



CELEBRATING
55 YEARS

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2021 Women in Construction: Lisa French Kelley, Principal, W.L. French Excavating Corp.

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What are you most looking forward to post-pandemic? I am most looking forward to seeing the operations accelerated by COVID-19 in full gear. For instance we have fast-tracked the automation

of our processes moving towards a 100% paperless office. Our staff has full capability to work from home, we effectively Zoom with all teams (fields, drivers, operators included) enhancing and easing day-to-day communications and cutting down on unproductive work travel. Additionally, we have found a new appreciation for one another that continues to translate into the strength of our team and company.

How have you adapted and changed in the last 12 months? Planning for the best and worst case scenarios has been a part of our every day for nearly fifty years. Regardless of that, no amount of planning could have prepared anyone for the pandemic and industry-wide shut downs. Having tools to learn to adapt, be flexible, anticipate change or be out in front of it helped us navigate through one of the most difficult times in our company's history. We rapidly deployed the capabilities for the office staff to work from home, something that was not previously in place. We worked tirelessly to adhere to guidelines, roll them out, building them into job plans and implement and reinforce them. We listened to our employees, our clients, our peers – everyone to get back to work and to ensure we were working safely. We made the commitment to come out of this pandemic stronger, more efficient and more productive in spite of the pandemic. We have learned a tremendous amount and the setbacks we felt during the shutdown and rolling recovery will remain with the company for the duration.

Why should woman consider a career in construction? Woman should consider a career in construction for the strong team building aspects that can be new, unique and specific to each job. Work in construction yields tangible, visible results and there is tremendous pride in seeing the contributions of your work help bring projects to a reality. It is a fast paced, ever-changing industry that offers tremendous opportunity for competitive compensations, benefits as well as a place to build a lifelong career.

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months? Sustaining our operation, never pausing for a moment, doing our best to motivate and lead in the times of great uncertainty and fully reopening and regrouping to finish out the year successfully was our greatest achievement this year.

What steps have you taken to ensure continued success for your firm? We have taken the many lessons COVID-19 has taught us (thus far) and used them towards our advantage. We are now better prepared for the next disaster or business disruption utilizing the enhanced communications through ZOOM etc. automation of operations, remote work force capabilities and our SARS COVID-19 Infections Disease Policies enforced in offices and on all job sites. This provides our team and company with confidence that we can function safely in a similar human health crisis with the advancements and new policies we create during the past year.