

# USBuildersReview

SPRING 2013 EDITION I

Safety is Our Way  
of Life

**Northline  
Utilities LLC**

Providing Maintenance  
and Modification  
Services for Tennessee  
Valley Authority

**G • UB • MK  
Constructors**

Providing Full Turnkey  
Electrical and Systems  
Solutions

**Prime  
Electric Inc.**

Cover Story Page 43

**Summit Contracting Group Inc.**  
Building On Trusted Relationships

# A-1 Masonry & Sandblasting Inc.

## Fulfilling Southwestern Sandblasting and Masonry Needs

Produced by Sean Barr & Written by Jeanee Dudley

Jennifer Roberts founded A-1 Masonry & Sandblasting Inc. (A-1) in 2002 to specialize in sandblasting and masonry work; the company now boasts a geographic footprint reaching across the southwestern United States. Roberts started A-1 just out of college, serving a growing need for reliable sandblasting services in the construction industry. Prospering over the course of more than a decade, A-1 has grown from a small operation to a nationally respected company, expanding its staff, equipment and services accordingly.

There are few woman-owned businesses across the country in the construction industry, but Roberts was born for building. “I grew up in construction,” she explains. “My father was a mason. When I finished college, I didn’t get into the graduate school I wanted. My dad said, ‘Hey, there’s a growing need for sandblasting, if you wanted to do that.’ So, I started small, and we’ve grown to where we are now.”

With a team ranging anywhere from 40 to 120 people – depending on the number of projects and the scope of work involved – A-1 is capable of tackling a diverse range of projects. Right now, Roberts reports that she has around 40 highly capable workers on staff.

### Projects and Services

Both ends of A-1 fill a market niche, and Roberts’ crew has secured steady work and a well-respected reputation with contractors across the region. “We’ve been around for a while,” Roberts explains. “We’re doing mostly military and public works projects. Just recently, we completed the Army Reserve Center in Sloan, Nev. We also finished the UNR Living Learning Center at the University of Nevada, Reno. It’s a five-story dormitory that involved block and brick.”





The sandblasting business is booming, as well; A-1 has developed relationships with several well-known local businesses. “We do work for Rick’s Restorations and Count’s Kustoms,” Roberts notes. “Both of these companies are featured in shows on the History Channel. We also have a mobile sandblasting unit; no one in Las Vegas has a system like ours. It allows A-1 to tackle any job, just about anywhere.

A-1 provides a consistent level of quality craftsmanship on each project; however, Roberts acknowledges that there have been a few standout jobs in the company’s recent history. “We’ve been involved with quite a few significant projects recently,” she explains. “A few of those projects have been the UNR Living Learning Center and the Bachelors Enlisted Living Quarters in 29 Palms, Calif., for the United States Marine Corps. Right now we’re getting started on three hangars in Yuma, Ariz., for the Marine Corps Air Station and the Fort Irwin Hospital in Fort Irwin, Calif., for the U.S. Army.”

Strong relationships keep A-1 strong, and Roberts notes the greatest indicator of strength is feedback from contractors. “We just had a meeting with a general contractor who we hadn’t worked with before,” she explains. “The contractor told me that he knew exactly who we are and that we do great work.”

Roberts also notes the strength of A-1 is built on top-notch employees. “I couldn’t ask for better foreman; their work ethic, performance, pride and commitment to the work correlates directly to the success of A-1,” she says.

### Picking Up the Bricks

Though the economic downturn has hit many businesses in the construction industry, A-1’s area has sustained some of the worst damage in the country. “Our biggest issues are economic,” says Roberts, describing the challenges her team has faced. “Within that, many of our competitors are not paying wages or maintain

insurance, as required by law and they’re saving a distinctive 15 to 20 percent on labor costs. It’s difficult to do things the right way and compete with people who don’t. I value our employees and when I hear other masonry contractors paying \$7 to \$12 an hour, I’m stunned. The work they do is worth more than that and I refuse to lower their standard of living with a low wage, which costs us jobs, but it’s simply the right thing to do.”

Labor is a big expense for most contractors, however, Roberts has constructed a streamlined business model that has helped to keep costs down. “I own all my own equipment, so our overhead is very low for our industry,” Roberts elaborates. “We also self-perform everything. When it comes to materials, we have a good network of quality vendors. We’ve sustained good relationships with many of them for as long as we’ve been in business.”

As the economy recovers elsewhere in the country, Roberts reports that Las Vegas and the surrounding areas are still struggling. “It’s happening a lot faster elsewhere in the U.S.,” she explains. “However, locally, I think we still have another two or three years before things start to turn around.”

Still, the A-1 team’s reputation holds steady. “Over the next few years, we’ll mostly be maintaining business,” Roberts continues. “For this locality, that is the best you can hope to do. We want to increase revenue. We want to increase production. We’re going to stick around.”

Roberts’ leadership has been the key to keeping the doors open in a hostile economic climate. She and her well-reputed team fill an important niche in the industry, and do so with integrity. Where others are cutting costs in the wrong places, A-1 is streamlined to better serve both valued clients and employees alike. The company offers professionalism and craftsmanship to discerning customers in the Southwest with Jennifer Roberts and the A-1 Masonry & Sandblasting Inc. team proudly leading the way. •



**CEMEX**  
Building the future™

---

CEMEX is a global building materials company that provides high quality products and reliable service to customers and communities throughout the Americas, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. We produce, distribute, and sell cement, ready-mix concrete, aggregates, masonry, and related building materials in more than 50 countries, and we maintain trade relationships in close to 100 nations.

**We look forward to continuing our successful business relationship with A1 Sandblasting and Masonry.**

