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PRO

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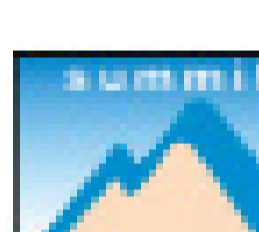



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Turning the Pages

Scour the pages of PRO for the following entertaining and informative features that will help boost the bottom line for your portable sanitation business:

A **Special Report** delves into the painful fuel crisis gripping America this year. We found that diesel prices peaking at near \$5 a gallon are a product of supply and demand. Supplies are limited by diminished refinery capacity and areas of strife in oil-producing regions across the globe. And demand is up all over, especially China and India, which are guzzling diesel like never before. And diesel demand, specifically, is growing over gasoline as the fuel of choice for autos in Europe and other countries. While the experts say you may see a little price relief, it's not just around the corner. They say fuel prices will probably never drop to where they were a few years ago, but they might slack off as supply issues start getting resolved in 2009.

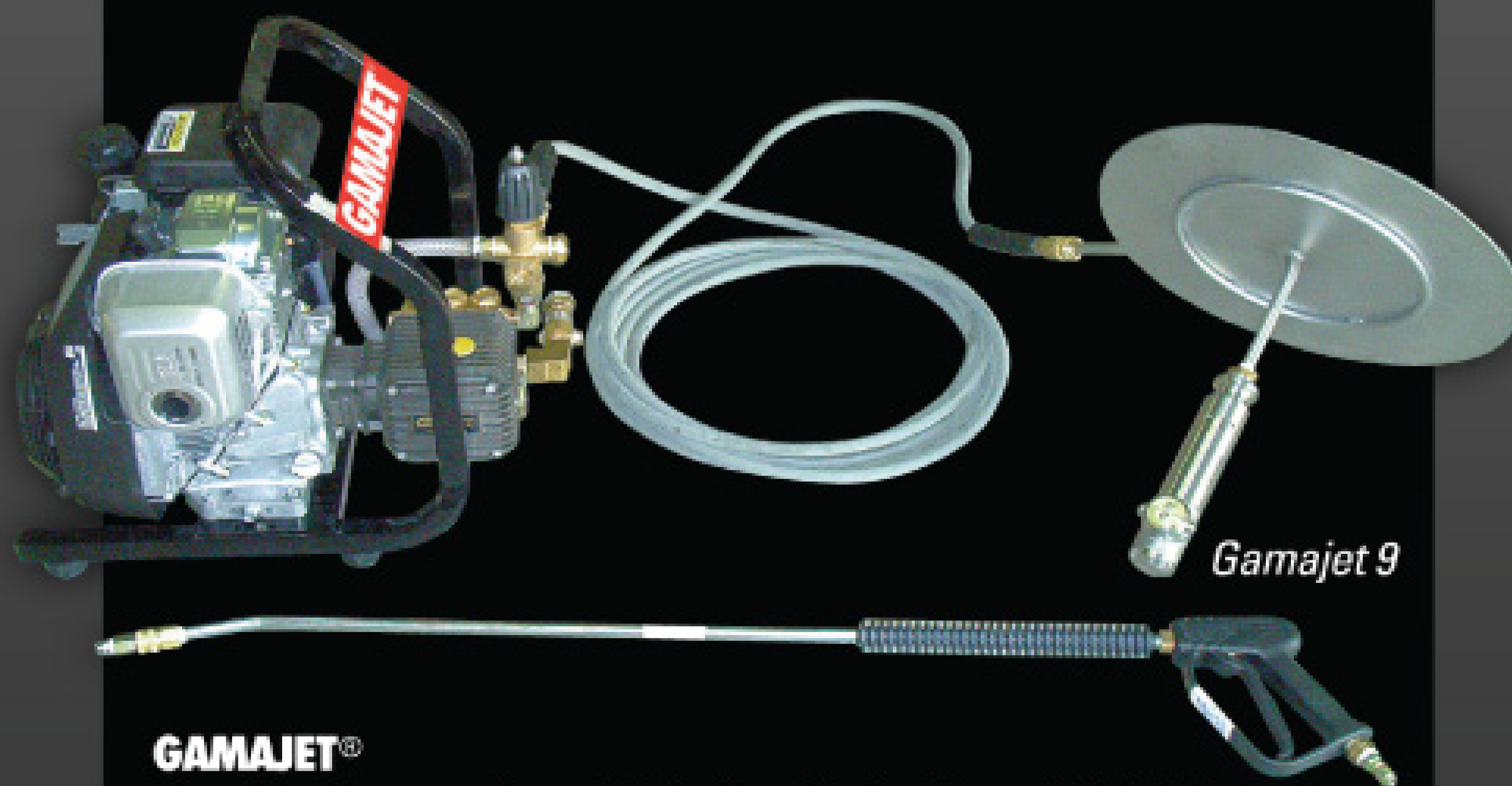
Our **Truck Maintenance** feature gets you ready to put the fleet in tip-top shape for the long winter ahead. Our truck expert Robert Carlson presents a host of valuable ideas to get on top of maintenance now so you won't see trucks heading to the garage when the snow flies. He talks about everything from switching to a lighter weight oil in your vacuum pump to checking the tread wear on your winter tires. It's time for PROs in the farthest northern regions to chain up and winterize their vehicles for carefree service runs.

