

SOUTHWEST ADMINISTRATORS

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# Southwest Administrators

A DIVISION OF NPL CONSTRUCTION CO. —

MEETS THE CHALLENGES OF  
LAGUNA BEACH PROJECT

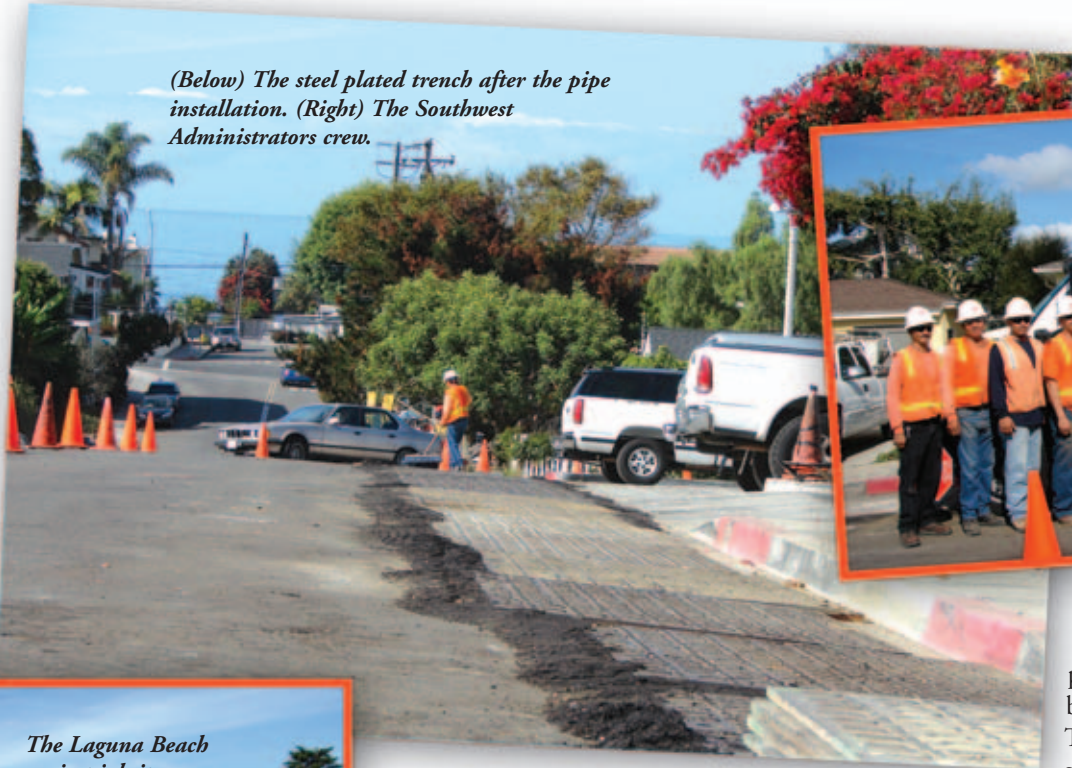
NPL Construction Company has been a leader in the natural gas industry for almost four decades. The company is dedicated to the highest quality and safety standards possible. Southwest Administrators [SWA], a division of NPL in the Southern California region, is currently busy working on an extremely challenging project for Southern California Gas Company in Laguna Beach.

The project entails the replacing of old gas pipelines along Park Ave. and Legion Ave. The existing pipeline is being replaced due to a combination of factors. Much of the pipeline being replaced is well over 50 years old. The old four-inch steel pipeline is being replaced with 1900 feet of three-inch plastic pipeline and 2200 feet of two-inch plastic pipeline. SWA is handling all trenching, service work and tie-ins that include a church, Laguna Beach High School and some 70 residences. The company is also providing tie-ins to seven side streets in the serviced area.

Due to the nature and location of the project, SWA has been faced with a number of challenges. The City of Laguna Beach mandates that 100 percent of all materials excavated in the trenching process be hauled away from the site. Due to a major portion of the project involving both the servicing and trenching adjacent to Laguna Beach High School, SWA has faced a number of restrictions. Under severe time constraints for this portion of the project, the company began work in August (after summer school was out) and needed to complete the work before fall semester began in September.

