

San Antonio

CONSTRUCTION NEWS

The Industry's Newspaper

BACK TO SCHOOL

www.constructionnews.net ★ (830) 500-0071 ★ Volume 26 ★ Number 9 ★ SEPTEMBER 2026

Wilborn Steel Celebrates 40 Years of Serving Texas Construction

Wilborn Steel is celebrating 40 years in business, marking a significant milestone for one of South Texas' longstanding structural steel fabrication companies. Founded in 1986 by **Tom Wilborn Jr.** and **Ernest Wilborn**, the company has grown from a small fabrication operation into a trusted partner for commercial, industrial, institutional, and public-sector construction projects throughout Texas.

Over the past four decades, Wilborn Steel has earned a reputation for delivering high-quality fabricated steel products while maintaining a strong commitment to safety, craftsmanship, and customer service. What began as a 1,600-square-foot shop with just two employees has expanded into a modern fabrication facility serving contractors and developers across the state.

The company specializes in structural steel fabrication, miscellaneous metals, industrial steel components, and custom fabrication services. Its work can be found in schools, healthcare facilities, manufacturing plants,



Tom Wilborn Jr. and Ernest Wilborn

municipal projects, office buildings, and commercial developments throughout Texas.

"Reaching 40 years in business is a testament to the dedication of our employees, the loyalty of our customers, and the strong relationships we have built throughout the construction industry," company leadership said. "We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the growth of Texas and look forward to serving our clients for many years to come."

As Texas continues to experience rapid population and economic growth, Wilborn Steel remains positioned to support the state's expanding construction market. The company continues to invest in its workforce, fabrication capabilities, and project delivery processes to meet the evolving needs of general contractors, developers, and public agencies.

The 40-year milestone reflects not only the company's longevity but also its commitment to maintaining the values that have guided the organization since its founding—quality workmanship, dependable service, and lasting partnerships.

Connecting with Nature



The **SpawGlass** Civil team joined City of Buda, TX - City Government and **Ten Eyck Landscape Architects** to break ground on construction of the City's new **John D. and Byrd Mims Garison Memorial Park**.



Once complete, the 40-acre park along Onion Creek will offer a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities, including trails, pavilions, nature play areas and water access, while preserving the area's natural beauty.



Dynamic Speaker Series Highlights Mental Health & Giving Back

Some motivational speakers leave you inspired. Others give you goosebumps and walk away with misty eyes. The keynote speaker for Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC) South Texas Chapter 2026 Dynamic Speaker Series did just that. **Justin Wren**, a humanitarian, MMA fighter, author, mental health advocate, and Founder & CEO of Fight for the Forgotten, shared his incredible journey and challenged guests to think differently about how they lead, how they care for themselves and others, and the purpose behind what we do.

This event was about total human health but became so much more. The afternoon was an experience that changed minds, touched hearts, and reminded those in the audience WHY we do what we do. ABC South Texas invests in people, creates connections, and provides opportunities that can make a difference in their members’ lives, their companies, our industry, and our communities. During the post-event networking, that message of purpose turned into action as members came together to support Fight for the Forgotten, raising

funds for two water wells in Uganda. A special thank you to the sponsors who helped make this experience possible: Robins & Morton, Pesado Construction Company, Americrane Rentals, CENTRAL ELECTRIC ENT & CO., Bandy Constructors and Quarter Moon Plumbing. “At ABC South Texas, we think outside the box and pride ourselves in offering different, unique opportunities for our members and look forward to continuing this in the future.” *Photos courtesy of Mary C. Haskin Photography*





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Inspiring the Next Generation

On Aug. 4 the **TCS Mechanical** high school summer interns had the incredible opportunity to tour the Texas State University-Hilltop project, gaining a firsthand look at the planning, coordination, and craftsmanship that go into a large-scale construction project.

A huge thank you to the **SpawGlass** team for welcoming the interns, sharing your knowledge, and giving them an inside look at the project. They also want to recognize their amazing TCS Mechanical safety team for helping make this experience safe, educational, and successful for everyone involved.



Marketing Momentum

Catamount Constructors is excited to announce the hiring of **Christina Zavislan** as Director of Marketing. Zavislan brings more than 25 years of marketing and communications experience across the commercial real estate and construction industries. Throughout her career, she has led strategic marketing initiatives, brand development, communications, business development partnerships, thought leadership, industry engagement, and high-performing marketing teams.



“As Catamount continues to grow, our marketing function is central to supporting our clients, our business development efforts, and our employee-owners,” said **Elaine Kanelos**, Vice President, National Business Development at Catamount Constructors. “Christina brings the experience, vision, and collaborative leadership style to elevate our brand, deepen support for our teams, and advance our business development

strategy. We’re excited to welcome her to the team.”
“I’m thrilled to join Catamount at such an exciting time in the company’s growth,” said Zavislan. “What immediately stood out to me was the strength of the company’s culture and its commitment to employee ownership. I’m excited to bring my relationship-led leadership approach to Catamount and partner with its talented teams to help shape what’s next.”

Job Well Done

Masters Electrical Services Ltd. couldn’t be prouder of their HR Manager and Vice President, **Alyssa Spaw** for being honored with the Rising Star Award by Seguin Young Professionals.



Back to School



The Associated General Contractors (AGC) San Antonio hosted their Construction Leadership Council (CLC) Annual School Supply Drive & Happy Hour on Aug. 6 at McIntyre’s sponsored by Mission Roll Off. They are happy to announce they filled 15 boxes to donate to the San Antonio ISD Foundation.

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Women In the Field

For women in the construction industry, there is no magic equation or wand for balancing work and family. Women tend to have to work harder in earning the respect among their team, face different expectations and must push themselves to go after opportunities instead of holding back. The Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC) South Texas Chapter LOGIC Affinity Group gathered at Joeris General Contractors where a panel of three women with different paths shared their stories of how they got started, what advice they'd give to their younger self, and how valuable a support system is to keep each other going. A common theme among the panelists included this piece of advice: Find your tribe. Army Veteran **Andrea Hughes** of **Cadence McShane** shared "Don't be afraid to do the right thing and stand up for yourself." Her past experience includes military logistics/construction and work on federal projects with her present focus is on multi-family. **Stephanie Alvarado** of **SpawGlass** stumbled into construction, starting off on the admin side. "A title should not sway a person", Alvarado shared. The impact you want to make is your call. She is now the Business Development and Diversity Division Coordinator and is excited about what lies ahead. While she shared many good bits of advice, one that stood out was "have an open dialogue. Don't be afraid to mingle with competitors." The third panelist, **Karen Fletcher** is a Project Executive for **Joeris General Contractors**. Fletcher brings close to 20 years of experience, specializing in complex healthcare construction. Karen encouraged the audience to "know your worth." Moderator and co-chair of LOGIC reiterated that by saying "those who ask for more, get more." LOGIC continues to be a great community for women in the construction industry, no matter your role.

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San Antonio CONSTRUCTION NEWS

Publisher..... Haley Mathews

Editor..... Andi Mathews

Production..... Kayla Johnson

Staff Writer.....Carol Wiatrek Rothman

Advertising..... Haley Mathews

Managing Editor:
Andi@ConstructionNews.net

San Antonio Area Counties
Atascosa, Bexar, Bandera, Comal,
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Construction News Home Office
P.O. Box 310207 • New Braunfels, TX 78131
830-500-0071
www.ConstructionNews.net

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Prior to his military career, **Ignacio “Nacho” Villarreal, Jr.** worked for a plumber where he began learning his plumbing trade. He continued expanding his knowledge while serving in the U.S. Army where he did a lot of plumbing for distribution systems, gas and water. In 1981, while in military service, Nacho earned his Master Plumber license and started **J.R.’s Plumbing**.

In 2007, Nacho hired **Angelica (Angie) Gonzalez** as his office manager. Within a few years Gonzalez began overseeing the day-to-day operations. “I went from office manager to business manager. I was helping him with all the jobs doing estimates, purchasing, insurance, vehicles, and HR. Suddenly, I’m wearing all the hats, and he was out in the field grading the guys,” recalls Gonzalez.

Fast forward to 2018, Nacho asked Gonzalez if she wanted to buy the company because he was ready to step back. Afterall, he had built a successful business after a successful military career.

“I wasn’t ready,” says Gonzalez. “I said I have to do some homework before I answer that. It took me two years. In May of 2021, I came back and said yes, I’ll do it.”

After doing her homework and getting all the answers needed along with all the necessary certifications, insurances, and capital, Gonzalez proceeded to buy J.R.’s Plumbing. On Aug. 1, 2021, signatures were exchanged and Gonzalez became the owner and president of J.R.’s Plumbing.

For many years, J.R.’s Plumbing was strictly a service and repair company for both residential and commercial. But as Gonzalez began wearing more hats and taking on more of a leadership role, the company slowly evolved into commercial remodel and tenant finish-outs for restaurants, strip centers, office buildings, and more.

“I want J.R.’s Plumbing to continue to be there for the community where we can be trusted to do a good job for a fair price while also developing successful, passionate,



L-R: Angie Gonzalez and Nacho Villarreal, Jr.

honest plumbers. I want us to grow steadily and gain knowledge in new methods and plumbing applications.”

For over 30 years, J.R.’s Plumbing has worked with San Antonio Water Systems (SAWS) in their endeavors for water conservation as one of SAWS’ preferred contractors. These endeavors are water conservation programs that allow SAWS to help the community in the lower income areas of town or the elderly with plumbing repairs. For many years, J.R.’s was the only provider in the water conservation programs, now they are one of two preferred contractors.

