

STYLE

A Clean Pivot

O.P. Almaraz | Allied Restoration Services Inc.

By DIANE HAITHMAN

O.P. Almaraz, chief executive of Allied Restoration Services Inc. in West Covina, said the company's core business used to be cleaning up the scene after fires, floods and other accidental damage to buildings.

That often meant such work as water damage repair, mold alleviation or smoke deodorization, particularly after a spate of wildfires in Southern California. Almaraz said Allied Restoration was often called in to do the fix-up following an insurance claim.

During the pandemic, however, Almaraz said the company has pivoted to prevention rather than repair. Allied Restoration has been disinfecting offices, restaurants and houses so tenants can feel safe returning to work or moving into a previously owned home.

"One thing that has been transitional for us is these Covid jobs," Almaraz said during a recent visit from the Business Journal at one such site, the sixth-floor offices of an insurance firm in Sherman Oaks.

"Typically, what prompts a call (is): 'I had an employee test positive, we're an essential business, what do I do?'" Almaraz said. "We had a law firm that had seven floors in downtown L.A. They wanted their employees to feel safe and protected before they returned. So we disinfected every single floor."

Since the pandemic began, Almaraz said, Covid cleaning calls have increased the company's revenue by about 18% over the same period last year. He said Allied Restoration had a revenue of about \$12 million in 2019.

Almaraz added that the firm distinguishes itself by teaching occupants about how to maintain a safe environment. He posts sanitation protocol on the company website and informs clients about such factors as "dwell time," meaning the amount of time a disinfectant must remain on a surface before being wiped away.

Almaraz, the son of Mexican immigrants, grew up in El Monte in a home of modest means. "I would get one pair of shoes a year, and that was at Christmastime," he said. He added he didn't really know he was poor until he went to school and began comparing his old shoes to those of his classmates.

"That was very, very disturbing to me," he said. "That got me to think, poverty is my biggest enemy. I will fight tooth and nail. I will go up against that monster every day of my life."

Almaraz started the company with his younger brother Victor in 2008. When Victor died suddenly of pancreatic cancer in 2010, "my whole world came crashing down," Almaraz said. At the same time, the economic downturn meant many potential clients were using insurance claims for living expenses rather than making repairs. Almaraz turned to making repairs for celebrity clients who could afford it.

Almaraz compares that situation to Covid-19. "When this pandemic hit, I'm like, OK, I've been down this road before ... we have to move fast. We can get stuck in the pain of it or we can decide not to be a victim."



On Location: Allied Restoration videographer Mark Henriquez documents the teamwork.

Germ Busters: Crew members attack an office with SteraMist's decontamination fogging system.



Get It Done: The Allied Restoration crew.

Green and Clean: Almaraz calls this \$75,000 SteraMist Environment System, acquired during the pandemic, "the Lamborghini of disinfection."

