

Southwest Gas profits inch up

By Eli Segall, Las Vegas Sun

Southwest Gas Corp. narrowly raised its first-quarter profit after seeing a turnaround in its pipeline construction services unit.

The Las Vegas-based natural gas provider on Friday reported earning \$80.8 million of net income, or \$1.75 a share, for the three months ending March 31.

That compares to a profit of \$78.9 million, or \$1.71 per share, in the same period last year.

The company's operating margin, or revenue minus the cost of selling gas, was \$293 million last quarter, up from \$288 million a year earlier. Also, its NPL Construction Co. unit accounted for almost \$1.5 million of the company's total profit. A year earlier, NPL lost the company \$447,000.

Southwest Gas has almost 1.9 million customers in Arizona, Nevada and California.