Celebrating her 20th work anniversary with J.R.’s Plumbing and her 5th anniversary as president, Gonzalez is steadfast in her desire to develop successful, passionate, and honest plumbers. She is currently serving as President of the Board for the Plumbing, Heating, Cooling, Contractors Association, (PHCC) San Antonio Chapter and actively participates in the PHCC San Antonio Chapter Apprenticeship Academy. She is also involved in the San

Antonio “Ready to Work” program and through her involvement with the Hispanic Contractors Association de San Antonio (HCA de SA) works with Alamo Colleges, joining boards that help establish curriculums and dictate what plumbers should be doing and helping bridge all the different organizations like PHCC’s apprenticeship program and HCA’s network with the Alamo colleges.

“As members of the PHCC SA, we are able to sponsor our employees to earn while they learn,” adds Gonzalez. “They attend school through a typical school calendar year, twice a week for a total of six hours per week. This apprenticeship program helps build better plumbers while at the same time helping reduce live and learn liabilities on the job for the employer. It inspires the employees by knowing the end goal is the next level of earning a license and better income.”

But Gonzalez isn’t just celebrating her anniversaries with the company, she and everyone at J.R.’s plumbing celebrates 45 years in business this year. They celebrate the legacy Nacho laid before them and they celebrate the future of J.R.’s Plumbing with Gonzalez and Nacho guiding their team into the future.

“Nacho is my mentor,” Gonzalez proudly states. “He guides me all day long, every day. He instilled in me valuable business sense, lessons, and knowledge. He entrusted me with continuing his legacy, and that gave me all the inspiration I needed to carry it forward with pride. And while he may not be the owner of J.R.’s Plumbing, he is still involved, guiding and overseeing the guys in the field.”

J.R.’s Plumbing will continue to stay for the community. “We want to be the plumbers with integrity, to stay for the community and be the people they can trust. We don’t want to be a big franchise or national organization that does plumbing in San Antonio. We want to stay local in the community and try to provide fair prices for our residences.” -cwr

mikeroweWORKS Foundation:
Building the Next Generation of Skilled Workers

As commercial construction continues to grow across Central Texas, contractors are facing a challenge that cannot be solved simply by adding more projects, equipment or technology: finding enough skilled people to perform the work.

Electricians, plumbers, welders, HVAC technicians, pipefitters, carpenters and other skilled craft professionals remain essential to virtually every commercial construction project. The mikeroweWORKS Foundation, founded by television host and skilled-trades advocate Mike Rowe, is working to encourage more Americans to pursue those careers.

Rowe established the nonprofit foundation in 2008 after years of traveling across the country and meeting the men and women who perform many of America’s essential jobs. His experiences while hosting Dirty Jobs helped reinforce a message that would eventually become central to the foundation: a four-year college degree is not the only pathway to a successful career.

The foundation’s mission is straightforward - help close America’s skills gap by changing the way people think about skilled work and helping individuals obtain the training necessary to enter in-demand occupations.

\$10 Million Scholarship Push in 2026

The foundation’s best-known initiative is its Work Ethic Scholarship Program, and in 2026 that effort has grown substantially.

The mikeroweWORKS Foundation says it is awarding \$10 million in Work Ethic Scholarships during 2026 to people willing to learn a skilled trade. The program is designed to help students pursue training for occupations where employers continue to need qualified workers.

Unlike traditional scholarships centered primarily on academic achievement, the Work Ethic Scholarship



Program places considerable emphasis on an applicant’s attitude, personal responsibility, work ethic and willingness to learn an in-demand skill. That approach has obvious relevance to commercial construction. Electrical, plumbing, HVAC, welding and numerous other craft careers require specialized training but don’t necessarily require the traditional four-year university route. For contractors struggling to build their future workforce, the foundation’s \$10 million commitment represents a significant investment in getting more people trained and into skilled careers.

Changing the Perception of the Trades

Money alone, however, won’t completely solve the workforce problem.

One of Mike Rowe’s central arguments has long been that America needs to change the way it talks about work.

For decades, many students were encouraged to view a four-year university education as the preferred route to a successful career, while vocational and technical education sometimes received considerably less attention. The mikeroweWORKS Foundation is attempting to change that perception. Its message isn’t that college is bad. Rather, the argument is that college isn’t the only

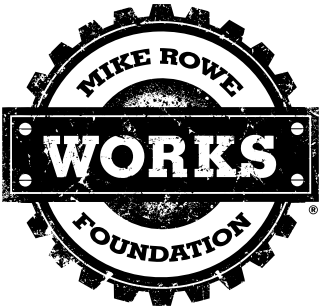
path to success. For some students, an apprenticeship, technical school or industry training program can lead directly into an occupation that is in high demand and offers considerable long-term earning potential.

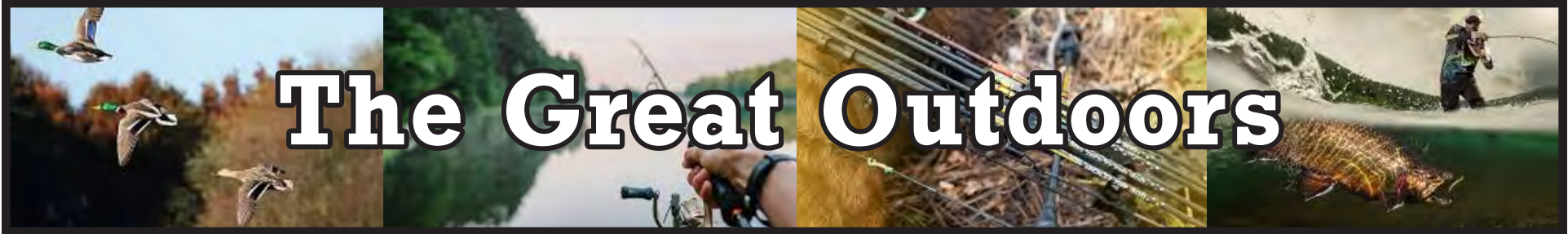
From Scholarships to a Workforce Pipeline

The developments of 2026 represent an important evolution of that effort. On one side is the \$10 million Work Ethic Scholarship commitment, helping individuals obtain training for skilled careers. On the other is Meta’s \$115 million first-year investment in America’s Workforce Academy, connecting training more directly with employers and jobs.

Together, the initiatives demonstrate what could become an increasingly important model for workforce development: industry, training organizations and skilled-trades advocates working together to recruit people, pay for their training and connect them directly with employers. For Central Texas contractors facing persistent workforce shortages, that model is worth watching closely.

Commercial buildings may begin with developers, architects, engineers and financing, but eventually somebody has to pour the concrete, install the electrical system, run the plumbing, fabricate the steel, install the HVAC equipment and operate the machinery. Technology may continue to change construction. But skilled people will still have to build it.





The Great Outdoors



Ken Milam

Ken Milam's Fishing Line

Since 1981, Ken Milam has been guiding fishing trips for striped bass on Lake Buchanan in the Texas Hill Country.



Dog Days

Three buzzards are sitting on the walkway to the dock. They are fluffing and snapping at each other while staring intently at a dead fish lazily floating into shore. The fish is still 20ft out, giving the buzzards a few more minutes to squabble before dinner arrives. Finally, they just all fly away, leaving the fish to bob along his way without them.

I know just how they feel. I don't wanna do anything either. Nothing looks good to eat. It's too hot. Got lots of stuff I could be doing, but I just can't seem to make myself move!

Welcome to the Dog Days of Summer. It's when you just feel dog-tired, go around with a hang-dog expression on your face, feeling dogged out and wanting to join the dogs under the cool front porch. If summer were any longer, would we just keep on naming the days after slower and draggier creatures? How about the Slug Days of summer, when it's all you can do to just drag yourself across the hot sticky pavement. Enough of that!

The Dog Days have always been with us. It's that time of year when summer has officially worn out its welcome. Right between high summer when we are still enjoying being rid of winter and Indian summer, when we can begin to feel the first subtle changes of fall coming and we want to cherish every last warm afternoon, because we know are going to miss them when

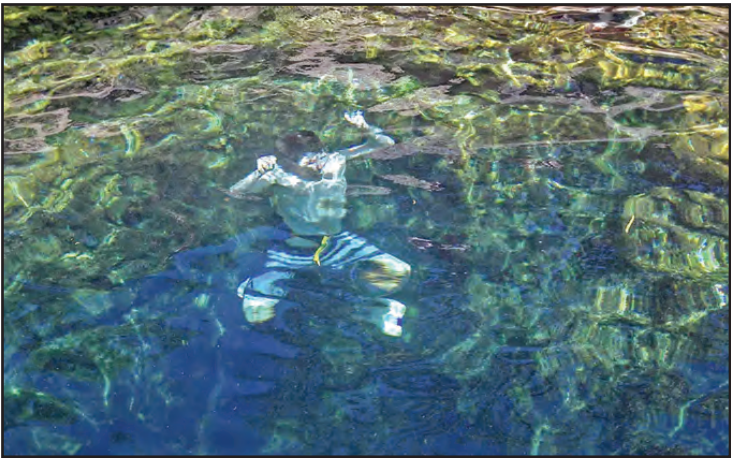
winter comes. Humans are not the only ones who go through this. Neither are buzzards and dogs.

