THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A DEADLINE TO KEEP things moving.

It’s certainly become an incentive for the masons, ironworkers, painters, electricians, plumbers and other skilled tradesmen who are working to complete renovations to Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. They’re scrambling to get the work done by Aug. 1 so the revamped venue will be ready for Rams and Trojans games.

“We’ve got lots of workers out here, and we’re working six days a week,” said Brian Grant, the coliseum’s associate director of facilities and project management. “We’ve pretty much broken it into two shifts. We’re working from 5 a.m. to 1 a.m.”

Lots of improvements

The upgrades are extensive. They include replacing every seat, adding aisles and a new seven-story structure on the coliseum’s south side to accommodate suites, loge boxes, club seats, a new concourse and a new press box.

Additional improvements will update the facility’s Wi-Fi technology, increase the number of concession stands, upgrade entry concourses, install new field and stadium lighting, add large video screens and replace the iconic venue’s aging electrical, mechanical and plumbing systems to meet current standards.

The Los Angeles Rams and USC Trojans...
have both been able to play on the field while work is underway.

**Costs have risen**
Funding for the renovation is coming from coliseum naming rights, gifts and donations. United Airlines won the 16-year naming rights deal, so beginning in August the stadium will be known as United Airlines Memorial Coliseum. The price tag for the project, initially $270 million, has since risen to $317 million.

“The additional scope of work brought us to that number,” Grant said. “We’re adding more things to the outside of the building as well as an antenna system to some of the outlying areas. We’re also investigating options for an internet-based TV distribution system, and we’re going to improve the gate entry system so it’s more automated. That will increase the speed for patrons coming in. We’ve done some additional fundraising for this.”

**Most are local hires**
Hathaway Dinwiddie Construction Co. is serving as lead contractor for the massive overhaul.

“We’ve had 1,765 people working on this project since we started on Jan. 2 of last year,” said Theodora Oyie, the company’s senior manager of community engagement. “Right now we have about 500 workers each day out there and nearly all of them are subcontractors.”

Oyie said 70 percent of the workers her company hired are from Los Angeles County. Their wages range from $18 an hour for starting positions to $71 an hour and more for seasoned professionals.

“We have about 50 percent of the work completed,” she said. “The rain delayed things, so that meant that folks had to double up to make up ground because we have a very hard stop date.”

**Bragging rights**
An agreement with Los Angeles County allowed the company to hire a broad spectrum of workers, Oyie said, including people with criminal backgrounds and military veterans.

“We reached out to community-based organizations and unions to ensure that local residents who wanted to work on the coliseum had that opportunity,” she said. “Everyone wants to work on the coliseum. They want to be able to look back and tell people, ‘I had something to do with that,’ even if they just carried water or picked up trash.”

Danny Garcia, vice chairman for Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers union, Local 4 agreed.

“It’s a good project for our company because they are using local hires, so we can get some of our apprentices going,” he said. “The coliseum is an exciting project to be working on.”

Grant said the work is on track, despite the recent rains.

“Most of the roof has been finished, so on rainy days our guys get a little tighter with their work areas,” he said. “We would prefer that the rain came more intermittently instead of dumping all at once … but we still welcome it because of the long drought we’ve had.”