

Allied HVAC's recent projects have included a central plant for the California Department of Justice's forensic research laboratories.



Allied Changes Its Focus

After initially concentrating on residential and light commercial projects, Allied Heating and Air Conditioning Co. Inc. says it has found success in the hospital and biotech sectors.

BY ALAN DORICH

Although it has grown to be a much larger firm, Allied Heating and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Co. Inc. has retained a “small company feel,” Vice President of Marketing and Mechanical Engineer Theodore G. Garcia, P.E., says. “We’re a family oriented company, so we don’t really drive people into the ground here. We want our employees to have a good balance in their lives, and we work to support a corporate culture that fosters that.”

Based in San Rafael, Calif., the company is an HVAC and sheet metal contractor that serves commercial, industrial and institutional clients. Founders Mark Barger and Neil Anderson started the company in 1984.

Initially, Garcia says, Allied HVAC specialized in residential and light commercial projects, and then grew to larger commercial work. However, when Garcia joined the company 11 years ago, “We started focusing on laboratory work,” he remembers.

Garcia explains the company then began to serve the biotech sector as well as larger hospital projects. “[We also] started looking at more substantial commercial, institutional and industrial projects,” he recalls.

Today, Allied HVAC serves clients in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. “We [will] travel as far south as Palo Alto, [to] as far north as Windsor, and east to Livermore,” Garcia says.

In addition, the scope of the company’s work has increased. “We’ve gone from doing projects that were in the tens to low hundreds of thousands [of dollars] to the \$4-10 million range,” he says.

The company also has added a piping division, Garcia says. “We brought on [Piping Estimator and Project Manager Nathan Kruse and Superintendent Erik Dohemann] to lead the effort to grow this new division,” he states. “That’s what’s really made us a full-service HVAC company.”

The company has enjoyed success by focusing on both customer service and satisfaction, Garcia says. “When we do a project, [that focus is] our end-goal,” he says. “We know repeat business comes from that.”

Allied Heating and Air Conditioning Co. Inc.
www.alliedhvac.com

2007 sales: \$32 million

HQ: San Rafael, Calif.

Employees: 88

Service: HVAC and sheet metal contractor

Theodore G. Garcia: “We know repeat business comes from [customer service and satisfaction].”



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Laboratory Systems

Allied HVAC's recent projects have included the engineering and installation of a new HVAC system at the California Department of Justice's forensic research laboratories in Richmond, Calif. The company installed "a central plant, with four boilers, two chillers, and a series of circulating pumps," within two buildings, Garcia says. Its contracts on the projects totaled approximately \$6 million.

One building, he notes, was not set up for laboratory space, which required it to be retrofitted. "[That] made it a little bit more difficult [than] a standard lab project," Garcia notes, adding that the project was completed this past February.

In addition, the company has completed work on John Muir Core Laboratory in Concord, Calif., a 51,000-square-foot blood and infectious disease laboratory that was also engineered by Allied on a design/build contract, and, Emerystation East, a laboratory building in Emeryville, Calif., that covers more than 245,000 square feet. The facility was designed by Flack + Kurtz, an engineering firm.

At Emerystation East, "We did the core and shell of the HVAC system, which was [comprised] of a central plant with a chiller, boiler and cooling tower, and a series of air handlers and exhaust fans," Garcia says.

In addition to the core and shell, the company has taken part in tenant improvement work at Emerystation East, including a speculative lab space, a lab space for Bayer Pharmaceuticals and a space for Amyris Biotechnologies. "We're currently finishing [that] right now," Garcia reports, adding the company's total contracts on the project have been worth approximately \$8 million.

Moving With Trends

Rising material costs have affected Allied HVAC, yet "We haven't seen an impact so far of the slowing of the economy," Garcia reports. "Because we're focusing on biotech and [hospital projects], it hasn't hit us yet and hopefully, [it will] miss us."

In the meantime, the company has embraced the trend in green building, and is in the planning stages of getting its headquarters LEED certified. "We have several projects that are going to be LEED certified," Garcia says. "We're working on

Allied HVAC's work at the labs also included four boilers, two chillers and a series of circulating pumps.



two tenant improvements for Autodesk that are going to be LEED silver [certified], and one for UCSF that may be LEED gold."

'Where We Need to Move'

Before joining the company in 1997, Garcia says he gained experience in consulting engineering in the HVAC sector.

"[I] was actually in graduate school when I started working at Allied," he remembers.

He says he enjoys Allied HVAC's "small company" culture. In addition, "They've given me an opportunity to enter into the ownership of the company," he says, noting that he now owns stock in Allied HVAC.

Garcia says he sees "nothing but positive growth" ahead for the company. A key figure who leads its current direction is

President and CEO Sargon Michael, who started as the firm's executive vice president in 1995.

Previously, Michael worked for firms such as as Betchel Corp.

"He has an ability to see where the trends are going before a lot of the major players do, and get us into that market before it becomes too competitive," Garcia says.

For instance, "When the tenant improvement market was starting to wane in the early 2000s after the dot-com bust, he corrected our course," Garcia says. Michael directed the company to focus on the biotech sector. "He's been integral in charting our course and growing the company," Garcia explains. "He seems to have an intuitive feel for the market for where we need to move." ■