

# 101 Pipe & Casing Inc.

Established in 1986, 101 Pipe & Casing has become one of the most extensive threaders of line pipe for water well use in the western United States.

By Mike Price

Calm by nature, Harold Maxwell's job is anything but a Sunday stroll in the park. Since 1992, Maxwell has worked as the superintendent of equipment and well maintenance for the City of Tucson, Arizona.

Sure, the job title may not sound too nerve-racking, but earlier this year Maxwell was sweating bullets. It was the middle of the summer when temperatures reach a sweltering 110° to 120°, and Maxwell was in full emergency mode as a pump in one of the 250 wells he is responsible for was out.

Enter Dusty Nabor, executive vice president of 101 Pipe & Casing Inc., the city's vendor ever since Maxwell has held his position.

"I called and said, 'Look, I've got a dropping water level in our reservoir, a failed pump, and we are out of pump column. We need it now,'" Maxwell recalls in a cool, monotone voice, "and all Dusty says was, 'Tell me what you need. I don't want to hear anymore. Tell me what you need.'"



Fidel J. Nabor, president of 101 Pipe & Casing Inc.

Nabor, realizing the city with a population of a little more than 500,000 was in desperate need of water produced by this down well, says he literally ran threading machines all night to ship the pump column the next morning. 101 Pipe & Casing's threaded line pipe, up to 20 inches in outside diameter, is typically sold to the water well industry as pump column.

"When Harold calls in a panic, you know something is wrong," Nabor says. "We understand the consequences of a pump going down that provides water to thousands of people in the desert. We knew that getting the city of Tucson pipe was much more important than just a sale. Quite literally, people's lives could depend on it."

Municipalities and water well service companies alike have come to expect this type of on-the-spot, same-day service from 101 Pipe & Casing, which was founded by Dusty's father, Fidel J. Nabor, in 1986 and is headquartered in Agoura Hills, California. The company has more than 50 employees among its five total locations.

Much like water well service companies who work within the time frame of "tomorrow is too late," 101 Pipe & Casing follows suit. Appreciative



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Based on the customer's specifications, a 101 Pipe & Casing employee tends to the machining of a pump bowl. The company currently has a customer base of 1500.

of 101 Pipe & Casing's service-oriented and timely operation, Matt Hinson, senior applications engineer and project manager for General Pump Co. Inc. in San Dimas, California, put what this means into perspective.

"Other pipe shops out there that we have had experience with do well with large orders, as does 101 Pipe & Casing, but when you have the type of relationship with a service company such as 101," Hinson says, "you can get things done pretty quickly. We can call them at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and ask them for a piece of 8-inch pipe, 5 feet long, and it'll be there waiting for us when we get there."

"Now I know a lot of people stock this stuff, but as you know with pipe companies, they're usually running a certain size at any particular time and they may be running thousands of feet, but with my experience in our relationship with 101 and Dusty, he'll tear that machine down to make that piece of pipe for us. *Now that's* service. That's the type of thing that keeps us in business."

Hinson, who has been a customer of 101 Pipe & Casing for 15 years, continues, "I value my relationship with 101 Pipe & Casing to a point where I treat them better many times than I do my own customers."

As opposed to other pipe companies, Fidel says much of what 101 Pipe & Casing does involves trust. The reason for this is, among other things, pipe is a threaded product that has to go together and come apart perfectly. It is also an integral part of a water well system.

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"You've got to trust the company you're dealing with, and a lot of companies have developed a very strong and deep trust for 101 Pipe & Casing because of the product that we make, the service we give, and the prices are always competitive," he says. "There's a certain amount of consistency with our customer base and that's what is allowing us to grow."

The company currently has a customer base of 1500. Although serving many industries using steel pipe, the majority of 101's customers is primarily made up of water well and pump contractors. Since its inception, 101 Pipe & Casing vies to build the largest market share in the 11 western states.

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Employees program the controls of 101 Pipe & Casing's Doosan vertical turret lathe, which uses computer numerical control technology to manufacture seamless pump column couplings.

pipe 108 inches, says Dusty, highlighting the fact that “we can pretty much do anything to a piece of steel.” 101 Vertical Fabrication is also an original equipment manufacturer of ductile iron spools sold to the water works industry.

“We can take most problems and solve it,” he adds. “The custom work that we do is what sets us apart. It doesn't take very much to put a thread on a piece of pipe, a lot of people can do it, but it takes a lot to put the right thread on the pipe for the right application and that's where we come in.”

Maxwell has even discovered that 101 Pipe & Casing can locate specialty items that are difficult to find.

“When I special order something or if I need something, they're following up, telling me the truck is loaded and equipment will be there,” he says before concluding in a surprising tone, “then they follow up and say, ‘Did you get everything? Did it come in on time? Is that what you need? Do you need anything else?’ It's not like they sell you something and then forget about it.”

Credit 101 Pipe & Casing's customer service to yet another inventive style of handling business fashioned by Fidel, who has more than 40 years of experience working in the steel industry.

While most companies require employees to work in a specific department, 101 Pipe & Casing goes

one step further. Each salesman wears many hats, including estimating, purchasing, and collecting, along with tracking their own orders.

