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## As If They Were Never There

### NPL leaves behind no signs at governor's mansion using Vermeer® D7x11 to install gas line

When performing a high-profile utility installation job, there are a lot more variables to consider besides just getting the product in the ground.

NPL Construction Co. is used to these challenges. After more than 40 years in the business, it has become a nationally recognized leader in the natural gas industry, with nearly 3000 employees working across the country. NPL specializes in electric, fiber, telecom, cable TV and other utility installation and offers a full line of distribution infrastructure services. So when its Georgia office was called upon to install a natural gas replacement line at the governor's mansion, the company gladly stepped up to the task.

NPL was hired by Atlanta Gas Light Co. to install replacement gas lines in the area of the governor's mansion in northeast Atlanta. The mansion currently serves as the official home of Georgia's 81<sup>st</sup> governor, Sonny Perdue, and his wife, Mary. The three-floor, 30-room, Greek revival-style home was built in 1967 and sits on 18 acres (7 hectares) of well-maintained land. The beautifully landscaped grounds immediately surrounding the mansion posed the first obstacle for NPL crews.

"We couldn't make a mess. We had to make no disturbance on the grounds," says Ray Harris, project superintendent for NPL-Georgia. "Before starting the job, we sat down with Atlanta Gas Light, the governor's mansion staff and our superintendent, and it took a while to plan."

To install the new 2-inch (5 cm) plastic gas pipe while making the least amount of disturbance, NPL crews chose a Vermeer Navigator® D7x11 Series II horizontal directional drill. Its compact size made it the machine of choice because crews could easily access the jobsite and maneuver within the confined area and around obstacles such as fences and landscaping features.

On the first day at the jobsite, NPL crews set up the drill unit in the middle of the yard and placed plywood underneath its rubber tracks to

prevent any possible ground disturbance. At about 9 a.m., they began drilling the first shot of the 500-foot-long (152 m) bore toward the mansion. Though the operator had to navigate to avoid irrigation, power, telephone, cable and other utility lines, the first shot took only two hours to complete.

"It had the size and the ability to handle the job. The drill was so **light** that it did not mash the grass badly, so when we left, it was as if we were **never there.**"

The second shot was a bit more complicated. Using the D7x11 Series II unit again, Harris and his crews bored in the opposite direction of the first bore — across the road to the gas main. Not only did existing utilities stand in their way, but they also had to drill under a brick wall with

a wrought-iron fence. "When we started the second shot, we had to stay level about 150 feet (46 m) and then take a dive in pitch to get under the wall," Harris says. "It was all downhill to the wall, and then it leveled off at the road. So we had to dive and level off quick at 3 feet deep (.9 m). The hill set 6 feet (2 m) above the road."

Harris says he knew he could start drilling deep after the first 100 feet (31 m) and then level off over the next 100 feet (31 m), so that when they got to the wall, they would be at a depth of 3 feet (.9 m). This enabled them to cross the road, two fiber lines and a water main.

By 2:30 p.m. that same day, NPL crews completed the total 500-foot-long (152 m) bore, and they were ready to pull back the new 2-inch (5 cm) plastic gas pipe. Harris says the job was a success in large part because of the Vermeer drill.

"With an open mind, and by trusting the ability of the drill that we used, we were able to change pitch quickly," he says. "It had the size and the ability to handle the job. The drill was so light that it did not mash the grass badly, so when we left, it was as if we were never there." ■

