

Competency, Testing Key to Installing Steel Piers

Utilizing steel piers (push piers or helical piles) in lieu of traditional drilled shafts, caissons or driven piles has become a very affordable and effective option when designing deep foundations or foundation retrofits and having qualified foundation contractors like L.R.E. Ground Services install them. Unfortunately, identifying fully tested steel pier systems and qualified contractors that have the credentials to install them has become a real challenge for property owners.

A plethora of companies do underpinning, but few are qualified. So how does a homeowner or insurance company separate the legitimate manufacturers and contractors from the fly-by-nights? You know, the same self proclaimed experts that pose a serious threat to any property they work on due to a lack of qualifications as well as the “homemade” resources they pass off as steel piercing systems? It’s simple. First, make sure the contractor you hire is reputable (you can find reputable contractors through FAS3.org) and fully trained on the system they are installing. Next, verify that the manufacturer’s steel pier system is fully tested and approved.



The International Code Council, a membership association dedicated to building safety develops the codes and standards used to construct homes and commercial buildings. The ICC “I”-codes, including the International Building Code, have been adopted by all 50 states, the District of Columbia and numerous Federal Departments including the Department of Defense. The ICC has defined testing criteria for manufacturers to use to obtain performance capabilities of their products. This testing criterion, ICC AC 358 is currently used for helical piles. A new, revised criterion for push piles is being developed. All manufacturers must have an independent, certified lab perform tests on their products according to the strict guidelines of ICC AC 358. The test results from this type of controlled, repeatable testing is the only dependable comparison data available to engineers and design professionals.

Grip-Tite Manufacturing Co., LLC, located in Winterset, Iowa has been manufacturing earth anchoring products continuously since 1921. Grip-Tite is one of the few manufacturers of steel pier products to utilize the ICC certified labs and have their product ratings published in an ICC Evaluation Services Report (ESR). The results of those tests are true, fair and verified by the ICC. They are not done with “in-house” personnel under “ideal conditions”. The Foundation Pier (push pier) system has a current ICC ESR published in May 2004. Once the new testing criterion for this product is approved, new testing will be done according to those procedures and a new ICC ESR will be issued. Until that time, ICC Legacy Report 22-02 will be renewed monthly to provide certified performance and installation data for the Grip-Tite push pier system for the design and code enforcement communities. Grip-Tite helical piers have already undergone the ICC certified lab testing and the results verify the performance data published in their literature, technical data sheets and catalogs. Once the ICC reviews all of the supporting documentation, including a manufacturing quality control manual, a new ICC ESR for the helical piles will be issued.

This is a very expensive and time consuming process, but it is the only process available to you – the design professional – to obtain unbiased, accurate and certified results for steel pier products. Grip-Tite is proud of its 89 years of product quality and the dependability of the designs of its respected engineering department. The manufacturing facility maintains extremely tight tolerances in all of their manufacturing processes. These procedures and personnel develop products of the highest quality whose performance has been evaluated and confirmed by the ICC and its certified labs. Be sure that the product you specify has been evaluated and tested by an ICC certified lab under the same regulated procedures that Grip-Tite products are tested under. That is your only assurance that the product you specify will perform to your standards.

The Grip-Tite quality doesn’t end with the products. All certified installing dealers must undergo an intense 2 ½ day training course which includes at least six hours of hands-on instruction in addition to installation procedures and soil mechanics. The hands-on instruction is conducted on live job sites and at their in-house demonstration area with a concrete wall on a poured footing. They utilize regional Grip-Tite certified installer dealers to coordinate the hands-on training at the job sites and at their training area. They sell Grip-Tite products only to their certified installer/dealer network. They provide technical support and continuing education for their certified dealers.

Yes, you can design and specify with confidence. Just be sure you use a credentialed, qualified and skilled foundation contractor like L.R.E. Ground Services, Inc. Also verify that the steel pier system the foundation contractor intends to install is fully proven and tested. After all, the quality and strength of the steel pier is just as important as the foundation contractor hired to install them.

Bookmark It Now!

The New **LREGSI.com** Website Is Launching!

The screenshot shows the website for L.R.E. Ground Services, Inc. The header features the company logo (a stylized 'LRE' with a house icon), the name 'L.R.E. Ground Services, Inc.', the tagline 'Providing a Solid Foundation of Trust', and the phone number '1-800-580-0229'. A navigation menu includes 'Home', 'About', 'Services', 'Testimonials', 'FAQ', 'Blog', and 'Contact'. The main content area is divided into several sections: a 'Contact LRE Today' form with fields for Name, Email, and Phone, and a 'CONTACT US NOW >' button; a 'Sinkhole Repair' image showing a large hole in a driveway; a 'Featured Testimonial' section; three smaller sections for 'Sinkhole Problem?', 'Cracked Brickwork?', and 'Listen To Our Podcast'; a 'Florida's Ground Modification Specialists' section with a photo of underpinning equipment and detailed text about the company's services and accreditations; and a footer with logos for BBB, FASE (Florida Association of Sinkhole Stabilization Specialists), and social media links for Facebook and Twitter.

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