

GAS OIL & MINING CONTRACTOR™

For Environmental &
Support Service Professionals

www.GOMCmag.com

AUGUST 2014

MONEY MACHINES:
Chemical-circulation unit boosts efficiency
PAGE 22

EYE ON THE INDUSTRY:
Utica Shale Academy provides workforce training
PAGE 30

2014 GAS
OIL &
MINING
CONTRACTOR
**BUYER'S
GUIDE**
PAGE 58

SOLE PROVIDER

AIMS/PVIC PROVIDES A COMPLETE PACKAGE
OF COMPLEMENTARY SERVICES TO HELP MINE
OPERATORS MAINTAIN PRODUCTION **PAGE 14**





SOLE PROVIDER

AIMS/PVIC provides a complete package of complementary services to help mine operators maintain production

By Ken Wysocky



In 2013, officials at AIMS/PVIC LLC received an emergency call from a molybdenum-processing plant at an Arizona mine, where a blocked transfer pipe had halted production.

Confined-space entry crews from the industrial and municipal cleaning company swung into action, knowing full well that every hour of downtime was costing the customer significant revenue. Working around the clock in 12-hour shifts, the crews used a 20,000 psi Jetstream hydroblasting unit to clean out a clogged filter, a 500,000-gallon thickener tank and transfer lines emerging from the tank.

"It was a high-priority job because it was holding up production," says Chris Mihaletos, the president and a minority owner of the company. "It took about two days to get the job done. When we finished, we got a big 'atta boy' from the mine supervisors."

Helping out customers in jams at mines throughout the western United States, as well as at power plants, is nothing new for AIMS/PVIC, the corporate parent of three companies: AIMS LLC (industrial hydroblasting and vacuuming services), Pipeline Video Inspection & Cleaning (PVIC) LLC (sewer cleaning,

video inspections and hydroexcavating) and AIMS Coatings LLC (industrial-coating services). Headquartered in Phoenix, AIMS/PVIC is a certified Women's Business Enterprise; Maria Mihaletos, the wife of Chris Mihaletos, is the company's majority owner and chief executive officer.

"Our philosophy is that we're only as good as our last job," Mihaletos says. "It's critical that we finish each job on time and safely. We know we have competition every single day, so we work as hard as we can every single day to finish projects on time and within budget and build relationships with customers."

SERVICES IN DEMAND

One of the company's specialties involves helping customers in Arizona and New Mexico reopen dormant open-pit copper mines, a move spurred by rising copper prices. AIMS/PVIC employees provide multiple services, including hydroexcavating to safely expose underground utilities; hydroblasting steel tanks and other vessels for strength testing or lead-paint abatement; and recoating tanks and vessels, Mihaletos says.

"Some of these mines have opened and closed several times in the last 10 years as copper prices fluctuated," he explains. "We've



WATCH THEM IN ACTION

To learn more about AIMS/PVIC, view the video at www.gomcmag.com.

ABOVE: Pipeline Video Inspection & Cleaning (PVIC) crews use two Vactor 2100 Series trucks to remove dirt from a series of large pipes that need to be cleaned.

RIGHT: An Arizona Industrial & Municipal Services (AIMS) crew uses a Vactor truck to service an industrial site near Phoenix. (Photos courtesy AIMS/PVIC)



The AIMS/PVIC team includes (from left) Buck Taylor, Giovanna Calleros, Yusuf Munir, Chris Mihaletos, Wayne Lovelace, Maria Mihaletos, Thomas Verbridge, Steven Hudson, Trish Tafoya and Stephen Walker. (Photo by Mark Henle)

already performed two openings in the last 10 years and each one can take a year or more to complete ... so we've gained a lot of knowledge with this, as well as a good reputation throughout the Southwest. Our management team collectively offers hundreds of years of experience.

"We know we have competition every single day, so we work as hard as we can every single day to finish projects on time and within budget and build relationships with customers."

Chris Mihaletos

After hydroblasting the tanks, crews use vacuum trucks to suck up the resulting debris. Depending on the post-cleaning condition of a tank, mine engineers might ask AIMS to sandblast the interior down to white metal, which provides a surface that's suitable for recoating. "We can coat the tanks with virtually anything they want," he notes.