NPL

*(Below) The steel plated trench after the pipe installation. (Right) The Southwest Administrators crew.*



*The Laguna Beach project jobsite.*



**“We had some very big challenges with this project.”**

“We had some very big challenges with this project,” said Ken Carlson, Superintendent in the So. CA division. “Not only did we have a small window in which to complete work at the high school, we also were limited to the hours we could operate. Due to the high volume of traffic, we could only begin working after 9AM and had to be off the site by 3PM.”

Added to the tight schedule is a requirement SWA has to cover all open trenches with steel plates at the end of each work day.

“Getting all that heavy equipment into the site and moving the plates when you are dealing with areas of high volume traffic have made this project one of the most challenging projects we’ve worked on,” said Carlson.

SWA has been running two full crews as well as backhoe and dump truck operators during the project’s duration. The first step of the project has been trenching. On the Laguna project well over 1,000 tons of material have been removed and hauled away.

The second phase entails installing the pipeline, and the third step consists of placing sand with a backhoe so that there is a foot of cover holding the pipe.

What’s next is for SWA to “gas” the pipe – one section of the pipe is tied-in to an existing gas line. After the new line is gassed, all related services are replaced and the tie-ins are completed and the old line abandoned.

One Sack Slurry is then poured as a final step before asphaltting the street. The pack is a combination of sand and cement. Not

only does the slurry act as a solid cover for the pipeline, it also serves as an indicator for any other contractor that will trench the area on a subsequent project. The solution is also pliable enough to allow for the constant geological shifts Southern California experiences. By being pliable, an easier dig is allowed should any repair work be required in later years.

Using plastic pipe as opposed to steel is another major time and job saving factor. When steel lines are used, a pressure control fitting must be installed in order to shut off the gas so that repairs can be completed. Plastic pipelines allow the

*SWA used a John Deere 310G to steel plate the trench.*





*(Above) Ken Carlson, Superintendent.  
(Bottom) Trenching around sub structures.*

**“We consistently strive for the highest quality of workmanship...”**

*SWA used 2 JD 310G's on the project. All of their backhoes are John Deere.*



company to “pinch” the line to control the gas pressure for repair work, and eliminate any need for welding the pipe.

At the Laguna project, SWA performed some of the work “hot” – meaning that, because Laguna High School was operating at the time work was being performed, SWA fed gas to the school through a temporary line while installing the new pipeline. Once the new line was installed, the company performed a switch-over from old to new with the school never losing its source of gas.

SWA opened their southwest division in Ontario in 2001. At the time the company had three crews and 20 employees. By the end of their first year in business, they had ten crews operating.

Today SWA boasts over 40 crews working daily on a wide variety of projects throughout Southern California. The company covers 17 districts throughout

Orange County and portions of Los Angeles County, as well as in San Bernardino and Imperial Counties.

“This company is quality and safety driven,” said Carlson offering the primary reason for SWA’s unprecedented growth over the past five years.

“We consistently strive for the highest quality of workmanship in any project the company is involved with. We have a zero tolerance policy when it comes to our quality level of performance. Everyone who works for the company understands that quality and safety are of paramount importance.”

One way SWA has taken the lead in being pro-active in safety is to offer classes to newer employees with less experience working with gas. Classes are held in a traditional classroom setting, and teach safety measures in the handling of gas pipeline installation.

The company has also two Safety Directors on staff whose sole role is to ensure that all SWA projects conform to the highest safety regulations and standards.

SWA holds also weekly foreman meetings, allowing a forum for all local managers for input and

feedback and open discussion on various challenges faced on projects.

Carlson enjoys this very type of company philosophy and teamwork. “I started in the industry back in 1982” he said. “Over the years, we have seen greater challenges occur due to stricter regulations and restrictions dictated by local government entities. SWA is clearly the best company I’ve ever worked for. The company fosters a team work atmosphere. It is team driven with a common goal for doing the job safely and ensuring the highest quality. Working together to deal with the challenges a project offers is very rewarding. Ensuring that all of our customers are satisfied is the goal of the team. Knowing that the project is completed to everyone’s satisfaction is extremely satisfying.”

High quality standards, meeting the challenge and making safety a priority is what NPL and SWA are all about.

