



A WAIT FOR CHIPS

A shortage has forced automakers, other chip users to idle production.

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CLASH AT OPEC

Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates fight over oil production.

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HELP IN TRAGEDY

FEMA can offer up to \$9,000 per COVID-19 death for funeral costs.

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BUSINESS

HOUSTON CHRONICLE • SUNDAY, JULY 11, 2021 • SECTION B



RECOVERY

Master of disaster

By Amanda Drane
STAFF WRITER

The Champlain Towers South in Surfside, Fla., collapsed in a heap of rubble overnight June 24. The next day, Robert Jensen had uploaded a lengthy blog post predicting – accurately – what would come in the days to follow.

Search and rescue, he wrote, would take several days before the tasks shifted to the recovery of bodies; media coverage would evolve from “nonstop coverage of the recovery, with focus on any rescues” to the whys of the collapse; and how various agencies would step into the investigation.

Few are in a better position to understand disasters on this scale

Kenyon International jumps in when large-scale tragedy hits



Top: Robert Jensen, chairman of Kenyon International, explains some of the paperwork they use in disasters. Above: Yellow labels mark the date, location and services rendered by Kenyon.

Photos by Michael Wyke / Contributor

than Jensen, the 55-year-old chairman and co-owner of Kenyon International, an emergency services company based in Spring.

Airlines and governments large and small from all over the world keep Kenyon on call, standing ready to help recover and identify bodies at disaster scenes, transport the dead and provide information and support to survivors. The company built its reputation responding to airplane crashes, but disasters of all kinds know no bounds and often require specialized expertise and an extra set of hands.

When a large-scale tragedy hits, Jensen and Kenyon are usually on their way. He was there when first responders drilled through sections of the collapsed Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, site of a domestic

Kenyon continues on B7

To boost fossil fuels, Abbott is rejecting Texas' crown as renewable energy leader

CHRIS TOMLINSON
Commentary



Gov. Greg Abbott has made clear that he's more interested in boosting fossil fuel burners' profits than improving the electric grid or fighting climate change, and he's rejecting new ways of generating clean, reliable and affordable energy.

The two-term Republican had two chances to help Texas lead the global energy transition. First, he issued orders to his new appointees on the Public Utility Commission, and

he set the agenda for a special session of the Texas Legislature.

Abbott is not letting lawmakers have a say in overhauling the wobbly Texas grid operated by the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, known as ERCOT. Instead, he wants to dictate solutions that benefit coal and natural gas companies over clean energy.

Abbott ordered the PUC, which oversees ERCOT, to redesign the state's wholesale electricity market to reward generators that can provide backup power. This is a break from the current, 20-year-old system that pays generators only for the energy they put on the grid, not their capacity to generate.

Critics of the system have correctly called on **Tomlinson continues on B6**



Mark Mulligan / Staff photographer

A solar panel is installed during a training class at a solar farm south of El Campo in May.

Pandemic bringing early retirements

By Don Lee
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Even with declining numbers of young Americans entering the job market and the Trump administration's crackdown on immigration, U.S. employers were able to count on the last of the baby boomers to prevent labor shortages and soaring wages.

But the COVID-19 pandemic has hit that longstanding reality like a hand grenade.

And the effects will likely be felt throughout the economy for years to come, in recurrent labor shortages, pressure for higher pay, problems for Social Security and private pension funds, and a host of other areas.

When the health crisis

struck early last year, workers of all ages were laid off by the tens of millions. But the result of the pandemic-induced recession is turning out to be vastly different for older workers than for their younger counterparts.

Younger workers now face strong pressure to resume their interrupted careers relatively quickly. Not so among older workers.

In large numbers, many have reassessed their finances and other factors and have concluded that they are about as well off retiring now as they would be going back to work and soldiering on for a few more years.

Right now, it looks like many of these older workers will never come back.

Retirement continues on B7

BUSINESS

KENYON

From page B1

terrorist bombing that killed 168 in 1995. He has been to more than 50 mass casualty scenes throughout his career, including in Thailand after the Boxing Day Tsunami in 2004 and the Haitian Earthquake in 2010, which together killed roughly 500,000 people.

Kenyon's teams helped tackle disasters such as Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, COVID-19 outbreaks in New York and last year's explosion in Beirut, where a warehouse containing explosive material blew up, killing hundreds and injuring thousands.

"I've been around the world a long time and I've seen probably more events than any individual," he said. "So, I know they will occur again. I wish they wouldn't, but I know they will."

A former deputy sheriff in Fresno County, Calif., Jensen was in the Army when he was assigned mortuary duties because of his law enforcement background.

He joined Kenyon, which was founded as a funeral home company in London in 1880, in 1998. "Kenyon was after me to come and work for them," he said. "Kenyon seemed to be a place where I could do some good."

