

# Rio West Quarterly

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## Varco Pruden's Sky-Web II Provides a Safety Net for the Construction Team



*Purcell Tire, 1515 E. Ajo Way Tucson, Az*

Safety is a key ingredient to every project. It is integrated in all work practices beginning with project planning through the final punch list. Workers, construction company owners and building owners, all benefit by ensuring job site safety is a high priority on every construction project. Using Varco Pruden's Sky-Web II® Fall Protection and Insulation Support System is a great way to provide workers with a safety net when working on roof installations. It is a unique, easy-to-install safety system designed to enhance worker safety and productivity on the jobsite. It protects workers from falls at the leading edge of a roof by providing a "web" of knotted nylon mesh that is attached to the perimeter of the roof's secondary structural members. With minimal investment, Sky-Web II increases safety and efficiency, reduces injury and improves productivity.

By providing a continuous layer of material over the secondary roof members, workers can work at the leading edge of the roof without being tied-off. The ability to work freely without being tangled in safety lines or installing portable safety nets below the roof surface accelerates the erection process. Safety is achieved and efficiency is gained by using this innovative and cost-effective system.

Sky-Web II is a made-to-order product that arrives at the job site with all of the instructions and required hardware necessary to complete installation.



## Tiny House Trends: Builder Discovers Untapped Demand In Small Home Market

It's a homebuilder's dream: People of all ages purchasing custom-built homes, rather than remaining renters. But where is this abundance of potential buyers? Vancouver-based builder Brian Persse said that, believe it or not, it's in the tiny house market. Persse, originally from Ireland, worked as a builder of traditional homes before moving to Canada. When he arrived in Vancouver, British Columbia, he took note of the climbing home prices that were unattainable to a significant portion of buyers.

***“The build time for a house from Tiny Living ranges between 4 and 6 weeks for a standard 20-foot property and cost an average of \$23,000.”***

## Tiny House Trends cont.

"There was a huge shortage in affordable housing," he said. The Tiny Living founders initially planned to target buyers who would build the structures for the lane-ways behind their larger houses and rent them out for a hefty return. They quickly discovered, however, that they would see strong demand from all types of customers seeking a more affordable housing option. The company delivers the structures all across North

America. "There is really no particular type of person or age group for these units. It's everybody." Persse thinks the fascination with tiny houses is less of a fad and more of a lasting trend in the housing market.

Building on a much smaller scale doesn't come without its challenges. But after building the first few homes, the company's workers ironed out those issues and established a standard building process to construct the houses. Currently, the build time for a house from Tiny Living ranges between four and six

weeks for a standard 20-foot property and cost an average of \$23,000.

While some expected tiny homes to be a passing fad, they have proven themselves to be a popular alternative to the rising prices of traditional houses. The first official Tiny House Jamboree in Colorado Springs, CO, drew 40,000 people. Tiny houses have captured the attention of more than the building industry so it will be interesting to see how the industry adapts to this new market.

## Arizona & New Mexico Lag Nevada in Construction Jobs

Construction job totals fell in Arizona and New Mexico but continued to be the fastest growing sector in Nevada over the past year, according to data recently released by the three states. In Arizona and New Mexico, unemployment rates increased by tenths of a percent with New Mexico falling to 6.7 percent, up two tenths from July and Arizona increased two tenths from 6.1 percent in July to 6.3 percent in August.

Nevada continued its job growth for the 54th consecutive month. Nevada's unemployment rate sits at a seasonally adjusted 6.8 percent in August, which is down relative to a year ago, and is at the lowest rate it has been since July 2008.

### **Nevada**

August experienced a seasonally adjusted growth of 40,200 jobs compared to the previous year with the construction sector showing the fastest growth. The construction sector in Nevada was up 7.5 percent in August and added 4,800 jobs over the year, Bill Anderson, chief economist for Nevada's Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation says. "All of the state's super-sectors experienced year-over-year growth this month except for mining," he says. "Nevada's economy is mending well with Nevada now having 1,900 more employers in the state than it had at the pre-recession peak, which is a 3.1 percent increase."

### **New Mexico**

New Mexico saw a drastic drop in construction jobs throughout the state losing 2,000 jobs which represents an over-the-year decline of 4.6 percent, according to a press release from the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions.

The mining industry registered further losses this month with estimates around 1,000 jobs or 3.6 percent. Growth has declined each month since the industry posted a gain of 2,000 jobs in both October and November 2014.

### **Arizona**

Arizona's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased two-tenths of a percent from 6.1 percent in July to 6.3 percent in August. This is a four-tenths decrease from the same time a year ago, according to data released by the Arizona Office of Employment and Population Statistics.

The construction sector in Arizona saw a slight loss of jobs, being down 100 jobs in August, but over the past year, the construction sector has gained 5,100 jobs.

The unemployment rate for the construction sector is slightly higher in Arizona than in the rest of the nation. Arizona's construction unemployment is 4.1 percent compared to 3.8 percent in the United States.

## Construction Jobs cont.

Lake Havasu City and Mohave County are seeing the highest unadjusted unemployment rate of the civilian labor force at 8.7 percent while Phoenix, Mesa, Scottsdale in Maricopa and Pinal Counties are seeing the lowest unadjusted unemployment rates at 5.8 percent.