The thing I know best is fish, stripers in particular, and they can really have a tough go of it this time of year. Since stripers come from the Atlantic, the kind of long hot summers we treat them to in Texas are not well received. They don't tolerate the high water temperatures very well and they feel a strong tendency to want to be traveling downstream, heading back to salt-water for winter. In a lake they just end up like my pup that sleeps by the back door. They know they need out, but they can't get there. In just a few weeks it will cool off enough to trigger the stripers to start to feed hard in preparation for spawning in the spring.

This summer we have been able to keep the striper bite going using live bait and switching over to downriggers if they get finicky. They have been steady for this time of year with some hint of top-water feeding schools starting up. There is nothing like sneaking in to fish on a school of topwater stripers as they roll and splash while feeding!

If you find yourself in the Hill Country hunting doves or getting the deer lease ready, save a little time to get on the water. Some the best fishing and prettiest days on the lake are just around the corner. It's hard to beat a fish fry in the pasture under a starry sky!

Jacob's Well Springs Back



Art Larson, swims up from the deep end of the well at Hays County's Jacob's Well Natural Area in Wimberley, Texas, on April 30, 2014.

Water is spilling from Jacob's Well again after mid-July storms sent rain into the underground water supply feeding the Wimberley landmark, giving visitors a glimpse of the spring looking more like its old self after years of drought and increased local water usage.

The improvement was dramatic but brief. Jacob's Well had spent much of 2026 dry or barely moving before its flow surged Jul. 15. At its strongest, the spring was pushing out roughly 170 gallons of water every second — nearly six times its usual rate. By Monday morning, that had fallen to about 10 gallons a second, or roughly one-third of normal.

So water is moving through Jacob's Well again, but the spring has not recovered.

The water comes from the Trinity Aquifer, an underground system of water-filled limestone. Rain that falls over the aquifer's recharge area can seep through cracks and caves before eventually emerging from Jacob's Well.

Hays County officials said the latest surge was likely connected to rainfall near Johnson City. But one storm can create only a temporary flush of water. The spring needs sustained rainfall to refill the aquifer as homes and businesses continue drawing groundwater from it.

Similar rain-driven increases have quickly faded in recent years, and Jacob's Well continues to face the effects of prolonged drought and groundwater pumping.

Can you swim at Jacob's Well?

Swimming has been prohibited at Jacob's Well since June 2022 because low water levels created unsafe conditions. On July 22, Hays County said the closure would remain in effect until further notice.

The natural area is still open for hiking and viewing the well. Admission is free, and visitors do not need a reservation. The park is open daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., with no entry after 5:30 p.m.



David Baker looks down at Jacob's Well on December 16, 2024 in Wimberley, Texas. Baker is the founder of the Watershed Association, a nonprofit that is trying to save water resources in the area. "It seems insane that we don't have rules to protect something like this," Baker said.



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Texas Dove Season Looks Promising as Hunters Prepare for Sept. 1 Opener

For many Texas hunters, September 1 marks the unofficial beginning of fall. Shotguns replace fishing rods, camouflage comes out of the closet and hunters begin watching freshly cut fields and watering holes for the familiar sight of mourning and white-winged doves. With the 2026 dove opener approaching, hunters across Central Texas have plenty of reasons to start getting ready. The 2026–27 season will begin Tuesday, Sept. 1, across all three Texas dove zones. For Central Texas hunters, the first segment of the Central Zone season runs Sept. 1 through Oct. 25, followed by a second season from Dec. 11 through Jan. 14.

Perhaps the biggest change this year comes farther south. The South Zone will also open Sept. 1, bringing its opening date in line with the rest of Texas. Its first season runs through Oct. 25 before reopening Dec. 18 through Jan. 21.

Central Texas Should Offer Plenty of Opportunity

Around Central Texas, the final days of August can make a tremendous difference in where hunters find birds. Mourning doves and whitewings will move quickly as food and water conditions change. Sunflower fields, harvested grain fields, native seed-producing areas and dependable water sources can all concentrate birds. A field covered with doves a week before the season isn't necessarily guaranteed to hold them on opening morning.

That's why scouting remains one of the most important parts of a successful opening weekend.

Hunters should spend the final week before the opener watching fields during the early morning and late afternoon. Pay attention not only to the number of birds but also to their flight paths. A small tank, tree line or opening between fields can sometimes produce better shooting than sitting directly over the primary feeding area. White-winged doves have also become an increasingly important part of the Texas dove hunting experience. Once associated primarily with South Texas, whitewings are now familiar sights throughout many communities and agricultural areas across Central Texas.

Weather Could Be the Wild Card

September dove hunting in Texas is always heavily influenced by the weather. A strong late-August or early-September front can move mourning doves out of an area almost overnight. Rain can have the opposite effect by spreading birds across the countryside as additional water becomes available.

Hot, dry conditions generally make dependable water sources especially valuable. Under those conditions, hunters who locate a tank or pond being regularly used by birds can sometimes find excellent late-afternoon shooting. That unpredictability is also part of what makes dove hunting so popular. Conditions can change from one day to the next, and hunters who continue scouting throughout the season often have the advantage.

Know the Regulations

The statewide daily bag limit for the regular 2026–27 dove season is 15 birds in the aggregate, consisting of

mourning, white-winged and white-tipped doves, with no more than two white-tipped doves included in the daily limit. The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit. Legal shooting hours are from one-half hour before sunrise until sunset. Hunters should also remember that a Migratory Game Bird Endorsement and HIP certification are required. Hunters should check the current Texas Parks and Wildlife Department regulations for the county they plan to hunt before heading afield.

A Texas Tradition Returns

Dove hunting remains one of the state's great outdoor traditions because it doesn't require an elaborate setup. A shotgun, shells, a bucket or stool and a good field can be enough for an enjoyable morning or evening with family and friends. For many young hunters, a dove field is also where they experience their first hunt. And unlike some forms of hunting, the social side is almost as important as the number of birds brought home. Opening weekend dove hunts often end around a grill, with hunters swapping stories about the shots they made — and usually even more stories about the ones they missed. Across Central Texas, hunters will soon be watching power lines, sunflower fields and evening skies a little more closely.

September 1 is almost here. And with another Texas dove season about to begin, it's time to clean the shotgun, find a few boxes of shells and start scouting.

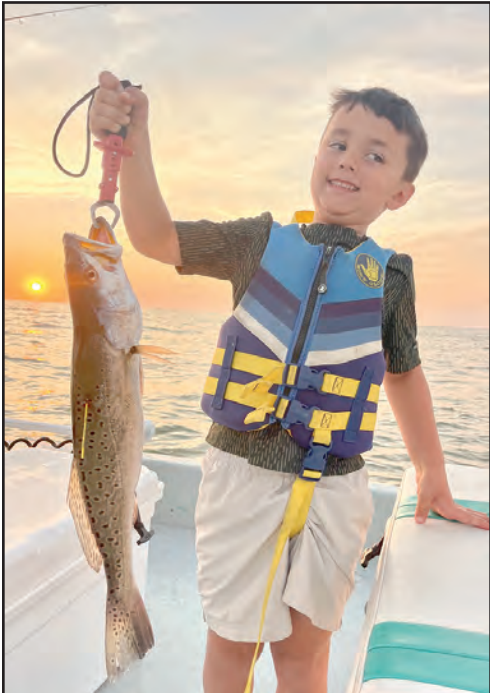
Source: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 2026–27 Dove Regulations

You gotta have guts, cuts, and some deep water



I was reminded of this just the other day. We have had more water move out on a wading trip where we would generally pick on the edge of the shoreline where the thick grass starts to break up into deeper patches, the water just wasn't high enough. One of those mornings where your whole plan just went in the trash can. You've already used every color lure you thought to bring and still nothing is interested. We spread the group out along the shoreline trying to work the solo reds in the real skinny grass only to watch them follow a lure but never attack. We can't even grind out some solo reds! The cooler stays empty, no new pics for the phone. We have already burned up the best two hours of the morning. Alright, back in the boat, we need deeper water closer to shore. Made a little run to where some deeper guts led back into the back lakes along the San Jose shoreline. Over the next 3 hours we ground out our fish. It's very easy to look at a shoreline and like it for many reasons. But one big reason may

not be there and it may not be as obvious. As we were wrapping up I walked through the middle of one of the guts that I knew I wouldn't disappear in (yes, after Harvey some of these guts are deep). The answer gave me goosebumps, the water in the guts was an obvious couple degrees cooler than the water around it. It was even cooler than the water off the shoreline that was past the waist. Why? I have no honest answer for that. Although, it explains why we get deeper in the late summer on the boat working reefs in the middle of the bay with deep water flowing over them, working the shaded deep water around the old oil rigs. Bonus, any shade in deeper water will begin to start holding tripletail soon. Not all of it but some of it will. If the original plan stops working or never starts... cooler heads will prevail, more so the fish heads. We don't get a break from the sun for another couple months. At some point this month we should see the water start coming in. If we are even luckier a front to take a couple degrees out of the water in general. It will start to be time to begin playing with live shrimp again. Keep an eye out at the bait stand for shrimp size. I call it magical but it's probably the bait shops knowing they can make more money off shrimp but the size will get better and that is my cue to start carrying it again. Good luck out there! Tight lines!



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Rockport Aquarium Set to Rise Again Nearly a Decade After Hurricane Harvey



Nearly nine years after Hurricane Harvey devastated the Texas Coastal Bend, one of Rockport’s beloved waterfront attractions is finally preparing to make a comeback. The Aquarium at Rockport Harbor, destroyed when Hurricane Harvey slammed into the Texas coast in August 2017, is moving toward construction of a new facility at Rockport Harbor. Current state filings list construction beginning Oct. 15, 2026, with completion scheduled for April 30, 2027.