“In that regard, we're unique in our company in that we don't have specific departments that do individual jobs,” Fidel says. “Our salesmen are specialized so that if a customer calls and wants something, whether it's to find out about what their balance is, to find out about water- or oil- lubricated products, our salesmen are knowledgeable enough where they can answer most of those questions. That helps us expedite a lot of business that needs to be expedited.”

Business runs in a cyclical pattern for 101 Pipe & Casing, which builds up its stock of threaded product during the winter and carries its largest inventory of pipe in the spring.

“We're looking for steel prices to go up in 2009, believe it or not, even though it's very soft now,” Fidel noted at the end of October. “With the dollar getting stronger and with the price of oil and scrap going down, the price of steel is apparently going down at this time.”

For any business to flourish, strong leadership is needed at the top. Fidel and Dusty, both with contrasting personalities, understand this fact.

“We complement each other and don't butt heads too often,” says Dusty, who has worked with Fidel for 14 years. “He is like a Type A personality, so I'm a little more easy-going. It's working out really well.”

### 'On the Cutting Edge'

The water well and oil industries don't go hand-in-hand per se, but they do follow one another to a certain extent. In that regard, 101 Pipe & Casing strives to change the notion of why certain products

are used, say for deeper wells, in order to have a combination of both a water and oil well system.

“We're on the cutting edge of new innovations in the water well market,” Dusty says. “For example, a lot of the water agencies don't want oil in their water source, and we're developing a system to use water as a lubricant instead of oil on deeper wells. We actually have the product in service now.”

101 Pipe & Casing has set up experimental wells that are lubricated by water, not oil. And the results? “They're up and running and doing beautifully,” Fidel says.

More and more business from the geothermal market is making its way to 101 Pipe & Casing. The company fabricates pump columns and couplings modified a certain way for some of the major energy companies.

“As a matter of fact, that sets us apart from most people who make pump column — we manufacture our own seamless pump column couplings,” Fidel says.

The company's newest product line is its pump column and tube and shaft specifically designed for geothermal wells.

By using oil field threading technology with standard pipe, 101 Pipe & Casing is able to keep the cost down, sometimes as much as 50% from oil field pipe, Dusty points out while adding that the company's goal is to go deeper and do it cleaner and cheaper.

“We have also increased the availability by using standard pipe,” he adds. “Oil field pipe can become very scarce at times and what little is around can become very expensive. This helps emerging energy companies by not having to compete with oil and gas companies for materials.”

Since geothermal technology is somewhat of a cross between water and oil wells, 101 Pipe & Casing is bridging technology from the oil field to the design of a geothermal well.

“What they've been doing in the past is using oil field pipe,” Dusty says, “and the problem with that is the oil field pipe comes in different sizes as opposed to all of the water well pumps, motors, and heads that come in standard pipe sizes. It can be very difficult and expensive to adapt all the different components. We have bridged that gap by using standard pipe with modified, stronger threads for the deeper settings.”

U.S. Geothermal Inc., a renewable energy development company based in Boise, Idaho, currently uses 101 Pipe & Casing's new geo pump column and tube and shaft that is installed in several of its wells.

“They've always had good pricing and delivered right when they said they were going to,” says Kevin Kitz, vice president of project development for U.S. Geothermal.

Though Fidel has shown a penchant for making savvy business decisions, you'll have to forgive him for his initial thought on what to name the company: “Earthquake Pipe & Supply,” with a lightning rod running through the logo.

Mind you, this is *California*, which is all too familiar with seismic activity.

“The fellow who was drawing it up said I should think about that name — it gives off a negative connotation,” Fidel recalls with amusement. “I wanted something unique to California. He said to think of something else and come back. So as I was leaving the office to get on the freeway, I saw U.S. Route 101. That's where I got the idea.”

Sometimes, as Fidel found out, the best ideas are right in front of you. [WWW](#)

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### A Novel Approach

Fidel may sound like Picasso when describing his company's business philosophy, but he must be on to something based on 101 Pipe & Casing's success.

“Instead of painting a whole wall pink, we'd rather paint a portion of the wall bright red and just really specialize in this water well industry,” he says. “We try to offer a complete package of tubular products that those in the industry put into a water well.”

Adaptable to everything from large pump columns for massive water systems to water well casing for a residence, 101 Pipe & Casing is geared to service the water industry, be it water well or various water agencies.

The company certainly has the capability. It maintains quite possibly the greatest threading capacity of middle diameter standard steel pipe in the 11 western states. Dealing with many of the major steel mills throughout the country and the world allows it to find the best prices available.

Depending on the time of year, 101 Pipe & Casing maintains approximately 5000 tons of steel pipe per day.

It uses what is called computer numerical control technology to thread its pipe and make couplings, and many of the orders are tailored to each customer.

“We're heavily involved in the research of the different types of materials to meet the different demands of the customer,” Fidel says.

At its nine-acre facility in Fontana, California, 101 Vertical Fabrication handles all fabrication and machine shop work in-house. 101 Vertical Fabrication is a wholly owned subsidiary of 101 Pipe & Casing. The machine shop is capable of turning