

Construction firm a smooth operator

By JENELL CAMP
The Union

Some workdays may find Mark Colin in an operating room during surgery.

No, he's not a doctor, medical intern or nurse. He's a general contractor, and though his company, Colin Construction, does commercial and industrial work, it specializes in remodeling and renovating hospitals.

"It's a very interesting market, there's not a lot of people who do this kind of construction," he said.

Colin started his career in Southern California 11 years ago doing a small remodeling job for Cottage Hospital in Santa Barbara.

From that start he began doing other small remodeling projects in hospitals.

"It was trial and error," Colin said. "Luckily, the jobs were not in critical areas at first and this allowed my firm to get real working knowledge to deal with emergency facility work."

After moving his company to Nevada County, he made presentations to the hospitals in Northern California. It wasn't long before his company had developed a steady business.

"I don't have competitors," he said.

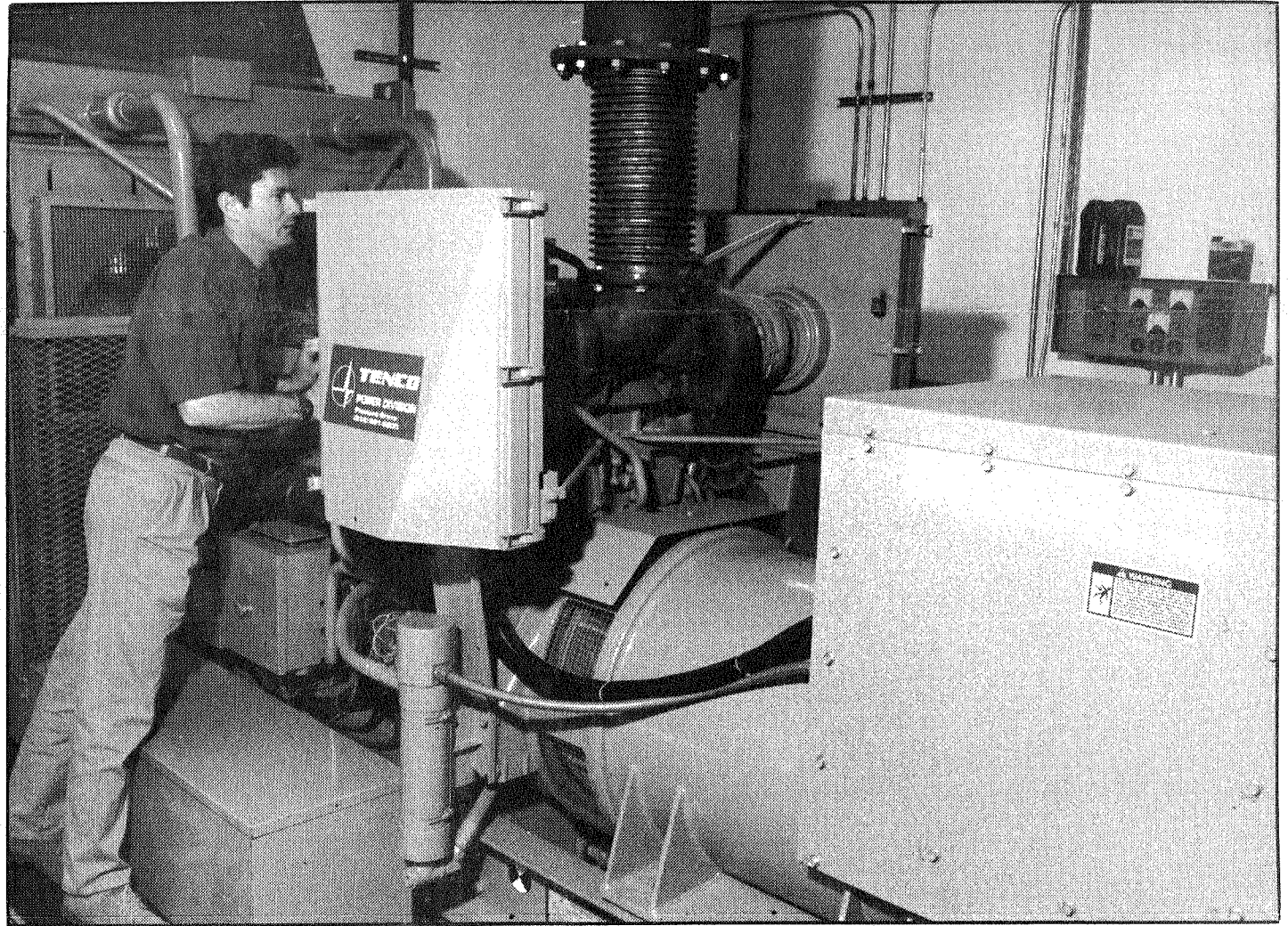
The company does almost all the medical construction at Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital, Auburn Faith Hospital and has done some work for Rideout Hospital in Yuba City and Mercy Mt. Shasta.

Construction work in a hospital is fraught with unusual working conditions. Hospitals don't close, so work must be done during surgical operations, as well as during other emergencies. Keeping the noise down and the job site dust-free are the two biggest challenges.

"Have you ever known a construction job that doesn't have dust and noise?" he asked. "We have to work that way."

During one job, workers were putting in steel beams and using jackhammers with an operation going on in the next room.

"The staff pounded on the walls for us to stop that noise while they put a patient under anesthesia," Colin said. "We stopped the



The Union/John Hart

Mark Colin shows the new emergency generator his company installed at Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital.

work until they were through."

Sometimes electrical systems have to be shut down and patients have to be hooked up to emergency systems with nurses standing by the patients.

Colin Construction recently finished work on the Radiology Room at Auburn Faith and not too long ago remodeled the emergency generator system at Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital.

"The emergency generator system is the guts of the hospital," he said. "It's the main life-support system of the hospital and maintains the hospital power system when the normal power grid goes down."

Half the hospital had to be shut down when the new generator replaced the old one.

"It's not an easy thing to transfer to new service with hundreds of patients in the hos-

pital," he said. "We had to alert everyone in the hospital."

And the company is in the process of doing another expansion project at Sierra Nevada Memorial. They are working with a Sacramento firm on the hospital's new outpatient center.

"It's probably one of the biggest projects this community has ever done and will take about two years," Colin said.