

J.R. RAMON & SONS, INC.

San Antonio firm turns offer into a massive splash in the demolition industry

In preparation for the World's Fair coming to San Antonio in 1968, several structures in the area had to be removed to make way for the massive amount of space the event would need. When a local official asked Joe Ramon Sr. and his sons Joe Jr. and Robert if they were interested in doing some of the work, they saw it as an opportunity to dip their toes into demolition work.

It proved beneficial, and the three decided to take a full plunge into demolition, which makes up the bulk of the work J.R. Ramon & Sons has done during the past 40 years. It was a dramatic shift for the Ramons, whose focus to that point was road construction and asphalt paving. The Ramons dropped road building and paving in the early 1980s.

"We were doing less and less of the road work, and demolition became our forté," said

Joe Jr. "That first project was basically tearing down a bunch of houses, but over the years we've gone away from that and focused more on large-scale, multi-unit commercial and industrial projects."

Joe Jr., who along with his brother Robert joined forces with their father in 1964 as paving foremen, is now President of the San Antonio company. His son Tim is Director of Operations. Robert has since left the business that was originally known as Joe Ramon Construction. The name changed to J.R. Ramon & Sons about the same time as the Ramons took on the World's Fair project.

"Taking on larger and larger projects became the norm, so we continued to grow in order to facilitate that," said Tim. "What sets us apart is how in-depth our service list is. We do complete and selective demolition, interior strip-outs and dismantling. We've developed the expertise to handle any project that comes our way, and do it in a cost-effective manner, even in the most adverse conditions."

Joe Ramon Jr. (left) is President and his son Tim is Director of Operations for J.R. Ramon & Sons. The third-generation family business founded by Joe's father, Joe Sr., specializes in demolition.



Services grow

Some of the company's most high-profile projects fall into the category of emergency response and natural-disaster recovery and clean-up operations. That includes last year's Hurricane Rita, which caused extensive damage in the Houston and Beaumont areas. J.R. Ramon & Sons cleaned up storm debris on more than 1,000 miles of Texas roadway. It also cleaned up after Hurricanes Hugo and Ivan, among others.

"We're trained to be first responders in such situations," said Joe Jr. "The goal on projects such as those goes beyond just cleaning up debris and hauling it away. Often there are environmental factors, and we've developed



A J.R. Ramon & Sons operator uses a Komatsu PC400LC-8 excavator to break up debris. "Komatsu fuel efficiency relative to its breakout force — and in demolition, breakout force is vital — allows us to increase production while actually lowering costs," said Director of Operations Tim Ramon. "In this competitive economic climate, we embrace every advantage. WPI and Komatsu help us remain competitive in our industry."

ways to reduce the impact of the waste on streams and other sensitive areas. We're usually able to mobilize to the affected area within 24 hours, which is an important factor in minimizing further potential damage."

With hazardous environmental impact an ever-growing concern in the demolition industry, J.R. Ramon & Sons has added abatement to its list of services. Abatement includes removal of asbestos, lead, PCBs, hydrocarbons and other regulated materials, and also focuses on salvaging and recycling as much as possible.

Recycling efforts extend to J.R. Ramon & Sons' other service areas, which include site preparation and earthwork. The company offers mass excavation, subgrade stabilization, building pads and site work, encompassing stormwater prevention as well. "We do all our earthwork services in conjunction with demolition," said Timothy. "It's all part of a total package we can offer customers. They like that because they're only dealing with one contractor that handles everything, so they can focus on other phases of their project."

Implosions are part of the company's list of services, including a 2007 blast that brought down the Intel building in Austin, the first such job done in the city. J.R. Ramon & Sons has completed other high-profile projects in past years, including decommissioning the Ray Point Mill Site, Felder Uranium Operation for

Exxon and dismantling of the "Rocket" roller coaster in San Antonio.

Several of J.R. Ramon & Sons' 48 full-time employees have been with the company more than 30 years. Tim estimates the average service time of the staff is nearly a decade. He credits that long-term dedication as playing a major role in the business' success and growth throughout the years.

"We stress safe practices with a very effective safety program, but that's only good if employees take it seriously," Tim emphasized. "Our staff does, and that's a big reason why we have repeat customers. They know our guys have the expertise to handle their projects on time and on budget without unnecessary risk. They're a tremendous group."

Komatsu and WPI offer tremendous value

J.R. Ramon & Sons has found tremendous value in Komatsu equipment as well. The company has used Komatsu machinery since the 1980s and today has five excavators — PC200, 220, 300 and 400 models — as well as four SK1020 skid steers and two WB146 backhoe loaders. With the help of Sales Representative Brian Childress and the staff at WPI's San Antonio branch, they've beefed up their machinery with hydraulic thumbs, cages,

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Steady work supports positive long-term outlook

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roller guards and steel plating to handle the rigors of demolition work.

"We buy Komatsu equipment because it's state-of-the-art, quality machinery," said Tim. "Our Komatsu excavators meet or exceed all emissions standards for our state, allowing us to participate in the Texas Emission Reduction Program. Their fuel efficiency relative to breakout force — and in demolition, breakout force is vital — allows us to increase production while actually lowering costs. In

this competitive economic climate, we embrace every advantage. WPI and Komatsu help us remain competitive in our industry."

The Ramons credit WPI for helping them keep their competitive edge with an equipment service contract that lowers their owning and operating costs. The contract covers routine maintenance as well as warranty work and provides fast response to any error codes. J.R. Ramon & Sons uses the latest Komatsu models equipped with the KOMTRAX remote machine-monitoring system, which comes standard with free communication for five years.

"WPI's service is a great benefit because they have the expertise to diagnose and fix potential issues quickly and keep our downtime to a minimum," observed Tim. "With KOMTRAX, they know right away if an error code pops up, and can often remotely diagnose the problem so the technician knows what he's looking for before he even gets to the machine. That's a real time-saver. We appreciate WPI's professionalism and cherish their friendships. Their service is unprecedented."

Keeping a firm handle

The Ramons want their customers to feel the same way about J.R. Ramon & Sons. That's part of the reason why they're comfortable in not growing the business beyond its current size.

"We take great pride in our work, especially being able to deliver on our promise to get a project done on time and on budget," said Joe Jr. "That becomes increasingly difficult when a company gets larger and more spread out. My dad had a saying, 'The more you try to hug, the less you can squeeze.' He meant you have to be able to wrap your hands around what you do, and if the business gets too big you lose control. That's something we'll never let happen."

Despite the economic downturn, J.R. Ramon & Sons' work has remained steady, and the Ramons don't see a big dropoff in sight. "Much of our work involves year-long contracts, and that's helped bridge us through the current climate," said Tim. "We're looking good for the near term and believe the long-term outlook is positive as well." ■



J.R. Ramon & Sons uses Komatsu S1020 skid steers for a variety of tasks, including breaking up concrete. The company also uses Komatsu excavators and backhoe loaders.

J.R. Ramon & Sons contracts with WPI to perform its routine services and other work as needed. "They have the expertise to diagnose and fix potential issues quickly and keep our downtime to a minimum," said Director of Operations Tim Ramon.