For Rockport, the project represents more than the return of another tourist attraction. The aquarium was a place where visitors, schoolchildren, anglers and coastal residents could get an up-close look at the fish and marine life inhabiting the bays and waters surrounding the community. Its return will restore a piece of Rockport that has been missing since Harvey.

Harvey Changed Rockport Overnight

Hurricane Harvey made landfall near Rockport on Aug. 25, 2017, as a Category 4 hurricane, bringing catastrophic winds and widespread destruction to Aransas County. The Aquarium at Rockport Harbor was among the community facilities lost in the storm. Aransas County’s updated hazard mitigation plan identifies the aquarium, county courthouse and other public facilities among structures destroyed during Harvey. The destruction left Rockport without the small waterfront aquarium that had become known for showcasing marine species familiar to Coastal Bend fishermen and families. While much of Rockport rebuilt in the years following Harvey, the aquarium remained one of the notable pieces still missing from the harbor. That is finally changing.

New Aquarium Planned at the Harbor

According to an August 2026 filing with the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, the new 3,436-square-foot Aquarium at Rockport Harbor will be constructed at 706 Navigation Circle. Plans call for a pre-engineered metal building containing the aquarium along with a service area, office, restrooms and mechanical mezzanine. The project also includes a deck and accessible ramp. The TDLR filing lists an estimated construction cost of \$1.5 million, while reports on the broader project have placed the overall investment at approximately \$2.2 million to \$2.3 million. The project has been years in the making. Rockport city documents show that plans to replace the aquarium were already moving through the local approval process in 2024, when officials considered design approval for a replacement structure and decking at the harbor. Now the project has advanced from an idea and design effort toward actual construction.

Bringing Coastal Education Back to Rockport

The aquarium’s importance has always gone beyond simply displaying fish. Rockport sits in the middle of one of Texas’ most productive coastal ecosystems. Aransas Bay, Copano Bay, Redfish Bay and nearby Gulf waters support everything from redfish, speckled trout and flounder to crabs, shrimp and an enormous variety of other marine life. A local aquarium gives visitors an opportunity to understand the same ecosystem that supports Rockport’s recreational fishing industry and attracts anglers from across Texas. That connection between fishing, conservation and education should

once again be a major part of the aquarium’s role in the community. Before Harvey, the facility featured living exhibits emphasizing local species and helped educate visitors about coastal resources and marine conservation. For young visitors in particular, seeing the creatures living beneath the surface of the bays can create a connection to the coast that simply cannot be duplicated in a classroom.

Another Milestone in Rockport’s Recovery

Rockport has undergone a remarkable transformation since Harvey. Homes, businesses, bait stands, public facilities and tourism attractions have been rebuilt throughout the area. Rockport Beach recovered, the arts community expanded and the harbor again became a center of activity. The aquarium has remained one of the lingering reminders of what the storm took away. Rebuilding it nearly a decade later provides another milestone in Rockport’s long recovery.

If the current construction schedule holds, work will begin this fall and wrap up in spring 2027 — positioning the aquarium to return as visitors begin arriving for another busy Texas coastal summer. For longtime Rockport residents and visitors who remember the old aquarium, seeing a new building rise at the harbor will carry special meaning. And for a new generation of children visiting Rockport, the aquarium will offer something even more important — a chance to discover the fish, wildlife and remarkable coastal environment that make this part of Texas special. Nearly ten years after Harvey took it away, the Aquarium at Rockport Harbor is coming back.



Eric White of *Freedom Painters* enjoyed a fun day on the water



Team DSM (*Dunnam Safety Management*) was proud to sponsor and participate in the 11th Annual *SpawGlass* CJ Strnadel Fishing Tournament. Bonus, each angler hit their limit of redfish! Way to go, (L-R) **Jake McNamara**, **Ted Dunnam** and **Thomas E. Dunnam IV**.

Celebrating a legend

A legend in his own time, as well as in the construction industry, **John Freund** and his brother, **Robert Freund**, started **Comfort-Air Engineering Inc.** when John was 33 years old.

"We started Comfort-Air because we felt if others could hire us to work for them, and make money, we could "go it alone" and cut out the "middle man."

John was born on the evening of Aug. 15, 1931 at Seton Hospital. He lived at 1212 West 31st Street in Austin, TX until he was 22 years old. He attended Austin public schools until he graduated from Austin High School in January 1949. After graduating, John enrolled in The University of Texas where he graduated with a BSME in June 1954. A year later, in December 1955, John married the love of his life, **Marilyn Flinn** at University Methodist Church in Austin. Their ceremony was performed by **Dr. Edmon Heinson**. Together, they raised three beautiful girls – **Andrea, Lisa, and Myra**; and one handsome son, **Thomas**.

When Comfort-Air was started, there were three employees. John, Robert, and **Byron Mapes** we all equal owners. Mapes, who was married to their cousin, was a retired Air Force Lt. Col. And was greatly admired by John and Robert for many years. John was president of Comfort-Air, and his brother Robert was vice president the entire time they were gainfully working with the company. Shortly after starting Comfort-Air, they hired their first external employ, Richard Flores.

"In 1964, the air conditioning industry was still building. There were a few old large companies, mostly, plumbers that ventured into air conditioning. The big shops pretty much had the large jobs to themselves and the smaller shops did mostly residential work. All of the large companies were union shops but there were some smaller non-union shops that we contended with and with whom we became friends. The air conditioning contracting business, as far as Comfort-Air is concerned, has evolved into a situation where you can be competitive on any size job."

Because the company was started from scratch, John recalls facing many challenges. First, they did not have a lot of capital which meant they had to watch their cash flow very carefully. "We didn't have access to trained employees, so we had to train our employees as we hired them. I think that we had three vehicles to carry out our work but, of course, we didn't have a lot of work at the time." Sales was also a problem as people were hesitant to do work with start-up companies. Still, they forged forward.

“The biggest challenge that we faced while running Comfort-Air was when the Plumber’s Union tried to unionize our company. This was back in the 1970’s and the country was going through a period of ‘high inflation.’ Nixon was president at the time and he came up with a solution of preventing companies from giving

raises to employees under penalties of fines. As stated earlier, we had to train our employees and as they progressed, we would adjust their compensation. According to Nixon's rules, a company could be fined if they gave an employee a raise in pay more than once a year. As a result, one of our employees went to the local plumber's union and sought help. The union then petitioned Comfort-Air to have an election on having our employees represented by the union as far as wages, hours and working conditions. The majority of our employees voted for the union representation and we began negotiating with the union. Robert and I didn't want to deal with a union. We hired a man who had a reputation for dealing with unions. This went on for about a year until the union went on strike against us and most of our employees left us. We had pickets out in front of our shop. We kept things going by doing all of the work ourselves and with help of some of our "non-union" contractor friends. **Emmaleigh Carter, H.B. Zachry's** daughter whose house we air conditioned, drove past our shop and saw the pickets out front, and called me to ask what was going on. I told her and she set up an appointment to see Mr. Zachry and talk about the situation. As a result, Robert and I met with Mr. Zachry at which time he related his dealings with his adversaries and even offered to hire us if we couldn't get our problem resolved. We both felt 10 feet tall after our appointment with Mr. Zachry and ready to get the situation resolved. After the union went on strike and we didn't quit, the union left us alone. We started all over again hiring new employees. It was a very costly and heartbreaking experience, but we survived.

"Since then, Comfort-Air has evolved from a two-man "hands-on" company to a company that can compete with anyone, mostly due to the people who took over after Robert and I retired."

John believes that with the invention of the computer, running any business has been made easier even though the operation of a business has become much more complicate. "Installing and servicing air conditioning equipment today is much more complicated than it used to and requires much more training of employees."

Retirement came easy for John when he realized when he didn't get a thrill at being awarded a new job. "Retirement is the best job I've ever had. I get up when I want to and go to bed when I want.

"In retirement, I try to keep things from falling apart around the house, but that's becoming more and more of a problem as I age. I love seeing my children, my grandchildren and my great grandchildren. I also keep up with my investments and I like to go dove hunting."

In reflection, John believes that after running Comfort-Air for 25 years, “my heirs know more about running an air conditioning business than I ever did. Just

pay attention to what is going on and react accordingly. When things are going great, remember they can go bad if you let them."

John says if he is lucky enough to last for his 95th birthday, which will be celebrated on Aug. 15, he will probably sleep until 8:00AM and drink another cup of coffee to doing all of the work their selves and with help of some of their “non-union” friends.

"I think that I have lived a long life because I'm just lucky. Lucky because I haven't contracted any fatal health problem or accident even though I've not taken any special precautions to prevent same.

"I cherish my family more than anything in the world. When Marilyn was alive, I cherished her more than any other person but now it's my children, their children and my great grandchildren. I just wish that I could live to see my great grandchildren mature. I believe that they are all going to be something special and I'd sure like to witness that." -cwr



*L-R: **Matt Freund**, son of the late Robert Freund and John Freund celebrate birthdays together*



John Freund arrives at a surprise birthday celebration held in his honor at Comfort-Air Engineering Inc. | Primo Plumbing Inc.



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Just another day...

Each year the Lytle ISD Primary School, creates a back-to-school video that is shared with students, teachers, and staff across campus and since **Marksmen General Contractors** is the general contractor for the Lytle ISD Primary School Expansion project., they were invited to participate in this year’s back-to-school video. This event is just one example of the relationship the Marksman team has built with the school while working on Lytle ISD’s primary school expansion project.

