jacksonville, Fort Lauderdale, and Miami, customers can see the beauty of natural stone materials that are available for their construction projects. These customers include builders, contractors, designers, fabricators, landscapers, and installers.

Moving these heavy slabs around its facilities is the work of a fleet of Toyota counterbalanced forklifts. The 5,000-pound capacity trucks have the maneuverability to handle these bulky loads within some very tight storage areas.

"We had been operating with different brands before from other manufacturers," explains David Mansur, vice president at Opustone. "But the Toyota equipment has been the one that has lasted." Mansur adds that the operation is rather complex, with a variety of moving and lifting needs. "I think Toyota has been very suitable for this type of work," he says.

TAKEN FOR GRANITE

The Miami facility is the largest in the company. It is spread across four separate buildings on both sides of a city street. The forklifts do a number of duties here, including crossing the street with heavy loads.

At the receiving docks, the slabs and tiles arrive in shipping containers from exotic origination points that include Spain, Brazil, Italy, and Greece. The forklifts carefully unload the stone products from the containers – marble, slate, granite, onyx, and other materials. The

slabs are placed into storage frames in the yard, while crates of tiles are floor-stacked as many as four high inside the buildings. Some of the tile products are also placed into storage racks.

FLEXIBLE AND MANEUVERABLE

The travel lanes inside the buildings are very tight. The tight turning radius of the 15 Toyota forklifts in the fleet allows them to easily maneuver their heavy loads around the thousands of different materials inside.

The vehicles' three-stage masts also have the lifting power to raise their heavy loads for stacking. In addition to being powerful, the masts are also see-through so that drivers can view the heavy loads they are transporting. "Safety is one of the most important things when you drive a forklift truck. You have to have high visibility," says Luis Penalo, warehouse receiving supervisor.

Out in the yard, a special telescopic boom attached to one forklift is employed to move large slabs, some weighing as much as 1,200 pounds. The boom has a clamp attachment and sling that is placed around the slab to gently lift it for transport. While solid and heavy, stone can still crack if mishandled. That is where the maneuverability and smooth handling of the Toyota forklifts is an advantage.

Opustone managers also appreciate the rugged durability of their Toyota forklifts. "There is a lot of punishment on the forklifts, and they perform very well," says Mansur. "But most important is the technical support. The moment that we need a repair, our warehouse supervisor will call Toyota and they will either come to work on-site or they will send another forklift to replace the one that has to be sent to the shop to be fixed. So we operate on a very good partnership with Toyota's local dealers on technical support."



To see a video of the slab and tile handling at Opustone's Miami distribution center, go to dcvtv.com and click on the Velocity Video.