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Executive of the Month: Paredes, general manager of Safety Supplies Unlimited and TSC Training Academy – NJ

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Saeideh Paredes,
Total Safety Consulting

Bayonne, NJ When Saeideh Paredes walks through the streets of New York City, she looks up often to see the skyscrapers towering above, sometimes 70 or more stories high.

“I look like a tourist – I even take photos!” she said.

Now general manager of Total Safety Consulting’s (TSC) affiliated companies, Safety Supplies

Unlimited (SSU), LLC and TSCTA-NJ (TSC Training Academy – NJ), her dozen years in construction have inspired awe and admiration in her, not just for the looming structures, but also for the manpower that builds them.

“I know the back end of the story,” she said.

She also holds her head high out of pride for the role that TSC’s family of companies plays in the construction process.

“We have a hand in building New York City and protecting workers and the public. We’re changing the face of the city, and helping workers be safe and go home every night,” she said.

A Responsibility and a Challenge

Construction was uncharted territory for Paredes when she joined TSC Training Academy LIC (TSCTA-LIC) as an administrative assistant in 2007 while studying evenings at Queens College.

A Journalism major, Paredes possessed the skills of a good reporter: a passion for exploring and an eagerness to learn. She completed her BA in sociology and media studies and translated her talents to her work.

“I was like a sponge – taking it all in and fascinated,” she said.

Shown is Paredes on-site at Brookfield’s Manhattan West.

Within a few years, she was promoted to administrative coordinator of TSCTA-LIC overseeing a staff of 15. She coordinated all training schedules and drafted proposals for clients. She aided marketing efforts and increased revenue and sales, handling such VIP accounts as the NYC School Construction Authority, MTA, NYC Transit Authority, MACYs, and Northwell.

In November of 2018, Paredes was named general manager of SSU overseeing all three retail locations (NJ, LIC and the Bronx) and TSCTA – NJ –the training division at TSC’s Bayonne headquarters (Paredes helped establish a Bronx branch last year). SSU provides safety supplies and equipment including PPE (personal protective equipment), fall protection, jobsite tools, apparel, fire extinguishers and first aid kits.

“I treat the division as if I own it myself– it’s a big challenge and a big responsibility,” she said.

Always eager to go the extra mile, from the start Paredes sat in on safety training classes to learn all DOB, OSHA, EPA and FDNY requirements. Once she began work at SSU, she received extensive training on the products.

“I wanted to continue fully understand all aspects of safety and learn the terminology,” she said.

A Turnkey

Solutions Provider

Paredes credits James and Elizabeth Bifulco, TSC co-founders and managing principals, with making TSC a turnkey solutions provider.

“Jim is fearless – never afraid to take chances and Liz is a perfect complement to his confidence in tackling inherent industry challenges,” she said. TSC, one of the largest safety companies in the metro area, is among very few firms of its size to offer a full spectrum of construction safety services – site safety, consulting, training, supplies and onsite medical technicians.

“Our clients know that we’ll take care of them; they don’t have to go anywhere else. We know your account, we know your site, we know your needs and what they entail,” Paredes said. “By offering all of these services, you don’t have to use multiple vendors. Our clients appreciate that because it provides a level of convenience and trust; if they place one phone call to us, they can instantly be connected to who they need or what they are looking for – training, supplies, or consulting, regardless of what it is.”

Quick Turnaround Time

In the fast-track world of construction, speedy turnaround time is paramount.

Owners, GCs/CMs and workers who fail to comply with equipment standards risk fines or violations, even stop work orders which can jeopardize a project. When a product is needed, the request is generally urgent.

“We know clients want results to be easy and immediate,” she said. SSU has a substantial inventory and is in close contact with all vendors, enabling them to often fill orders on the spot or within 48 hours.

The Right Equipment

The wrong equipment is not only useless, it’s dangerous.

SSU stays updated on the latest equipment and regulations through its vendors and its site safety staff.

“From hard hats to steel toed boots, there’s a vast variety of products,” said Paredes.

- Gloves – “When an electrician needs a special type, warmth alone won’t do,” she says.

- Respirators – TSC’s Med Tech division first does a medical evaluation to see if the worker can be fitted for a respirator, then SSU determines the right type and sizes the unit to the worker’s face. This is especially important when there might be exposure to silica or other toxins.
- Fire extinguishers – SSU’s fire safety technicians have extensive backgrounds in fire safety, one is a retired FDNY firefighter. They are regularly apprised on the latest rules and regulations including new tagging requirements. SSU sells, inspects and repairs extinguishers which are highly specialized.
- Protective wear – Includes shields, masks, goggles and more just for the face – there are over 60 eye protective products alone.
- Fall protection – Most fatalities are from falls. SSU stocks various brands, types and sizes to accommodate each worker.
- Hard hats – A new version features a clip-on under the chin which prevents slippage in a fall or under high winds.
- Climate-control wear – Heated jackets use battery packs that last eight hours; cooling vests and towels help in the summer’s heat.

Journey of a Woman in a Male-Dominated Field

TSC has many women in high positions, including managing member Liz Bifulco. “What better leader, and example, than a woman!” said Paredes.

She said, “Some men still wonder when they see me in a class or on a job site if I really belong there. When a customer calls sometimes they’ll ask who they can speak to about a technical question thinking that I wouldn’t be able to provide the right answer. I’ll assure them I can and prove it!”

“Proving she can” is instinctive for Paredes. “I’ve always wanted to show that I can do it,” she said, adding that construction is offering more opportunities for women as the industry evolves.

“The future for women in construction is bright. Once we set our minds to anything, we can accomplish it. It is very exciting to see how times are changing and to be able to be a part of it,” she said.

Looking to the Future

“I’ve watched TSC grow through the vision of the Bifulcos. The original company, started in 1996, has always been a pioneering force for safety in the industry,” she said.

She foresees TSC and its divisions continuing to expand, with SSU offering more equipment and

innovations. Paredes is ready to help “take it to the next level.” For her, this means lifting her head high and looking way up. The sky’s the limit.

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