“The students love watching the construction progress from their classroom windows,” says Marksman General Contractors Marketing & BD Coordinator **Erika Allen**. “Around Christmas, when those windows needed to be covered, one of our superintendents dressed up as the Grinch to surprise the students. The team also incorporated portholes into the temporary wall so students could still peek at the project. Since Lytle’s mascot is a pirate, they painted a pirate ship around the portholes to make

the experience even more fun.”
The Marksman team also participated in the school’s monthly “Real Men Read” events. Office staff, project team members, and even the architect joined in, including a team member who read to students in Spanish. Another memorable moment was when the students temporarily lost access to their playground during construction. The team rallied together to collect and donate toys, then had the opportunity to deliver them and watch the students enjoy them. -cwr



L-R: Lytle ISD **Roxanne Jenke**, Marksman Executive Vice President **Butch Dixon**, Project Manager **Gerald Barnes**, Senior Superintendent **David Laureano**, Superintendent **Zac Glasser**, and Lytle ISD **Shavan Galindo**



L-R: Marksman’s Director of Pre-Construction **Josue Escobedo**, Project Manager **Gerald Barnes**, Superintendent **Zac Glasser**, CEO **Mark Baublitt**, Director of Technology **Andrew Rendon**, **Santiago Vera**, and Senior Project Manager **Joey Breuer**



Senior Superintendent **David Laureano** participates in the “Real Men Read” program



Marksman President **Eric Stirm** reads to the children as part of the “Real Men Read” program



Superintendent **Zac Glasser** dresses up as the Grinch to give the children a little extra excitement in their day.

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Built on faith, family, and integrity

After more than 15 years in the construction and water restoration industry, and her involvement in the Plumbing Heating Cooling Contractors (PHCC) Association San Antonio and the Hispanic Contractors Association (HCA de A), **Lisa Casarez** knew it was time to build something of her own.

On her birthday, Apr. 18, 2023, Casarez and her son, **Jonathan Mendoza** founded **Tri-County Restoration & Construction**. Together they set out to build a family-owned business dedicated to serving others with integrity, compassion, and excellence.

"Restoration has always been more than a career to me," says Casarez. "It is my passion. I wanted to create a company that would not only provide exceptional restoration and construction services but also build a legacy for my family and future generations."

Six days later, on Apr. 24, they began full operations on April 24, 2023, marking the beginning of their journey serving homeowners, businesses, and builders throughout Texas.

"Our mission has always been simple: help people during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. Whether a family is dealing with water damage, mold, fire, or storm damage, we want them to know they have someone they can trust.

"At Tri-County, we don't just restore homes and businesses, we restore peace of mind. We want every customer to feel that from the moment they call us until the project is complete. They're not just another job. They're family. From one family to another, we've got you," adds Casarez.

Built on faith, family, and integrity, Tri-County Restoration & Construction proudly serves homebuilders, homeowners, property managers, insurance carriers, and commercial clients. Their services include emergency water mitigation, mold remediation, fire and storm damage restoration, selective demolition, complete reconstruction and rebuild services, residential and commercial restoration projects. From emergency response through the final rebuild, Tri-County manages every phase of the project, returning properties to their pre-loss condition or better.

"There are many companies in our industry, but we believe what sets us apart is our commitment to honesty, transparency, education, and treating every customer like family," Casarez states.

Headquartered in Bulverde, TX, Tri-County Restoration & Construction currently employs 12 dedicated team members who share their commitment to quality workmanship, customer care, and professionalism. They proudly serve San Antonio, Austin, Corpus Christi, and the surrounding communities, providing 24/7 emergency restoration and full-service reconstruction throughout South and Central Texas.

Everything they do is guided by their core values: Integrity above everything; people before profit; education creates trust; quality without compromise; accountability; respect everyone; team first; continuous improvement; serving their community; and strong family values.

"These are more than words on a wall," says Casarez. "They are the standards we live by every day. They shape how we lead our team, serve our customers, and represent our company in the communities we serve."

As Tri-County continues to grow, Casarez and Mendoza's vision is to expand their construction and reconstruction division to allow them to serve more residential and commercial clients while continuing to invest in their people, technology, and the communities they proudly serve.

"At Tri-County Restoration & Construction, we believe our purpose goes far beyond repairing buildings. We are in the business of helping people rebuild after an unexpected loss. Every project is an opportunity to earn trust, provide comfort, and make a positive difference during one of the most challenging times in someone's life.

"As a family-owned, woman-owned company, we take tremendous pride in the relationships we build with our customers, employees, referral partners, and community. We lead with integrity, communicate honestly, and stand behind the quality of our work.

"We understand you have many choices when selecting a restoration and construction company. We simply ask for the opportunity to earn your trust. If you choose Tri-County

Restoration & Construction, you'll experience a team that genuinely cares, works tirelessly on your behalf, and treats your property as if it were our own. Our goal has never been to be the biggest company. Our goal is to be the company people remember because we did the right thing, delivered exceptional service, and treated them like family."

As Casarez reflects on her company's journey, there are people that she simply could not have gotten this far without them. "First and foremost, I want to thank my husband, **Caleb Casarez**. Thank you for believing in me, encouraging me, and pushing me to follow my dreams, even when I questioned myself. Starting a business takes faith, sacrifice, and countless hours of hard work, and your unwavering support gave me the courage to take that leap. Thank you for standing beside me through every challenge, celebrating every milestone, and reminding me that anything is possible when you believe in yourself. This dream became our dream, and I am forever grateful for you.

"My son and business partner, Jonathan Mendoza, thank you for taking this journey with me. Watching our vision grow together has been one of the greatest blessings of my life. I am incredibly proud of the leader you've become and the heart you bring to this company every day. Also, I would like to thank **Tony Coss**, along with another valued business partner who prefers to remain unnamed, for your support, encouragement, and contributions to our company's journey and continued growth.

"To our employees, thank you for believing in our vision and representing Tri-County with pride and professionalism. To our referral partners, builders, plumbers, insurance professionals, and community members, thank you for your trust and support. And most importantly, to our customers, thank you for allowing us into your homes and businesses during difficult times. It is a responsibility we never take for granted.

"This company was built on faith, family, hard work, and the belief that doing the right thing will always matter. We are incredibly grateful for how far we've come, and we are excited for the future as we continue to grow and serve the communities we love." - cwr



L-R: Owners **Lisa Casarez** and **Jonathan Casarez**



L-R: **Lisa Casarez** and husband, **Caleb Casarez**



L-R: General Manager **Carlos Tototzintle**, CEO **Lisa Casarez**, and President **Jonathan**



L-R: Tri-County team member Technician **Ariel Salas**, Mitigation Manager **Leondre Armendariz**, Apprentice **Leon Armendariz**, President **Jonathan Mendoza**, Lead Technician **Vicente "Chente" Barrera**, and General Manager **Carlos Tototzintle**



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INSURANCE



Your Renewal Has a Critical Path. The Letter Shows Up Late.

Allison De Paoli
Founder & Principal
Altique Consulting
San Antonio, TX

Nobody on your team waits for drywall to order the switchgear. You know your long-lead items before you break ground. You build the schedule backward from turnover, flag the tasks that won’t compress, and ride them every week. A slipped critical path doesn’t cost you a little. It costs you the job.

Then your health plan renewal letter shows up and the whole discipline evaporates.

The 86-day problem

Your carrier sends the renewal about 86 days before your effective date, if you’re lucky. It often squeaks in right at the 60-day deadline. Sounds like a runway. It isn’t.

Subtract the time to review it internally, get your broker’s read, run open enrollment (crews need notice, HR needs time to pull it off), and load elections into payroll before day one. Now count what’s left for the only part that actually moves the number: negotiating.

A week. Maybe two.

Real leverage takes longer than that. If you want the carrier to sharpen its pencil, you need a credible alternative. Getting one means pulling your claims data (carriers take their time producing it, or limit what you see), letting other markets underwrite your group (weeks, not days - especially in 4th quarter), and leveling what comes back the way you’d level bids.

None of that fits inside 86 days. The carrier knows it. By the time you’re mad about the number, the realistic options are down to two: take it, maybe shave a point or two with higher deductibles, and swear you’ll start earlier next year. Or shop the regular market with limited information and play the carrier switch game.

Neither of those is a plan. You’d never run a job without one.

Run the backward pass

Treat the renewal like a project schedule and the fix gets obvious. Here’s the ideal schedule, the goal, not a pass-fail test, working backward from your effective date:

- **30 days out:** elections loaded, payroll tested, ID cards on the way.
- **60 days out:** decisions made, open enrollment planned and ready.
- **90 days out:** enough information for a real internal discussion. The carrier letter also shows up here,

where most firms begin.

- **120 to 150 days out:** alternative underwriting begins. Markets want nine months of claims data, so request your HB 2015 report (limited claims data every fully insured or level-funded Texas group can get; self-funded firms already have theirs). This is the leverage window. It’s the whole game.

- **180 days out:** claims reporting reviewed, questions asked, strategy set.

And anything structural, different funding, a different network, an actual plan redesign, needs the 180-day start. None of this is a change order you price in a week.

The critical path item is the credible alternative. Not because you have to move (most firms don’t, most years), but because carriers price one way for a captive audience and suddenly start negotiating for a buyer with options.