Royal lineage

Kenyon started out handling royal funerals and has been responding to mass casualty incidents since 1906, when a high-speed rail derailment in Salisbury, England, killed 28 people and local authorities asked for help recovering remains.

The company later helped handle the repatriation of bodies during World War II and in the 1950s developed an international reputation for swooping in after airplane crashes and providing services.

It drew the attention of Houston-based funeral services company Service Corp. International, which bought Kenyon in the late 1990s and moved its headquarters to the Houston area to be near its own.

It was here that it would undergo a transformation that separated the funeral business from its emergency services operations, Jensen said.

In 2007, Jensen purchased 70 percent of the emergency services side of

the company, Kenyon International, in a management buyout and took it private. He later bought the remaining 30 percent. He shares ownership of the company with his husband, Brandon D. Jones, the company's vice chairman.

Jensen joined the company as it was developing a stronger emphasis on support for survivors in addition to recovery efforts.

"There was a big shift in realizing when you have these mass disasters, the focus needs to take into account the living, the survivors," he said. "All these areas need to really be coordinated and work together."

Not only is casting survivors aside when disaster strikes "just not right," it's bad for business, he said. Those who loved the dead tend to come after airlines, governments or whatever companies may have been involved in the incident more vengefully when recovery efforts aren't handled well.

"Litigation is an extension of rage," he said.

Emotional recovery

Now, he said, Kenyon does a lot more than recover the dead and their personal effects. It provides mental and social support for the living, providing them grief and financial counseling to help them move forward.

The company relies largely on contractors; it has more than 2,000 on-call associates, including forensic specialists, mental health providers, linguists and search-and-recovery experts. It has just 25 full-time employees, servicing around 600 clients that keep it on retainer, paying between \$4,000 and \$30,000 a year to be ready if disaster strikes. Jensen declined to disclose the company's revenue.

Kenyon teams are trained in the universalities of loss, Jensen said. They're trained to expect grief and its effects on survivors, selflessly support people through it and work with different cultures. So when a 24-year-old mother lost her husband in a cargo plane crash in Houston in 2019, Kenyon provided both mental health and financial guidance, helping her access financial support for herself and her two young children.

"We're not training people for any of the skills they're supposed to have

when they come here," he said. "We're Kenyonizing people ... working with different cultures, making it not about you, working with grief. This is about: How do I deal with the universalities of loss?"

Matt Ziemkiewicz, now president of the National Air Disaster Foundation, lost his 23-year-old sister nearly 25 years ago after a plane she was on crashed into the Atlantic Ocean shortly after taking off from New York bound for Paris. Kenyon was able to retrieve a childhood photo she carried of her hugging him as he blew out birthday candles.

"Kenyon got it back for us," Ziemkiewicz said. "It's still got the water damage, and it's one of my most prized positions."

Janice Watson lost her daughter, Jill, on the same flight. She'd fallen asleep watching television that night and remembers waking up to images of a plane's wing sticking out of the ocean against the night sky.

Kenyon recovered two of her daughter's favorite necklaces from the wreck. "When I put them around my neck," she said, "it just feels like a hug from her."

Personal effects Kenyon recovers from disaster sites get cataloged in a binder and put online so they can be retrieved by families. If the family wants it cleaned or restored, Kenyon will handle it.

Sometimes families ask that the items not be cleaned. "I did his shirts for 17 years," Jensen recalled one mother saying after her son died in a crash. "I want to be the last one to wash his shirt."

In a storage room inside Kenyon's headquarters in Spring, Jensen keeps a personal locker with gear and clothes for any climate. In his locker there are also flak vests for war zones, earplugs and safety goggles at the ready.

Portable morgues and pre-made death certificates await loading in a rear warehouse. There's a handheld dental X-ray machine to help them identify bodies, a box full of test tubes, jackhammers and metal grinders for cutting through rebar. And a typewriter for where that's necessary for typing death certificates.

"We don't travel light," he said. "You never know where you're going to go."

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Michael Wyke / Contributor

Robert Jensen, chairman of Kenyon International Emergency Services, travels the globe to assist in family-related victim services after disasters.

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Friendswood High School Addition and Renovation - Early Site Athletic Package

Friendswood Independent School District

Satterfield & Pontikes Construction, Inc. as Construction Manager-At-Risk for Friendswood ISD, in accordance with Texas Government Code 2269, will receive bids or proposals from all qualified subcontractors for the "Friendswood ISD - Friendswood High School Addition and Renovation - Early Site Athletic Package" project.

A Pre-Proposal Conference will not be held for this package. If needed a site visit can be scheduled.

