

Big-Scale Leader

TP MECHANICAL SAYS SAFETY AND INNOVATION ARE THE BEDROCK OF ITS SUCCESS. BY CHRIS PETERSEN



TP Mechanical aims to provide the highest-quality plumbing, HVAC and fire protection service in the market.

IMAGE COURTESY OF SUE WELLES PHOTOGRAPHY

For more than 60 years, TP Mechanical has been a leader in the Midwest, completing numerous successful large-scale construction projects ranging from factories to schools to hospitals. President and CEO Bill Riddle says the company's success has been driven by a focus on safety and innovation, and will continue to concentrate on these areas as it serves clients with the highest-quality plumbing, HVAC and fire protection service in the market.

The company was founded by Bill Teepe, who started out installing water heaters for Sears in 1953. Over time, the company continued to grow and add new services, and eventually Teepe's sons Scott and Steve took the reins. Although TP Mechanical was acquired in the late 1990s by a large residential plumbing contractor, Scott

Teepe and a number of other employees successfully purchased it back in 2003. Riddle has been with the company for more than 30 years, starting out as an apprentice and working in the field before getting the chance to become a regional manager in the 1990s. Today, TP Mechanical remains an employee-owned company, and Riddle says it has carved out a successful niche as a mechanical contractor that specializes in taking on the biggest and most complex projects in the marketplace.

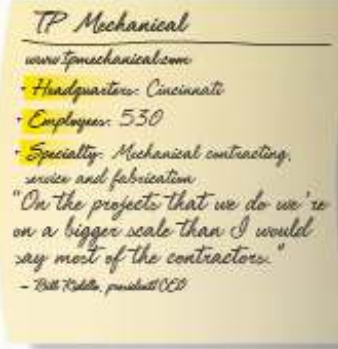
"We are highly regarded as a strong provider of contractor services," Riddle says. "When needed, we can operate on a much bigger scale in a more effective way than most contractors."

As an experienced contractor with a long history of performing work safely while embracing new ideas, Riddle says TP Mechani-

cal has what it takes to remain successful in the long run.

Safe Culture

Riddle says TP Mechanical has built a strong reputation for working safely, and that has



Forward-thinking problem-solving has been key to TP Mechanical's success on projects.

IMAGE COURTESY OF SUE WELLES PHOTOGRAPHY

'I think we're very out in front on the cutting-edge with technology.'

been a significant advantage for the company as customers look for a contractor they can trust. The company's stellar safety record is the culmination of a commitment the company made 20 years ago to concentrate on creating the safest work environment possible for its employees. "I think we're second to nobody in that category," Riddle says.

As of early October, TP Mechanical has performed more than 2 million man-hours of work without a lost-time accident – nearly one-third the industry average – and Riddle attributes that success to the company's stringent safety program. This includes working closely with OSHA, participating in its Voluntary Protection Program to reduce accidents on the jobsite and participating in OSHA's safety training programs. Riddle says the company requires workers to pass a 10-hour OSHA training certification as well as an additional 30-hour training program and continual safety education throughout their time with TP Mechanical.

Riddle says promoting safe working practices and encouraging all of its employees to make safety their responsibility and priority has led to the company's strong safety record and reputation. "That's what drives the culture," Riddle says.

Thinking Differently

Alongside safety, TP Mechanical also places innovation and forward-thinking problem-solving as high priorities and key drivers of its success. "I think we're very out in front on the cutting-edge with technology and processes," Riddle explains.

For example, TP Mechanical has a fabrication shop on-site, where

nearly 30 percent of all work is done before workers arrive at the job site. Riddle says more than 60 employees staff the fabrication shop to keep it operating 24 hours a day. The facility also incorporates advanced automation technology such as automated welding machines as well as advanced tracking software to ensure the workflow is managed smoothly. "We're monitoring materials as they're being delivered and we're broadcasting that internally," Riddle says.

Another forward-thinking idea TP Mechanical has introduced into its processes is the company's new distribution facility. Recognizing that most modern job sites don't have the necessary space to store all necessary materials on site, the company established its distribution center to bundle and sort project materials from the fabrication shop so they can stay there until the moment they are needed on the job site. "We're delivering right to the site as needed," Riddle says, adding that this has improved the company's productivity.

Confident Future

Even though a lack of available labor has created concerns in the construction industry, Riddle says TP Mechanical remains confident about its future. The company plans to continue implementing the newest technologies, such as BIM for rendering projects in a 3-D model before setting foot on site. As long as the company continues to focus on what it does best, Riddle says, it will continue to find success.

"I believe that over the next couple of years, we should be able to grow 10 to 15 percent from where we are today," he says. ♦