

## Expert Spotlight: Armando Garcia

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Our greatest influencers are those whose opinion we respect and listen to. For Armando Garcia, BPUB Water and Wastewater Operations & Construction Manager, listening to advice from his brother Alfredo began him on his career path. “I had just graduated from high school in Houston. My older brother heard about PUB and told me to go to Brownsville and try at PUB because ‘it is one of the best companies to work for’”, Garcia said. “I made an application and I got a call.”

“My first memory about working here is being impressed by large projects that PUB tackled,” he said. “Not just the projects but the skill and proficiency that it takes to use the machinery to make a project happen, from the moment you begin looking at the building plans to the moment you step foot into the field to make it happen.”

Garcia recalls beginning as a maintenance worker with the electrical division. He built concrete substation transformer pads. Even after a 31-year career at the BPUB, there are always things to learn. He said this was exemplified when he moved from electrical maintenance and was assigned to water and wastewater. “It’s clear that there is a wealth of knowledge here and people who know their jobs very well. With the help of some really good employees, I learned about the water and wastewater department. A lot of my guys were some of my best mentors.”

With over 100 pieces of rolling equipment, over 68 employees who oversee 13,000 water valves, 5,000 fire hydrants and over 50,000 water meters, Garcia says he has a sincere appreciation and commitment to his team. Working with them is his “biggest reward.”

“What also impresses me is their ability to adapt and overcome if any problem comes up. I like to say that we are the backbone of the organization,” he says with a smile. “We generally get called when there is a problem that is hard to solve. What this crew can accomplish in mud and sewers and come back daily with a smile on their faces, I really admire that.” The crew responded to 4,759 water service calls last year.

He also credits improvements in employee education and training and technology for providing better service to customers. “This new generation of employees, they bring new ideas, new technology and their education. When I see them come in, I can imagine what the future holds for them; it’s going to be an exciting one because of technology. It used to take a crew hours to hand dig a trench when today we can use technology and equipment to make that task faster and easier.”

One of the changes Garcia expects to see over time is the loss of careers in the water and wastewater employees who know the Brownsville water system like second nature. “We are losing a lot of experienced

employees annually,” he said. “It’s hard to see them retire because we lose knowledge and years of skill. What I want to see (and aspire to) is to identify possible successors, supervisors and future managers so that we can keep taking care of our customers.”

These days, things seem to have come full circle for Garcia. “Young men who I interview they tell me, ‘PUB’s the best company to work with, great benefits and steady work,’” he says. “It means something. That shows a lot about the company and its standards. When people want to come work with you, that means a lot. I love my job; otherwise, I wouldn’t have stayed so long.”

Garcia spends free time biking, hunting or fishing with his two sons, Christopher, 26, and Alejandro, 16, or his chocolate Labrador, Oso.