

# Safe, Quick, Effective Turnaround Service.

75% of AltairStrickland's customers turn around and come back.



AltairStrickland, a subsidiary of EMCOR Group Inc., was founded in 1976 as a generalized mechanical contracting firm. In the years since, primarily by listening to customers' needs and responding to their most challenging projects, the Texas-based company has evolved past its original service offering and now counts itself among the country's premier authorities in process unit upgrades, revamps and turnarounds.

through the many issues and challenges that stem from getting clients back on line safely and quickly with the minimum amount of stress and expense.

"Many of our clients might see one turnaround every five to seven years, but we see them all day, every day," said Rick Ramirez, director of sales and marketing for AltairStrickland. "That gives us the depth and range of experience required to help bring clients a sense of routine calm

continually improve."

One project that illustrates Webber's point is the Western Refining turnaround project AltairStrickland completed just over a year ago. The El Paso refinery turnaround was AltairStrickland's fourth project for Western, an independent Texas-based oil refiner and marketer. With a total crude output of 128,000 barrels per day, performing a turnaround at Western's El Paso refinery was a complex project. But successfully executing these types of complicated projects — where the stakes are high and big money is on the line — is how AltairStrickland has built its reputation for success. It's also one of the reasons Western Refining has been a longtime AltairStrickland customer.

## A different kind of contractor

If you were to ask someone at AltairStrickland what exactly it is that makes the company different from other turnaround contractors, you'd likely get the same response no matter whom you approached: a focus on safety, constructability and pre-planning.

The most likely reason you'd find consistency in these answers is because these three components are deeply embedded into the fabric of AltairStrickland. According to Webber, the company uses advanced problem-solving techniques to keep itself out in front of its competition.

"Ours is a culture of

innovation, and one where everyone gets a voice," stated Webber. "We're not content to simply maintain the status quo. We're always looking at new ways to grow and excel. Of course, it also helps that we're obsessive about pre-planning and constructability studies. We know that when a million pounds of steel is being hoisted from a million-dollar crane, well, that's certainly no time for surprises."

The surprises Webber refers to can be significantly reduced, and in many cases eliminated, with proper planning. By using AutoCad and other tools, the company develops, optimizes and enhances execution plans, crane selections and critical lift activities — all while improving safety and quality prior to starting the actual project. AltairStrickland even uses plywood and other materials to build models that are then used to explore virtually every conceivable what-if scenario that could be encountered, in an effort to assess potential constructa-

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Over the course of the past 40 years, the company has managed to refine its sweet spot and now specializes primarily in both scheduled and unscheduled (emergency) work on fluid catalytic cracking units (FCCUs), delayed coking units (DCUs) and ammonia units. The company is now known as one of the country's go-to contractors for turnaround work — in part because of the safety awards it has received, including the 2016 American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers (AFPM) Contractor Award for Meritorious Safety.

Averaging some 25 projects annually, AltairStrickland is successful and hyper-focused on helping clients meet three main target areas: safety excellence, schedule and budget. The company is experienced in nearly all tasks related to turnarounds, including how to work

to what they might otherwise perceive as the proverbial threatening storm."

Jeff Webber, president of AltairStrickland, points to the fact there is no better measure of the trust AltairStrickland enjoys with clients than the fact the company is routinely asked back to do more work after the initial engagement.

"Over 75 percent of our clients have worked with AltairStrickland on more than one job," he said. "That speaks volumes. Our goal isn't to only perform one project with excellence; it's to work in a manner that shows our customers just how seriously we approach quality, pre-planning, safety and budgeting. When it comes time for work opportunities, we strive to be our customers' preferred contractor. We've done a great job of that so far, but we're driven to



A Delta valve is lifted into a structure using the Delta Glide System, while AltairStrickland personnel oversee the work.