Bids or proposals are due July 22 at 10AM, bids or proposals should be emailed to houstonbids@satpon.com, faxed to 713-996-1400, or mailed/delivered to the Satterfield & Pontikes Construction, Inc., 11750 Katy Freeway, Houston, TX 77079. Late bids will not be accepted.

There will be no public opening of bids or proposals. All bids or proposals shall be available after award of contract, or the 7th day after final selection of bids or proposals, whichever is later. After receipt of bids or proposals, Satterfield & Pontikes Construction, Inc. will conduct its evaluation of the subcontractor bids or proposals in relation to the project requirements and will select the bid(s) or proposal(s) that offers the best value to Friendswood ISD.

Friendswood ISD, the Owner, reserves the right to waive any informality and/or to reject any, or all bids, or proposals.

Contact Danny Struzick at dstruzick@satpon.com or Charles D. Reagan at creagan@satpon.com for additional information on this project. Please forward all questions to Danny with S&P, deadline for submitting questions is seven (7) days prior to bid day

Drawings and specifications will be available July 7, 2021 on www.satpon.com and in the Satterfield & Pontikes Construction, Inc. office located at 11750 Katy Freeway, Houston, TX 77079.

Drawings and Specifications may also be reviewed at:

Associated General Contractors
McGraw Hill Construction/Dodge, www.construction.com
Virtual Builders Exchange, 3910 Kirby, #131, Houston, TX 77098, (832) 613-0201

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Texas (METRO) is planning to issue the procurement documents listed in this advertisement.

RFQ No. 4021000142: Architectural/Engineering Services For Design For Transit Facilities And Transit/Transportation Improvement Projects. Solicitation will be available on or about 07/13/2021.

RFQ No. 4021000141: Land Surveying, Mapping & GIS Services. Solicitation will be available on or about 07/14/2021.

Prospective bidders/proposers can view and download these solicitations by visiting METRO's website at <https://www.ridemetroapp.org/procurement/>

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS WILL BE RECEIVED BY PROCUREMENT SERVICES, PORT HOUSTON, UNTIL 11:00 A.M., ON AUGUST 4, 2021, FOR THE FOLLOWING:

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RETIREMENT

From page B1

"We are now, in this century, in a period of reduced immigration to the U.S. We are also in a period of lower fertility," said Richard Fry, a senior researcher at the Pew Research Center specializing in the economy and education. "So the fact that boomers were staying in the labor force has been an important contributor to economywide growth."

For some older workers, it's a quality-of-life issue: They have found being at home fulfilling. And retirement incomes go further than many expect without job-related expenses of transportation, lunches and such.

Others have been nudged toward earlier retirement by medical, family and other personal reasons.

"This is a big shock that's irreversible for a lot of people," said Patrick Button, an economics professor at Tulane University who has written extensively on age discrimination and the labor market.

Even as pandemic restrictions have been lifted and businesses are struggling to find enough workers to fully reopen, the number of adults 55 and older who are participating in the labor force — that is, working or looking for work — has barely budged this

year and is actually down from last fall, according to government statistics.

That's in sharp contrast to people in their prime working years, ages 25 to 54, who have made significant strides in getting back into the job market.

The pandemic did not accelerate Monique Hanis' retirement, but it certainly crystallized her plans.

"I think it allowed for thoughtful time and conversations. It really solidified the decision that I was ready," said Hanis, who this month turned 60 and left her job as senior director of communications at Advanced Energy Economy, a business association in Washington.

For Hanis, the pandemic spurred a broad rethink about life and priorities.

"You can't always get your healthiest time back," she said, "and as we get older, that becomes a concern, to be able to physically do the things that we want to do, to travel."

Her husband, Doug Warnecke, retired two years ago at age 66. "After juggling two really demanding careers," Hanis said, "raising kids through all of this — I took six weeks off to have the babies and I was back to work — you know, all the carpooling and sports teams and all the stuff you do, and we're just like, 'It's time to have fun. Let's play.'" To be sure, many older

workers don't have adequate savings and retirement funds to stay away from jobs. Others want the stimulation of work.

"I never, ever in a million years saw myself retiring at all. I'm very work-oriented, and so for me, just not doing anything itself drives me up a tree," said Christine Garza, 68, a former health educator in Charlottesville, Va., who has been taking part-time and temporary assignments in recent years.

Still, it's likely the momentum among older workers has shifted, a change from the past two decades, when they remained on the job and reversed a century-long trend toward earlier retirement, said Courtney Coile, a Wellesley College professor who studies the economics of aging and health.

What kept people working longer had to do with better health and education, the increased role of women in the job market, shifts in company retirement plans and especially changes to Social Security that incentivized delaying retirement, she said.

In the decade before the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S., employment among people 55 and older grew on average by 1 million a year, compared with about 750,000 for prime-age workers. The fastest growth rate was among those 65 and older.

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