A Texas construction firm’s renewal came in at 26%. We had already marketed the case, alternatives at or below their current rate, and the carrier’s willingness to negotiate appeared on cue. From 26% to 4%. Same plan, same carrier. The calendar did that.

What to do this month

If your plan renews January 1, look at that schedule again. You’re inside the window right now, not ahead of it.

Send two requests today. First, ask for your claims experience, ideally the last 24 months (the HB 2015 report can be ordered twice a year and covers 12 months... it’s a start). Second, ask for a written renewal timeline with dates, owners, and deliverables from your broker. A schedule, in other words. You’d never mobilize a sub without one.

If the answer is “let’s wait and see what the renewal looks like,” that’s a sub telling you they’ll build the schedule after mobilization. You wouldn’t accept that on a \$1 million job. Your health plan probably costs more than that, every year.

Your renewal date is more predictable than any notice to proceed you’ll get this year. Firms get surprised anyway, every fall, because nobody ever put it on a schedule.

You already know how to run a critical path. Run this one.

LEGAL



Negotiate Out-of-State Choice of Law Provisions with Care

Texas HB 2960 rewrote the rules on where construction disputes get resolved. The industry should take note.

Laura K. Napoli-Janitens
Principal
Cokinos | Young
Houston, TX

What changed, and when it took effect

For years, the so called “home rule” statute—Section 272.001 of the Texas Business & Commerce Code—let participants in Texas-based construction projects attempt to void contract clauses that mandated the use of another state’s courts for disputes or imposed another state’s laws on Texas projects. Attempt is the key word here: an out-of-state forum selection clause could stand unless affirmatively opposed by a party to the contract.

House Bill 2960, passed unanimously (148-0, 31-0) during the 89th Legislature’s 2025 regular session, changed that. Effective September 1, 2025, any provision in a construction contract (or in an agreement collateral to or affecting a construction contract) that requires litigation in another state’s courts, arbitration in another state, or application of another state’s law is void as against public policy. The change applies to contracts entered into or renewed on or after the effective date.

Not just voidable, but void

A voidable clause is essentially valid and enforceable until someone challenges it, and a court agrees with the challenge. Under the old law, courts sometimes enforced out-of-state forum or venue clauses for Texas projects, reasoning that the party advocating for Texas home rule had bargained away such protections or failed to timely raise the issue. National contractors, keen on resolving disputes in their choice of state, could even use creative contract language to draft around the statute.

But a void clause is invalid from its inception. It cannot be ratified, waived, or cured by mutual consent before a dispute arises. Under the new HB 2960 version of the home rule statute, no amount of pre-dispute contract language—no matter how conspicuous or heavily negotiated—can relocate a Texas-based project construction dispute to another venue or impose another state’s laws.

Where cases will be heard

New subsection 272.001(c) supplies the default venue: “To the extent that a venue provision in a contract is void . . . unless the parties stipulate to another venue after the dispute arises, an action arising out of the contract shall be brought only in this state in the county in which the property that is the subject of the litigation is located.”

Thus, a Texas-based project’s physical location now drives not only where the case is heard, but also the jury pool, local counsel requirements, witness travel, insurance and defense costs. These

are all important pre-dispute considerations and can certainly affect settlement discussions.

An open question: federal arbitration act preemption

Before HB 2960, at least one Texas appellate court held that the Federal Arbitration Act preempted the earlier, voidable version of Section 272.001 as applied to arbitration clauses in interstate-commerce contracts. Whether the FAA similarly preempts the new “void” standard is untested. Parties should not treat an out-of-state arbitration clause as a safe harbor—prudent contract negotiators should assume the enhanced Texas home rule statute requirements apply to arbitration as well.

Practical Guidance for Contract Drafting and Negotiation

Adjust expectations. National contractors and out-of-state parties should stop assuming home-jurisdiction dispute clauses will stand on Texas-based work.

Audit form documents. Update subcontracts, purchase orders, design agreements, guaranties, warranties, flow-downs, joint-check agreements, and indemnity agreements. The statute reaches agreements “collateral to or affecting” construction contracts, so ancillary documents are swept in.

Watch renewals and extensions. A contract entered into before September 1, 2025 that is renewed or extended on or after that date is subject to the new statute. Legacy forms pulled forward without revision expose the parties to unenforceable clauses.

Treat venue as commercial leverage. The dispute-resolution clause is no longer boilerplate. Where the case will be heard affects claim valuation, defense cost, jury composition, and settlement dynamics. Price the risk accordingly during negotiation.

Preserve the post-dispute stipulation option. Although pre-dispute venue agreements are void, both parties may still stipulate to a different venue after a dispute arises. Knowing this gives negotiators a tool.

The Takeaway

HB 2960 is a clear legislative signal—passed without a single dissenting vote—that Texas construction disputes belong in Texas. For owners, developers, general contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, and design professionals working on Texas projects, the days of defaulting to a distant forum are over. Treat September 1, 2025 as a hard deadline to review every active form and every pending deal.

ACCOUNTING



Tax Moves for Unlocking Hidden Cash Flow

Steven Bankler, CPA, PFS, Cr.FA, CFF, CGMA
Senior Partner
Bankler Partners, LC
San Antonio, TX

Traditional tax strategies can fall short for construction businesses and contractors because the advice is often built around predictable revenue and cash flow—luxuries few contractors enjoy. For this reason, aligning taxable income more closely with the economics of your work is both an art and a science. Thankfully, mid-sized contractors have flexibilities that can result in big tax savings. Three areas deserve particular attention: accounting methods, capital equipment deductions, and the research and development (R&D) credit.

Start with the accounting method. The timing of revenue recognition can be one of the largest cash-flow levers available, which is why we’ve discussed it here before. Long-term construction contracts generally fall under percentage-of-completion (POC) accounting, which recognizes income as work progresses rather than when the customer pays. This can produce taxable income before the contractor has collected the related cash.

However, not every contract must be—or should be—treated this way. There can be exceptions in which the completed-contract method might be available. In fact, a contractor with a mix of short-duration commercial work, residential work, service work, and longer public projects may have several tax-accounting treatments operating at once.

The objective is not simply to defer income. It’s to select an accounting method that accurately reflects the business while supporting cash flow and tax efficiency. Ask your tax advisor what options are available within IRS requirements, and which approach makes sense on a contract-by-contract basis. The answer should consider tax savings, working-capital needs, estimated taxes, bonding capacity, and loan-covenant implications. Remember that you can use different methods for financial accounting and tax accounting.

Consider expensing versus depreciation when purchasing equipment. Equipment purchases are operational decisions first, but the tax consequences should not be ignored. Contractors often focus on the monthly payment for a truck, excavator, trailer, skid steer, or shop equipment. But what will this asset do for productive capacity, and what deduction may be available in the year it is placed in service?

Section 179 allows businesses to elect immediate expensing for qualifying property, rather than depreciating the full cost over several years. For tax years beginning in 2026, the maximum Section 179 deduction is \$2.56 million, subject to limitations and a phaseout when

qualifying property purchases exceed the applicable threshold. The deduction is generally limited by taxable income from active trades or businesses, so it’s most useful when the business has income to absorb it; unused amounts may generally carry forward.

For contractors planning to replace aging equipment or expand capacity, coordinating the purchase date and equipment delivery with the company’s tax forecast can make a substantial difference. Keep in mind that an asset generally must be placed in service—not merely ordered or financed—before year-end to support a current-year deduction.

Of course, the tax deduction should not drive an unnecessary purchase. But when an asset is needed to improve safety, reduce downtime, increase capacity or strengthen job profitability, thoughtful tax planning can reduce the after-tax cost of acquiring it.

Look for R&D opportunities. You don’t need a lab coat to qualify for federal research credit. Construction businesses may have qualifying activities when undertaking genuine technical experimentation to develop or improve a process, technique, product, or software.

Those in the construction industry often miss the R&D credit, but there’s a good chance you’re already conducting activities that could qualify. The activity must relate to developing or improving a business component; rely on principles of engineering, physical science, biological science or computer science; seek to eliminate technical uncertainty; and involve a process of experimentation.

There’s no exclusivity on what types of businesses must be conducting these activities. You don’t need to be a laboratory, software company, or manufacturer. And there doesn’t need to be a patent on the work to prove its worth. Consider the times in which you’ve needed to rethink the way you do things or build things, either for a specific client or to generally improve your products, processes, or services. Did you hire or contract with someone to accomplish it? Purchase materials or technology to help you experiment? Ask your tax advisor how these activities might be turned into valuable tax credits.

And then—most importantly—plan for these opportunities in the future. They don’t need to be last-minute surprises. Business owners who make these tricks a part of their tax planning can be more confident in their ability to maintain cash flow, even when roadblocks occur. Too often, the tax bill is a painful afterthought. But what if it was treated as a proactive opportunity for savings instead?

OSHA



Building a safer approach to trash boxes

Suzanna Perz
Compliance Safety & Health Officer
OSHA
Austin, TX

With construction continuing across Austin and surrounding counties, job-made wooden trash boxes remain a common sight at worksites. While these boxes may seem like a convenient way to move debris, it’s important for employers and workers to understand the safety requirements and potential hazards associated with their use.

OSHA does not specifically approve job-made trash boxes, and their use should comply with applicable OSHA requirements for powered industrial trucks (PITs).

Engineered boxes, baskets and platforms are available for powered industrial trucks (PITs), with different designs intended for specific tasks, such as moving materials or equipment or lifting workers. These attachments are designed and tested by manufacturers for their intended use.

