

NEW JERSEY

# Construction

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# Atlantic Concrete Cutting Approaches Quarter-Century Anniversary

**D**riving down a country road in Mt. Holly, you would not suspect that behind the stately, 160-year-old farmhouse lies the headquarters of ACCNJ member Atlantic Concrete Cutting Inc. The farmhouse has been home to five generations of Nancy Walker's family. It is where she and her husband Doug raised their children and where the concept of Atlantic Concrete Cutting was born.

### Crossroads Create a Dream

Newly married in 1991, Nancy was at a career crossroads. She was having difficulty finding a full-time teaching position in elementary education. Her husband Doug had worked for a small New Jersey concrete cutting construction firm and was searching for similar employment. Nancy's dream of someday becoming an entrepreneur was looking like a viable option.

Inspired by her father's own entrepreneurial spirit, Nancy mulled over the idea of starting a concrete construction business. "If not for the trust, love and support of my parents, Atlantic Concrete Cutting Company would have never become a reality," said Nancy.



Incorporating in March 1991, Nancy converted an old barn on the farmhouse property to serve as an office. With \$20,000 in the bank, one truck and a few pieces of used equipment, Atlantic Concrete Cutting was off and running. By day, Nancy juggled raising two children, managing projects and driving sealing trucks, leaving the nights for preparing bids and catching up on office work.

From that modest start, Atlantic Concrete Cutting Company has emerged as a thriving, full-service industry leader providing virtually any state-of-the-art concrete cutting technique required for private and public projects in the tri-state area and regions beyond.

### Certified as WBE and Growing

Atlantic Concrete Cutting began its first decade primarily in the private sector, performing sawing, coring and drill operations on commercial buildings in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York.

The firm expanded its services to include wire sawing, road, wall and slab sawing, roadway sealing, bridge deck grooving and curb sawing. All of that necessitated an expansion of the original building to encompass a training center. They hired union craft workers and converted a second barn into a fabrication and machine shop, warehouse and maintenance garage.

"The commercial side of the business was booming for us in the beginning, but when that sector hit the recession, we needed to focus more on the heavy and highway sector," said Nancy.

In an effort to broaden her scope beyond new services and into new markets, Nancy realized the value of becoming a certified WBE. She had strong knowledge of the business side of construction but would need to become proficient in the technical aspects of the company operations to qualify. Through her membership in the National Concrete Sawing and Drilling Association, Nancy traveled the country training in such courses as blueprint reading, core drilling, saw cutting and wall sawing. She even headed to Japan to learn more about new technologies in wire sawing.

After ten years in business, the company was granted WBE/DBE status in seven states on the East coast. Not without lessons learned, however. "If you're starting a WBE construction company in New Jersey," Nancy advises, "be prepared to have your authenticity questioned. Document, document, document everything."

Despite the challenges of certifying, Nancy recognizes the rewards have come in the many opportunities open to WBEs. Atlantic Concrete Cutting has grown to 50 employees and 35



### Safety on the Cutting Edge

Concrete cutting is, of course, dangerous work. Nancy focused more and more on safety as the company expanded, creating a full-time safety director role and beefing up safety and training policies.

Atlantic Concrete Cutting operators are trained on the most modern technology and equipment, receiving both field and classroom instruction through the company's in-house training program. In addition, operators are required to take a minimum of eight hours of OSHA safety training every year after they have completed the OSHA 30-Hour safety course.

That emphasis on safety led Atlantic Concrete to invest in cutting-edge technology like Ground Penetrating Radar, or GPR, which allows operators to analyze the subsurface of a floor or wall without having to evacuate a worksite, unlike potentially dangerous radiography or X-ray devices. Atlantic Concrete Cutting has put its practical applications – locating extension cables and conduit in concrete, pinpointing pipes, utility mapping and more – to use at the Cherry Hill Mall, for example, and at various sites in New York City. With it, contractors can avoid hitting a gas line – or even a graveyard.

### Confronting Challenges, Marking Success

Post-recession, Nancy notes that competing against non-union shops is the firm's biggest challenge. Day to day, keeping up with complex state and federal regulations looms as another challenge.

But she is quick to emphasize their successes in the industry, particularly the projects on which the company can prove its value by providing a multitude of services and disciplines.

"Best of all," Nancy concludes, "Atlantic Concrete Cutting is part of the ever-changing infrastructure in our region – New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania. I can see our triumphs every day."

trucks. On any given day, 10 to 15 crews are dispatched to various projects throughout the region. While the headquarters remain in Mt. Holly, the company also has satellite offices in Pennsylvania and North Jersey.

### Rewarding Work with ACCNJ Members

Nancy joined the former AGC of New Jersey, now ACCNJ, in 2008, and enjoys reminiscing about some of her favorite projects, many of which were performed with ACCNJ members. They were part of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority's mega projects, widening the Garden State Parkway and the construction Turnpike Exits 6-9.

"When the Tropicana garage collapsed, we were dispatched there in 30 minutes and stayed on for nine months," Nancy related. In addition to countless school and hospital projects, Atlantic Concrete Cutting is proud to number these ACCNJ-member projects in its portfolio: Giants Stadium, Yankee Stadium, Robert Wood Johnson, South Street Seaport, Temple University, the University of Pennsylvania, The College of New Jersey and Princeton University.

