



Construction Trades Have Always Weathered the Storm

Acknowledging an Essential and Opportunistic Industry

By Blair Lavoie, President and CEO, MWH Constructors

Mothers and fathers begin dreaming of their children's potential often before their sons and daughters even take their monumental first steps. Are these hopeful parents looking down upon a future doctor, lawyer, dentist or financier? But why is the potential of working in the construction trades generally not included in these aspirations? As we learn to navigate the world in this new normal that the COVID-19 pandemic has created, one positive takeaway to arise is that construction trades have been universally deemed essential for our communities to thrive. Our industry presents engaging, impactful and necessary opportunities for the workers of tomorrow.



An MWH safety manager surveys a jobsite in Colorado.



An MWH employee walks a construction site in Denver.

Broad Benefits

The benefits of working in the construction industry are multiple. For those craftworkers where physical labor plays a vital role as part of the job, it has long been known that working with one's hands helps to establish a sense of pride, especially when viewing the finished product. Additionally, there have been multiple studies conducted that outline the positive results that a more active lifestyle and work environment have on the human body, such as lower stress levels, increased cognitive function, more adequate sleep and reduced likelihood of obesity.

But, the essential roles of our industry are not limited to just those with boots on the ground. A successful project also relies on individuals in a variety of professional fields and departments: business development, estimating, contracting, legal, digital/virtual construction, human resources, diversity/inclusion and sustainability, to name just a few. The multifaceted needs of construction are the greatest strengths in ensuring that our industry weathers these uncertain times successfully and promotes future growth through meeting the aspirations of younger generations. Graduates today place a greater emphasis than ever before on issues such as equality, diversity, environmental conscientiousness and the societal footprint they will leave behind. Construction careers represent a chance to directly address these concerns in an industry poised for growth even despite the unprecedented challenges COVID-19 presents that have crippled other industries.

Strong and Essential

While most sectors of the economy have been deeply and possibly irreversibly impacted by COVID-19,



MWH employees walk a jobsite in New Mexico.

construction and engineering services have continued relatively uninterrupted. In fact, while many companies in other industries across the country have instituted layoffs, furloughs and hiring freezes, firms such as MWH Constructors, a national leader in water and wastewater treatment construction, are actively hiring. It's true that safety procedures and office dynamics have changed due to recent events, but graduates and jobseekers should be confident in knowing that even in a pandemic, the construction and infrastructure needs of this country remain.

I return to something my father would always tell me, "If you know how to work with your hands, no matter the situation, you'll have something to fall back on." Construction today still holds this same sentiment. In a period of unknowns, some things have become more concrete. We know now, more than ever, that our industry remains essential and presents the opportunity to address the issues of today to create a better tomorrow.

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