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## FIRE SYSTEMS INSTALLATIONS

**Customer TLC increases TVA's position****Company experiences sustained growth through customer retention, new acquisition**

By Jeffrey Sanders, managing editor



SAN DIEGO - A customer retention rate of 98 percent is not the only reason the fire and security consulting firm TVA Fire & Life Safety continues to experience 20 percent growth year after year. It's also a result of investing back into the business, signing new clients and meeting the needs of the market. As the strength of the overall economy improves, so has the company's bottom-line.



"The overall strong economy is a benefit to our business," said James Tomes, chief executive officer of the company and son of its founder, William. "We're a good barometer; we see expansion plans," he continued. Business expansion plans of its customers are discussed well in advance with the company, Tomes said.

*James Tomes*

The Home Depot, its largest client, announced an agreement last month to acquire up to 24 stores from Kmart in a deal valued at \$365 million in cash. The retailer plans to convert the sites into retail stores in their name. Before these locations reopen under The Home Depot brand, TVA will work on bringing the buildings' fire systems up to code. Concerns to be addressed include the age of the buildings and if they are compliant with new codes.

The senior Tomes started TVA in 1986, and serves as chief operations officer and co-chairs the board of directors with James. The company has 10 regional offices throughout the U.S., and its headcount exceeds 200 and is expected to grow as the amount of business has warranted increased hiring.

"We've had to be aggressive with our hiring plans," said James. Although the younger Tomes concedes "we have never had a down year," he's also apt to give credit where credit is due. "We have maintained growth because of our customer base." If the optimistic mood prevails for the rest of the year, the company has enough traction to achieve 25 percent senior profit, bottom line growth, he said. It does not hurt either when, "Right now, everyone's accelerating expansion plans."

TVA recently inked a contract with an undisclosed industrial plant in Chicago, a deal Bill Wayman, director of security services, worked on. The local account requires the full range of services that the company provides, including fire, security, engineering and engineering services as well as upgrades to

## IN THIS SECTION

- ◆ [Customer TLC increases TVA's position](#)
- ◆ [UL revision causes stir](#)
- ◆ [SimplexGrinnell forms industry group](#)
- ◆ [Jade's fire business to rival alarm side](#)
- ◆ [ICC okays electronic monitors](#)

[FSI Briefs](#)[▶ Current Issue](#)

the unnamed customer's facility.

Several \$1.5 million proposals are being considered, according to Tomes, including a major casino project in Mississippi.

"We are growing exponentially," agrees Wayman. He said if the business environment stays as healthy as it is, then perhaps the historical 20 percent run rate might just be exceeded this year.

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