

VINCE LOPEZ JR. & SONS



From left, Vince Lopez Jr., Vince Lopez III and Butch Lopez.

Chance encounter leads to 38-year bond

A year after starting his backhoe service company in Santa Maria, Vince Lopez Jr. was doing excavation work at a residence when the homeowner noticed his work quality. The man, a SoCalGas field supervisor, asked Lopez if he would be interested in bidding for work with the utility. That was in 1980, and Vince Lopez Jr. & Sons has been working with SoCalGas ever since.

"SoCalGas was our first major customer," says the founder's son, Vince Lopez III, president of Vince Lopez Jr. & Sons, noting the company performed trenching work for natural gas lines in the early years.

The disabled veteran-owned enterprise with 35 employees has expanded its services to include underground utilities, asphalt, concrete, demolition, sewer lines and more. Now the company performs paving and concrete restoration work for SoCalGas in several counties.

The younger Lopez, who was a medic in the U.S. Navy, and his brother, Butch, who serves as secretary, treasurer and project manager, helped propel the company's growth by expanding their customer base.

Still, the utility remains one of the company's largest and ongoing clients with about five employees dedicated to SoCalGas projects.

"SoCalGas helped us get the business up and running," says Lopez. "They were instrumental in helping us hire more employees, add new equipment and open doors."