Job-made trash boxes are different. Because they are not manufacturer-approved forklift attachments, they may not have been tested to make sure they can safely handle the load or remain stable during use. A makeshift box may not be strong or stable enough to protect workers from injury.

For example, workers can be exposed to fall hazards if they fall through the bottom of a box or over the side. Workers can also face crush hazards if a box shifts, slips or becomes unstable while attached to a powered

industrial truck. Workers should never ride on an unapproved, job-made trash box. Falls are the leading cause of deaths in construction, and using equipment in a way it was not designed for can put workers at serious risk.

Proper attachment is also critical. Job-made trash boxes may not be correctly secured to the mast of a powered industrial truck or may not sit properly on the truck’s tines. An improperly positioned or secured box can become unstable, creating additional hazards for workers nearby.

Elevated boxes and platforms may also be considered scaffolds and can be subject to OSHA’s scaffolding and/or powered industrial truck requirements. Employers should understand the requirements that apply to the equipment and tasks before putting it into use.

For employers and workers, the safest approach is to use equipment designed and approved for the job. Taking a few extra steps to select the right attachment can help prevent falls, struck-by and crush injuries, and help everyone return home safely at the end of the day.

To learn more about using powered industrial trucks safely, check out OSHA’s Safety and Health Information Bulletin (SHIB-06-03-2021) for additional guidance and safety information.

HAPPY
Birthday
TO YOU

SEPTEMBER

1 — Gerard Orta / Mazzella

1 — James Quintana / Catalyst Insurance and Financial Strategies

2 — Jorge Gonzalez / Middleman Construction

7 — Mari Garza / Middleman Construction

9 — Joseph Shulter / Core Electrical Group

9 — Shelby Watson / Core Electrical Group

11 — Mark Aguilar / Core Electrical Group

13 — Stephanie Alvarado / SpawGlass

13 — Kenneth Moore / KCM Cabinets

14 — Harmon Harmann / Insurica

15 — Sara Kubala / Middleman Construction

15 — Nick Metcalf / Provview

17 — Lindsay Ozolins / Absolute Resourcing

19 — Rhonda Chadwick / Aprio

20 — Summer Robertson / Americrane Rentals

20 — Robert Crow / Omega General Contractors

21 — Casey Bartek / Bartek Construction Co.

22 — Zac Patrick / Sciens San Antonio

24 — Stephanie Hawley / Dumas Hardware

26 — Penny McDonald / Fetzer Companies

30 — Honore Mendoza / Middleman Construction

30 — Dustin Michalak / ATKG

30 — Carlos Galvan / CG Steel Solutions

Know someone celebrating a birthday next month? Let us know!

Email Andi Mathews, andi@constructionnews.net

Association Calendar

Content submitted by Associations to Construction News

ABC Associated Builders & Contractors South Texas Chapter Sept. 17: Lunch & Learn/Building a Defensible Space, 11:30am-1pm, 814 Arion Parkway, Ste. 111, San Antonio Sept. 21: Fall Golf Tournament, 8am-3pm, Canyon Springs Golf Course – Pavillion, 24405 Wilderness Oak, San Antonio	IEC Independent Electrical Contractors Sept. 7: Labor Day – IECGSA Office is Closed Sept. 8: A&T Committee, 11am Sept. 10: ATAC Meeting, 8am Sept. 14: IECGSA School Year Begins, 5-9pm Sept. 16: New Member Orientation, 10am Sept. 16: Board of Directors Meeting, 11am Sept. 19: Electrical Maintenance Technician Class, 8am-5pm, \$175 Per Person
AGC Associated General Contractors San Antonio Sept. 15: Happy Hour & Membership Meeting, 4-6pm, High Praise at Intercontinental Hotel, 111 E. Pecan St., San Antonio Sept. 19: CLC Construction Cup Softball Tournament, Rusty Lyons Softball Fields, 5200 McCullough Ave., San Antonio	MCA-SMACNA INC Mechanical Contractors Association Sheet Metal & A/C Nat'l Association Sept. 9: Regular & Associates Meeting, 11:30am, The Petroleum Club, 8620 N New Braunfels Ave #700, San Antonio Sept. 23: Joint Industry Fund Meeting, 11:30am, MCA-SMACNA Office, 206 E Nakoma, San Antonio Sept. 30: Hunters Symposium, 12:30pm, Bexar Community Shooting Range, 15391 Bexar Bowling, Marion
ASA American Subcontractors Association San Antonio Sept. 3: Free Safety Update, 11:30am, Alterman Office Sept. 10: Free Tacos & Training: Contract Negotiation, 8:30am, ADKF office Sept. 10: Free Webinar: How to Build Your Dream Team, 11am, Online Webinar Sept. 24: Annual Pour Off Mixer, 4pm, Aggie Park Sept. 29-Oct. 1: ASA National Subexcel	NAWIC National Association of Women in Construction San Antonio Sept 2: General Meeting, 5:30pm, Alamo Café, 14250 San Pedro Ave., San Antonio
GSABA Greater San Antonio Builders Association Sept. 24: Professional Women in Building (PWB) Bingo Pajama Party, 5-7pm, GSABA Ballroom, 3625 Paesanos Parkway, San Antonio Sept. 28: StrucSure ProAM Golf Tournament, 8am-3pm, Canyon Springs Golf Club, 24405 Wilderness Oak, San Antonio	PHCC Plumbing Heating Cooling Contractors Association Sept. 10: September Monthly Membership Meeting/Guest Speaker: Kathleen Stuman (TPWD Game Warden), and Rheem, 11am-1pm, Paesano's 1604 - 3622 Paesanos Pkwy, San Antonio. RSVP at https://tinyurl.com/Sept2026Meeting Sept. 25-26: PHCC-SA Perry Beyer Jr. Memorial Fishing Tournament, Fulton Texas Convention Center, 402 N Fulton Beach Rd, Fulton, TX 78358. RSVP to events@phcc-sanantonio.org
HCA de SA Hispanic Contractors Association Sept. 10: Fall Golf Tournament; Serape, Swings, & Lotería, 8:30am shotgun start, Quarry golf course Sept. 16: Cafe y Conchas Con el HCA de SA Board of Directors 9-11am, Principal Auto, 15507 W IH10, San Antonio. Sept. 29: Hard hats with hearts HCA de SA + AHA soccer game, 5-9pm, Toyota Field. \$25 donation	TACCA Texas Air Conditioning Cooling Contractors Association Sept. 12: Fishing Tournament, 6am-4:30pm, Doc's Waterline, 13309 S. Padre Island Dr., Corpus Christi
	UCATX Utility Contractors Association of Texas Sept. 3: E-Z Bel 6th Annual Sporting Clay Shoot, 1-6pm, The National Shooting Complex, 5931 Roft Road, San Antonio Sept. 17: Coffee With OSHA/Speaker Victor Ramon, Compliance Assistance Specialist at OSHA, 7-8am, E-Z Bel Construction, 214 Jackson Keller Rd., San Antonio

A well-deserved recognition

Congratulations to **E-Z Bel Construction** President & CEO **Stephen Park** on being named one of the San Antonio Business Journal's 2026 C-Suite Award honorees. Since stepping into the CEO role in 2019, Stephen has helped lead E-Z Bel through tremendous growth while keeping the focus on what matters most: people, culture, and the communities E-Z Bel helps build every day. From growing their team to more than 400 employees to expanding into new markets and strengthening the way they operate, his leadership continues to build opportunities through constructing our communities.



Apprentice Academy Scholarship Winners



CAMERON RANDOL
S&S PLUMBING
YEAR 1



RICHARD LINAN-GARCIA
A-RAM PLUMBING
YEAR 2



OSCAR ZAPATA
VASQUEZ PLUMBING
YEAR 1



AUGUST RAMIREZ
A-RAM PLUMBING
YEAR 1

Congratulations to the 2026–2027 Plumbing Heating Cooling Contractors Association (PHCC) San Antonio Academy Apprenticeship Scholarship Recipients.

PHCC is proud to recognize four outstanding apprentices who each received a \$1,500 scholarship toward tuition costs for the PHCC-San Antonio Apprenticeship Program.

Congratulations to:

Cameron Randol – S&S Plumbing Contractors, LLC | Year 1

Richard Linan-Garcia – A-Ram Plumbing | Year 2

Oscar Zapata – Bobby Vasquez - Vasquez Plumbing | Year 1

August Ramirez – A-Ram Plumbing | Year 1

These apprentices are demonstrating a strong commitment to their education, professional growth, and future in the plumbing industry. We are proud to support them as they continue building the skills and knowledge needed for successful careers in the trade.

A special thank you to the NKBA South Plains Chapter for your generous investment in the future of our industry and for making these scholarship opportunities possible.

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Long overdue ribbon cutting



The S&S Plumbing Contractors team at S&S Plumbing Contractors’ 20th Anniversary ribbon cutting ceremony’

On Jul. 24, **S&S Plumbing Contractors** hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the company’s 20th anniversary in business.

Twenty years ago, when **Steven Stanush** and **Sherill Stanush** started S&S Plumbing Contractors, they were focused on getting their business off the ground and never took the time to celebrate the milestone of opening their business doors for the first time. This year, they wanted to pause, reflect, and recognize everyone who has helped make their journey possible.

“Steven and I have been married for 37 years and business partners for 20,” says Operations Manager Sherill Stanush. “It hasn’t always been easy. We’re two very different people. But those differences have become our greatest strength. This celebration gave us the chance to reflect, say thank you, and look forward to the future.”