## Construction September Jobless Rate Dips from August and Year-Earlier Levels

Construction's unemployment rate dropped again in September from August's level and also was down sharply from its year-earlier rate, the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has reported. The bureau said in a report released on Oct. 2 that construction's September rate dipped to 5.5% from 6.1% the previous month and was greatly improved from the September 2014 level of 7%. Last month's 5.5% rate was the lowest September level for the construction industry since 2000, the Associated General Contractors of America noted. Construction also picked up 8,000 jobs last month, boosting its overall workforce 3.3% to slightly less than 6.4 million, BLS said. Specialty trade contractors posted construction's best September jobs record,

but heavy-civil engineering construction lost 2,200 jobs during the month. Ken Simonson, AGC's chief economist, said in a statement, "Growth in the construction workforce has been slowing throughout 2015, just at the time that construction spending has accelerated to a multi-year high." He added, "Contractors would love to hire more workers but there aren't enough qualified craft workers or supervisors available." Anirban Basu, Associated Builders and Contractors chief economist, said in a statement, "The monthly and year-over-year growth in employment are both consistent with the notion that construction wage growth will continue to accelerate."

## Big Utilities Enter Market for Small Rooftop

Traditional power companies are getting into small-scale solar energy and competing for space on your rooftop. The emerging competition comes as utilities and smaller solar installers fight over the future of the U.S. energy system. While the market for residential solar power remains a financial drop in the bucket for a big utility, the installation of solar panels overall grew by more than 50 percent in 2014 and is on track for another record-breaking year at time when the traditional utility business is pretty flat.

"The whole theory is you need to serve your customer or someone will serve them for you," said Raiford Smith, a vice president at CPS Energy in San Antonio, Texas. "I think the entire market is in a race for rooftop."

These moves may have a range of effects for customers. The utilities experimenting in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan and Texas could make solar more affordable for average consumers by energizing competition and driving down prices. Smaller solar companies fear the incumbents will use their power to drive competitors from the market. These experimental programs are one part of a bigger battle between the solar industry and utilities. Since 2013, legislation to limit rooftop solar has been introduced in nearly two dozen states. Some utilities like NV Energy in Nevada and PNM in New Mexico have debated charging solar customers special fees since they still buy electricity from the traditional utility system but end up paying less money to support common infrastructure.

Solar panels remain pricey, at least upfront. For example, a Phoenix resident he wanted to install panels on his home but couldn't justify spending \$25,000 on an investment that he estimated would pay off in 20 years or more. He considered leasing solar panels, but found the multi-year leases would be difficult to end if he eventually sold or rented the property. Instead, he became the first customer this year to lease part of his roof to Arizona Public

***"The utilities experimenting in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan and Texas could make solar more affordable for average customers by energizing competition and driving down prices."***

## Big Utilities cont.

Service Co. which installed all the equipment at its own cost. APS' manager of renewable energy, Marc Romito, said the utility will use the program to test new equipment, batteries and distribution systems.

Critics accuse APS of rigging the system by undervaluing the solar energy, which lowers prices and makes it difficult for rivals to compete. APS generally faces less risk than competitors since regulators grant the monopoly guaranteed profits on all investments, including solar panels. Regulators will be watching to see if the utilities use the advantages of its monopoly electric business.

## Jet Wash Express



*4657 E. Valencia Tucson, Arizona*

Rio West is currently under construction on a new car wash concept coming to Tucson, Jet Car Wash. The new facility is located on Valencia just west of Benson Highway. The building is scheduled for completion in February 2016.

## Creating Concrete from Sewage Sludge

A new method to create concrete using the sludge that is removed during the sewage water treatment process have been developed by researchers. The study performed by scientists at the University of Teknologi MARA in Malaysia, demonstrates a process by which wet sludge cake is dried, burnt, ground and sieved to create domestic waste sludge power (DWSP). The resulting powder can be mixed with cement to create a range of concrete types, including normal as well as high strength grades. The research published suggests that DWSP enhances the durability of normal concrete when used as an additive during the production process. The new method can also increase the resistance to chloride permeability by up to 15%, reducing the effects of salt.

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## Construction Worker Shortage Continues

The construction industry continues to struggle with adequately manning the long-awaited surge in construction projects. A major shift for an industry that saw millions of workers laid off and unable to find work just a few years ago during the recession according to the Associated General Contractors of America. 86% of contractors have reported difficulty in finding qualified hourly and salaried workers, which, the AGC predicted. In response, the AGC is urging federal, state and local agencies to take action in an effort to boost the number of those entering the construction industry workforce.

Since then, experienced workers have retired from the industry, and the trickle of younger replacements are just not enough to fill the gap. States like California, Texas, Arkansas, Iowa and Florida have managed to add some jobs in response to increased demand, but the ability to fill skilled worker gap in the future is in doubt if officials at all levels of government don't mobilize to encourage careers in construction at the secondary and post-secondary levels, according to the AGC. The association added that there has been a significant trend of young people choosing technology-based

careers over technical, and unless officials and educators can convince younger workers to see construction as a viable career option the continued shortages of skilled workers will continue to impact the industry and the economy.

### Note:

The Pima County statistics will be available in the next newsletter



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**We're on the Web!**  
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Rio West Development & Construction was founded in August 1994 by brothers Brad & Walter Hoge. Over the course of the last 20 plus years, we have constructed or developed projects in all jurisdictions in Pima County that include; medical buildings, office buildings, retail centers, industrial buildings, schools, assisted living facilities and other specialty type buildings. Our work experience includes:

- Pre-Construction Services
- Design Build
- CM@ Risk
- Building Inspection Services
- Development
- Solar Installations

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