In other instances, AIMS gets called in to clean up acid spills; copper mines use acid in the process of chemically treating the ore. "Sometimes a pipe breaks or leaks, and we come in with protective suits and use our Guzzler vacuum trucks, which have stainless steel tanks," Mihaletos points out.

"We might do hydroexcavating to safely determine the location of underground lines in mines," he continues. "Often there are minimal records of where things like electrical, water and transfer lines are located.

"We also hydroblast steel thickener tanks to clean them for inspections ... and ensure they meet environmental standards for asbestos and lead abatement," he adds. "Our crews perform confined-space cleaning in tanks with up to 1-million-gallon capacities. A large mine might have 10 to 15 of these tanks, while smaller mines might have three to five."

AIMS/PVIC, PHOENIX, ARIZ.

OWNERS:

Maria Mihaletos
(majority owner and CEO)
and husband Chris Mihaletos
(minority owner and president)

FOUNDED:

2005

SERVICE AREA:

Western United States

EMPLOYEES:

150

SPECIALTIES:

Hydroblasting, steel cutting, industrial vacuum cleaning, pipeline inspections and cleaning, hydroexcavating, sandblasting and protective-coating applications

WEBSITE:

www.aims-pvic.com




"Our turnkey operation offers a big advantage," Mihaletos adds. "We're also known for having well-trained employees and a good safety record. This is critical because when a mine is down, it's losing hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost production. Our operators are trained to go out there and get the job done quickly and safely."

EXPANSION THROUGH ACQUISITION

AIMS/PVIC was established in 2005 when Chris and Maria Mihaletos bought PVIC. In 2007, they acquired AIMS, which primarily provides hydroblasting, industrial vacuuming/cleaning and steel-and-concrete cutting services. About six months later, the Mihaletoses purchased a related industrial-coatings company, AIMS Coatings.

"After those three acquisitions, we decided that due to the volatile [economic] climate, we would hold off on further acquisitions and grow organically," says Chris Mihaletos. "From 2008 to 2014, we've grown into a multimillion-dollar-a-year company [in terms of gross revenues]."

As the company grew, so did its fleet of equipment. Mihaletos says the company has invested more than \$15 million in machines and vehicles, including nine Guzzler and Supersucker vacuum trucks (made by Guzzler Manufacturing, a subsidiary of Federal Signal Corp., and Super Products,



A PVIC crew uses a Vactor 2100 Series truck to unload debris at its yard near Phoenix. (Photo courtesy AIMS/PVIC)

“Our turnkey operation offers a big advantage. We’re also known for having well-trained employees and a good safety record. This is critical because when a mine is down, it’s losing hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost production.”

Chris Mihaletos

respectively); five hydroblasters made by Jetstream of Houston (also a Federal Signal subsidiary); seven camera trucks made by CUES; five IBAK camera trucks made by RapidView LLC and equipped with LISY lateral-launch inspection cameras; six vacuum trucks made by Vactor Manufacturing (also a Federal Signal subsidiary); and five sandblasting units manufactured by Marco Group International.

“We’re always upgrading and updating our equipment,” Mihaletos notes. “Our goal is to be the leader in our industries ... and advanced, more productive equipment is key.” As an example, he points to the Jetstream hydroblasters, which are capable of generating up to 40,000 psi, a level of pressure that some companies shy away from using because of the associated risk factors.

Mihaletos also points out that to increase efficiency and productivity, the company cross-trains employees on all equipment. “We also focus sharply on maintaining equipment in order to minimize breakdowns ... which goes hand in hand with developing good relationships with customers,” he says.

SAFETY COUNTS

On-the-job safety in often risky work environments poses a constant challenge. As such, the company works to increase employee awareness by holding daily safety meetings and periodically sending out “safety shares,” where everyone in the company is notified if an incident occurs.

“We tell everyone about it – send out a media blast to all divisions,” he says. “And project supervisors



DIVERSIFIED SERVICES DRIVE GROWTH

AIMS/PVIC LLC has achieved dramatic growth since the company was founded in 2005, and the ability to offer customers a wide array of services has been a critical factor in that expansion, says Chris Mihaletos, a minority owner and the president of the Phoenix-based business.