The event was hosted in partnership with the Converse Economic Development Corporation and the City of Converse. Converse Mayor **Al Suarez**, various city officials, customers, vendors, employees, family, and friends gathered together for the celebration. Father **Jordan Milligan** and Father **Rodrigue Rakotomampiarina**, both from St. Ann’s Catholic Church in LaVernia, extended an opening prayer and a blessing over the business, followed by light refreshments for their

guests to enjoy while visiting and celebrating together.

S&S Plumbing Contractors’ story began in 2006, but the dream started several years earlier. Steven earned his Master Plumber License in 2003, while Sherill left the corporate world and returned to college so they could pursue their goal of building a business founded on quality, ethical plumbing service at reasonable prices. What began as a dream has grown into a family-owned commercial and residential plumbing company serving San Antonio and the surrounding communities.

“When we started S&S Plumbing, our goal was simple,” adds Field Manager and Master Plumber Steven Stanush. “To provide quality workmanship and treat people the right way. Twenty years later, those values haven’t changed. We’re grateful for every customer, employee - past and present, and supplier who have trusted and supported us over the years. Most of all, I’d like to thank my business partner and wife for standing by my side every step of the way.”

Today, S&S Plumbing specializes in commercial new construction and service and repair for commercial and residential customers. They have had the privilege of working with general contractors, municipalities, schools, healthcare facilities, churches, restaurants, retail centers, and businesses throughout South Texas. Additionally, they are proud members of

PHCC, ASA and AGC and believe strongly in supporting their industry through apprenticeship, continuing education, and advocacy for the plumbing profession. *Photos courtesy of Mary C. Haskin Photography. -cwr*



L-R: S&S Plumbing Contractors owners Sherill and Steve Stanush pose with the Converse All-Star Shoe and 20 Year Business award from the Converse Economic Development Corporation



S&S Plumbing Contractors owners Sherill and Steve Stanush pose before cutting their 20th anniversary cake

Profit Planning



Knowledge is power and Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC) South Texas Chapter firmly believes in helping their members become armed with the tools they need to grow their business. Representatives from **Deaver & Saldívar** CPA Firm enlightened those in attendance on how to “master the art of business growth” and shared ways they could consistently make money. A mix of business owners, insurance professionals, CFO’s and other finance professionals walked away with practical pieces of advice they could implement to strengthen their portfolio.

Mary C. Haskin
PHOTOGRAPHY

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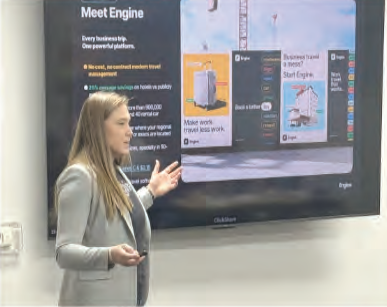
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Helping Members’ Dollars Go Further

When you join Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC) South Texas Chapter, you gain access to discounts on fuel, phone, travel, supplies, software and much more. Last month, a few of ABC’s Business Partners were on hand to share how members can utilize the various discounts eligible to them just by being a part of ABC. There are both business and employee discounts, and when maximized, the membership ends up paying for itself.

Lunch sponsor, **Verizon Business**, discussed the ease of transferring phones, controlling devices, and 22% monthly discount on calling plans. **Enterprise Fleet Management** shared how their local, hands-on approach can meet your commercial fleet needs, provide cost-savings, customization to fit your business for fuel savings, maintenance, after-market vehicle customization, telematics, and more. **Engine Travel** presented how using their platform, members on average save 26% through

their no-cost/no-contract modern travel management tool. There are also hassle-free changes to itineraries through your dedicated account representative. They work with over 900,000 hotels, 300 airlines and 40 rental car companies. **Lowe’s Companies, Inc.** detailed how their MyLowe’s PRO Rewards program saves members 5-8% with online ordering, and the ability to earn points on purchases which can be redeemed for cash or exclusive rewards.



EXAMPLES OF COMPANY SAVINGS*

SMALL COMPANY EXAMPLE			LARGE COMPANY EXAMPLE		
Product or Service	Contractor-Annual Revenue \$6M	Annual Savings	Product or Service	Contractor-Annual Revenue \$100M	Annual Savings
Verizon Wireless Service	8 cell phones	\$1,720	Verizon Wireless Service	50 cell phones	\$10,750
ABC Fuel Program	8 vehicles	\$2,000	ABC Fuel Program	50 vehicles	\$12,500
Lowe's Pro**	\$20,000 annual spend	\$1,400	Lowe's Pro**	\$250,000 annual spend	\$17,500
		Total Savings for Year: \$5,120			Total Savings for Year: \$40,750

MEDIUM COMPANY EXAMPLE		
Product or Service	Contractor-Annual Revenue \$25M	Annual Savings
Verizon Wireless Service	12 cell phones	\$2,580
ABC Fuel Program	12 vehicles	\$3,000
Lowe's Pro**	\$80,000 annual spend	\$5,600
		Total Savings for Year: \$11,180

*Savings vary based on number of employees.
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Safety never retires

After a 33-year career in construction safety, **Ted Dunnam** was told at age 71 that he was “too old” to continue working. Rather than retire, he turned that setback into an opportunity and founded **Dunnam Safety Management** in January 2024, providing safety consulting, training, audits, and OSHA compliance assistance to contractors and manufacturers throughout South Texas. Drawing on decades of experience in roles ranging from surveyor and superintendent to safety consultant, Ted is passionate about helping companies protect their workers while avoiding the hidden costs of workplace injuries. Beyond his business, Ted has made a lasting impact on the construction industry through his leadership with ASA San Antonio, including serving as Chapter President and creating the highly successful ASA Gun Raffle Calendar, which earned the 2025 ASA National Innovation Award. Following a rise in workplace fatalities in 2016, Ted



partnered with OSHA and industry leaders to establish the Texas Construction Safety Summit, an award-winning annual event focused on promoting a strong safety culture across the region. He also chairs ASA San Antonio’s SubFest BBQ Cook-Off, a community event attracting more than 1,500 attendees and recognized as the 2025 ASA National Event of the Year. Ted’s story is a testament to resilience, leadership, and the belief that experience never retires.





On Aug. 11-13 the **Bobcat** of San Antonio team spent the weekend at the Texas Nursery & Landscape Association (TNLA) Expo at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center.

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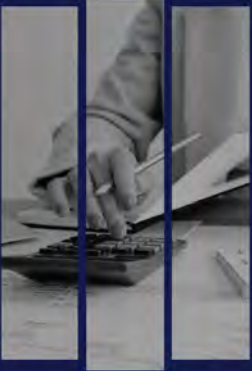


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Meet the General Contractors

On Jul. 22 the Associated General Contractors (AGC) San Antonio held their Meet the GC event hosted at Alamo Colleges headquarters and sponsored by TorcSill. It was an amazing and free opportunity exclusive to AGC chapter members, allowing their trade partners to connect with general contractors and build relationships that could become incredible future partnerships.



Addison Prime General Contractors



Clark Construction



Flintco



Guido Companies



*Bartlett Cocke General Contractors and
Robinson General Contractos*



Tuner Construction Company



Vaughn Construction and G.W.
Mitchell Construction



In memoriam....

Known simply as Ryan, Ryan Lynn Hay passed away on Jul. 17 in Luling, TX, at the age of 57. He was born on Nov. 14, 1968, in Oklahoma City, OK. His life was marked by faith, devotion to family, loyal friendships, and a steady commitment to the people he served throughout his years.

Ryan was a Christian man who lived with a quiet strength and a generous spirit. He believed in the goodness of God and sought to reflect that belief in the way he treated others. Those who knew him will remember his kind heart, his dependable nature, and the warmth he brought into every room. He was a man who valued honesty, hard work, and the simple blessings of life, and he carried those values with him throughout his days.

For 16 years, Ryan served at **Tipton Company** as the Central Texas Territory

Manager. In that role, he built lasting relationships and earned the respect of coworkers, clients, and associates alike. He approached his work with dedication and professionalism, and he took pride in doing his job well. His years with the company reflected his strong work ethic and his ability to connect with people in a genuine and meaningful way.

Above all else, Ryan loved his family. He was a devoted husband to Melanie Hay and a proud father to his son, Austin Hay. He treasured his family deeply and found great joy in the time he spent with them. He also welcomed Megan Hay, his daughter-in-law, into the family with love and appreciation.

Ryan is survived by his sister, Stacy Hay, and his nieces, Caitlin Melton and Megan Hay, all of whom held a special place in his heart.

He was preceded in death by his

parents, Raymond and Jacquella Hay, whose memory remained a lasting part of his life.

Ryan enjoyed traveling, and he especially loved cruising. Those journeys gave him the opportunity to see new places and create lasting memories with the people he loved. Yet his favorite pastime was always spending time with family and friends. Whether gathered around a table, sharing stories, or simply enjoying one another's company, Ryan found happiness in relationships and in the moments that brought people together. His presence made those moments brighter, and his laughter and companionship will be deeply missed.

Ryan lived a life that was grounded in faith and enriched by love. He lived each day with a steady spirit and a grateful heart, and he leaves behind a legacy of devotion, kindness, and



faithfulness. Though his earthly journey has ended, those who love him take comfort in the promise of God's eternal care and in the hope of reunion through Christ. His memory will continue to live in the hearts of those who knew him, and his life will be remembered with gratitude, respect, and affection. We are comforted knowing Ryan is at home with his Lord and Savior. -cwr

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