

# Success on a large scale

## Two companies join forces to fumigate 14 buildings simultaneously



*An aerial view shows all 14 buildings fumigated.*

Picture this: You're tasked with fumigating a condominium complex, home to 540 residents, that spans 14 buildings and 10 million cubic feet — all at once.

This was the task in California facing Willie Payne from Payne Pest Management and Manuel Aguilar from Your Way Fumigation. No strangers to large fumigation jobs — Payne says they are his specialty — both companies usually fumigate one or two buildings at a time. Not in this case.

Their need to cooperate seamlessly is important in California, which has strict fumigation laws. Typically in California, two companies are involved in a fumigation. Payne, the successful bidder on the job, served as the lead company overseeing the project, and Your Way Fumigation carried out the actual fumigation work. It was a big job with many moving parts.

"In California, it's required to have the municipalities turn off the utilities to a structure," Payne explains. "So we asked the local gas company to tell us if we could fumigate the buildings one at a time or two or three at a time. They came out and discovered some leaks in the pipes, and they also discovered because of the age of the piping, they couldn't separate or cut off any buildings. Everything would have to be done at one time."

The plan to fumigate the Lakeside Village complex was delayed seven months because those leaks needed to be repaired.

Once the gas lines were repaired and the date was set, Payne, Aguilar and their teams went to work. They held seven town hall meetings for the hundreds of residents who lived in the buildings. All residents were required to attend a meeting. As anticipated, though, not all of them were ready as the fumigation

date arrived. Payne, a veteran of large fumigation jobs, knew to expect this.

"We probably had 200 residents who needed help," Payne says. "Either they didn't double-bag their food or they left some food out. Then we had about 250 to 300 residents who needed help with anywhere from one to 10 heavy plants that had to be moved out. I brought in 32 of my own employees, and we went through every unit, in every building, one by one."

Aguilar, who called the fumigation job the biggest of his career, said the planning was the most challenging part.

"The most important thing was the timing for the 540 families that live there," he says. "We couldn't be wrong. We had to do everything by the book and in the time they wanted us to do it. We needed to make them happy."

The job intensified the weekend before the fumigation.

“We came in Saturday morning and started taping off the corners and putting carpeting on the sharp edges; we had to put sandbags around the buildings and move out the heavy plants,” Payne says. “Then we had to help people get out. We had people from our team go through each building and answer questions. That effort had to be precise and complete because we had to get to the point on Monday that we could do the tarping and nothing could stop us. We had to have the buildings tented that day.”

Residents left their homes by 8 a.m. on a Monday and were allowed back in by 3 p.m. Wednesday.

Aguilar brought two RVs to the site where he and his crew stayed, around the clock, monitoring the levels on the job.

“All through the night, I was checking the fumigant levels on all 14 buildings,” Aguilar says. “In the extra trailer, I had six guys just in

case anything happened during the night. Wind, tarp blow-opens, any inconvenience for the fumigation. Nothing happened. Everything was perfect, but we were prepared.”

In the final few hours Wednesday, Aguilar says, the Los Angeles Agricultural Commissioners Office sent an inspector to the site.

“They don’t come to every job, but they pick the jobs to go to,” Aguilar says. “Everyone wants to see these big jobs, so I sort of knew someone would come out to inspect us.”

After aeration (CAP), the inspector tested the fumigant levels in every unit of one building. Aguilar watched the clock tick, knowing residents were eager to return to their homes.

“I think she left a half hour before we needed to complete the last building,” he says with a laugh. “I was shaking because people were waiting outside to get into their homes. The pressure was really on in that last two hours.”

Despite this monumental task, they met their 3 p.m. Wednesday deadline for residents to return. Payne says everything went according to plan.

“We had one broken window, one broken globe and a few ‘keep off grass’ signs knocked over. That’s it.”

Reflecting on this huge effort, Payne credits Aguilar and his company for tremendous cooperation and skill.

“Those guys just got on it, knocked it out and met the deadline,” he says of Your Way Fumigation employees. “It was truly a fantastic effort that they put out. They monitored the job around the clock. Remember, if we didn’t get the kill, we’d have to do that whole thing again, all at once. There was no room for any error.”

Though the work was stressful, Aguilar says he received a great reward for the hard work.

“Homeowners and tenants came to tell us what a good job we did,” he says. “That’s my payback. That made me feel really happy that they came out to say ‘Thank you for doing a good job.’”

As a testament to their planning and cooperation, both men were pleased the job was completed effectively, reinforced by the fact that there were no swarming calls this year.

“We had been servicing Lakeside Village for three years for swarm calls,” Payne says. “The next year after the fumigation, we didn’t get a single swarm call, and we were averaging 30 or 40 per year. So I knew when we didn’t get those swarm calls, we were in good shape.”



Two of the 14 buildings tented for the Lakeside Village fumigation.