Customers typically find diversified companies more attractive because it's easier and more efficient to deal with one contractor that can provide multiple services, as opposed to working with several different contractors to obtain the same services, Mihaletos says. AIMS/PVIC owns three divisions that offer the following services: hydroblasting, steel cutting, industrial vacuum cleaning, pipeline inspections and cleaning, hydroexcavating, sandblasting and protective-coating application.

"Our chief advantage is our ability to provide turnkey operations, which is a huge advantage to our customer base," he explains. "Customers are more inclined to reach out to one company that can provide all the required services. Not only is it less expensive, but it's easier too, because the customer doesn't have to deal with, say, four different safety certifications [for four different contractors], plus four different points of contact, which requires more time and effort.

"It also makes for easier scheduling and communication," he adds. "We all communicate easily with each other because we're all under the same umbrella company. This allows us to better focus on finishing jobs on time for customers."

Mihaletos also points out that AIMS/PVIC gains efficiencies through sharing equipment between divisions, which reduces costs. Moreover, the company's service diversity promotes cross-selling. For instance, after employees clean an industrial tank, they might notice that the vessel now needs sandblasting and recoating – services provided by another AIMS/PVIC division.

"We train our crews to constantly educate customers about other services we can provide," he says.

A PVC crew vacuums up material from a spill along a rail line. (Photo courtesy AIMS/PVIC)

share it with everyone in the company. Safety is of paramount importance above operations and production."

In addition, all new employees first take a three-day, in-house safety training and orientation class. After that, employees receive equipment-operation training. The company employs two full-time safety instructors, Mihaletos says.

"We're always upgrading and updating our equipment.

Our goal is to be the leader in our industries ...

and advanced, more productive equipment is key."

Chris Mihaletos

Moreover, whenever the company starts a new job, most customers also require eight hours of site-specific safety training. "We're trained and approved to work in every single mine throughout the Southwest," he notes.

AIMS/PVIC is no stranger to working on large projects. For example, its Northern California PVIC division will be involved for at least the next 15 years in one of the country's largest cross-bore inspection projects in San Francisco and the Bay Area. By the time the project concludes around 2030, PVIC camera trucks will have inspected countless miles of mainline sewers and lateral service lines at tens of thousands of properties to determine if they've been pierced by natural gas service lines installed over the years via trenchless-installation techniques like horizontal directional drilling, says Steven Hudson, vice president of AIMS/PVIC.

“This is the biggest inspection project we’ve ever been involved with in terms of manpower, equipment and revenue,” says Hudson. “We’re in the third year of the project, which is projected to last another 15 years plus. We’ve already performed approximately 2,000 property inspections in 2012 and 6,000 in 2013.

“We’ve invested more than \$2 million in new equipment, employee training and local offices for this project,” Hudson adds. “And we are prepared to continue investing as the project grows.”

MORE GROWTH EXPECTED

Mihaletos believes that AIMS/PVIC is well-positioned for future growth, either organically or via more acquisitions. He says the company’s management team is always on the lookout for profitable, stable

more info

CUES

800/327-7791
www.cuesinc.com

Guzzler Manufacturing

800/627-3171
www.guzzler.com

Jetstream of Houston

800/231-8192
www.waterblast.com
(See ad on page 31)

Marco Group International

800/252-7848
www.marco.us

RapidView IBAK North America

800/656-4225
www.rapidview.com

Super Products LLC

800/837-9711
www.superproductslc.com
(See ad on page 43)

Vactor Manufacturing

800/627-3171
www.vactor.com
(See ad on page 51)



Yusuf Munir locks the hose reel on his Vactor 2100 back in place at the AIMS/PVIC yard in Phoenix. (Photo by Mark Henle)

businesses that have developed good relationships with customers.

“We are fortunate to have good banking and capital behind us to aggressively pursue acquisitions,” Mihaletos says. “We’re looking at good companies that fit our portfolio of service or that can complement our core business. We want to focus on what we do best ... stick with what we know. We also want to expand geographically.

“Our plan is to eventually have a presence throughout the United States and Canada, and grow AIMS/PVIC into a multimillion-dollar-a-year company. It’s a very, very exciting time for our company.” **GOMC**

Tell us your story ...

Would you like to share your company’s success story with readers of GOMC? In every issue, we feature a different contractor who serves the energy exploration or mineral extraction industries. Tell us about your business or nominate another company for a profile by sending an email to editor@gomcmag.com.