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bility issues before they become problems impacting safety, scheduling and budget. All this occurs in the six to eight months it often takes for AltairStrickland to plan a turnaround — proof positive the ability to manage subcontractors, collaborate with clients and ultimately manage an entire scope of work truly sets the company apart.

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— Jeff Webber, AltairStrickland

### It’s all about the people

One of the other themes that emerges when looking at how AltairStrickland does what it does so successfully is it places a great deal of importance on finding and employing the right people — people like project manager Brian Nelson, who recently worked on a sulfur recovery unit project in Channahon, Illinois, that included more than 100 critical lifts, no small feat by any stretch of the imagination.

However, it wasn’t the lifts that were the most challenging aspect of Nelson’s job. It was something else, something the construction industry as a whole is having a hard time with these days: finding skilled, qualified workers.

“One of the biggest hurdles we had to get over was recruiting manpower for this one particular job,” Nelson recalled. “Internally, we had seven turnarounds going on at one time, and a couple of those were emergency jobs. That put a pretty heavy tax on our labor pool, and

me for 16 years; that’s the whole time I’ve worked for AltairStrickland.”

Campbell sees his role as project manager as one where his primary responsibility is making sure he’s doing all he can to assist his team in achieving their goals. He says his team has good morals, good relationships and good leaders, and they communicate instead of keeping people

in the dark.

“What I try to do is stop roadblocks and help them be successful; I try to create paths to help them move forward,” Campbell said. “We all have a role to play in a project, and mine is to help my team as much as I can.”

But sometimes, no matter how much pre-planning is done, roadblocks do come up, and that’s when Campbell and his team have to pivot and make changes to the scope of work on the fly. Sometimes those changes require a significant amount of adjustment, so Campbell and his team do what they do best: They plan.

“We make a plan to respond to any change that arises,” he said. “We don’t just start. We don’t just talk about it. We take the time to make a plan and agree on it. That way everyone knows exactly what they need to do. Communication is one of the most important tools we have to be successful. If we don’t communicate, we don’t succeed.”

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— Rick Ramirez, AltairStrickland

we knew getting the right people would be pretty difficult.”

But AltairStrickland isn’t the type of company to be deterred easily. Nelson and his team thought creatively.

“We put out there that we were looking for qualified craftsmen with the right credentials,” he said. “Honestly, we were surprised by the response. We picked up quite a bit of new talent.”

Ben Campbell, another longtime project manager for AltairStrickland, also cites the people he works alongside of as one of the reasons the company continues to be successful.

“I have great people that I work with,” he stated. “Some of the guys have been with

One example the company cites to illustrate the ability of its people to think and react in real time emerged during a project where a steam generator shell ruptured at an ammonia plant. AltairStrickland’s team began planning for repairs immediately, but they soon realized the exchanger was located under a floor. To dismantle and replace the floor would be too time- and cost-consuming. So instead, the team fabricated a one-of-a-kind machine mover at the site and slid the heat exchanger out a side wall located nearby. No piping had to be cut and the floor remained intact. Impressively, the plant was back at full production capacity in just 12 days.

It’s this ability to think creatively and quickly, to see problems as opportunities and to innovate solutions, that keeps AltairStrickland at the cutting edge of turnaround work. It’s the team’s unique approach of addressing constructability issues at the beginning of a project by participating in the early planning stages with clients that often results in safer, more cost-effective turnarounds. However, there’s one other benefit of taking such a unique, progressive approach to the turnaround business: It results in happy, satisfied clients who want to ask them back again and again, clients who depend on AltairStrickland to help manage their turn-



A crane lifts a new coke drum into a structure during one of AltairStrickland’s turnarounds.

arounds, *no matter how complicated*, from concept to completion.

**For more information, visit [www.altairstrickland.com](http://www.altairstrickland.com) or call (281) 478-6200. ●**



AltairStrickland sets a new FCCU head and cyclone (new head and cyclone pictured in gray).

A lattice-boom crawler crane picks a new FCCU head and cyclone during one of AltairStrickland’s critical lifts.