Think Tank continues this month's maintenance theme, asking PROs for their tips to avoid frustrating and costly downtime in the fleet. Allen Lammott of Richmond Sanitary Service, Marcellus, Mich., performs a daily inspection of lights, tires and other everyday functions before setting off on his route. "Kind of along the lines of a DOT inspection" is how he describes this procedure. Pat Kelly of Got-A-Go Rentals, Florence, Ky., has his own tricks to keep everything running smoothly. "We change the oil in our trucks every 3,000 miles and clean the vacuum pumps every two weeks," he says. "We run kerosene and diesel through the pumps." That work is all performed in-house. "We also pressure wash our trucks and dry them off every day, including cleaning the inside."

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The Right PSI for the Best MPG

With high fuel prices apparently here to stay, proper tire inflation and common sense driving tips can help control transportation costs

By Jim Kneiszel

As the presidential election cycle ramped up a while back, John McCain poked fun at Barack Obama for suggesting that proper tire inflation and regular engine tune-ups are key components to reducing the impact of the current fuel crisis.

Precisely, Obama suggested that if Americans maintained optimum tire pressure and followed regular engine maintenance, the fuel savings would equal the amount of oil that could be derived from further offshore drilling being touted by McCain. Sensing an opportunity to gain control over the hot button issue of the year, McCain distilled Obama's energy plan to handing out pressure gauges to the electorate.

Now, I'm not dumb enough to get involved in a political debate here in the pages of *PRO*. But I also happen to think that many drivers — maybe even a few vacuum truck drivers — ignore recommendations to check tire inflation regularly and keep their vehicles properly tuned.

DO YOU FLOSS?

In fact, I'll bet tire pressure checking is a lot like flossing teeth for most people. You know you should do it regularly, but you only

I'll bet tire pressure checking is a lot like flossing teeth for most people. You know you should do it regularly, but you only think about it the day before your next dental appointment or when you notice the truck riding a little low, whichever applies.

think about it the day before your next dental appointment or when you notice the truck riding a little low, whichever applies.

If my hunch is true, Obama might actually be onto something here. While his argument seems simplistic on its face (and an easy target for jokes), *Time* magazine tested his theory and found some interesting numbers.

According to the *Time* report, the Bush Administration says expanded offshore oil drilling could increase oil production by 200,000 barrels per day, or about a 1 percent increase over current usage, by 2030. According to its efficiency sources, *Time* reports that proper tire inflation raises mileage by 3 percent and regular tune-ups add another 4 percent. If everyone would pay more attention to maintenance, the result would be an immediate reduction in demand for oil by several percentage points.

When it comes to the tires, I speak from personal experience. While I am a stickler for engine maintenance on my vehicles, I'll

admit that I've been lazy on checking tire inflation over the years. I'd check the pressure before leaving on a big vacation or if I hauled a trailer, but that would be about the extent of it. Once in a while I'd check the tires during the first real cold days of winter, thinking they'd be low.

But recently, the fuel mileage on my car has been poorer than usual. So I had my mechanic look over the car and I got more serious about checking tire inflation. With a tweak here or there and properly inflated tires, my mileage went back to close to where it should be.

And checking my tires more regularly has provided a side benefit. I've become more aware of the condition of my tires.

I never thought I was one of those lackadaisical drivers who doesn't notice spent tires until the treads are gone and the steel belts are starting to poke through the rubber. But on my most recent pressure check, I noticed my front tires were down to the wear bars and President Lincoln's haircut was in full view when I did the penny check on the rears.

BUY A BETTER GAUGE

Previously I used a handful of the old-fashioned pencil-type gauges with stick indicators that pop out when you apply the



Here are two popular types of tire gauges, the stick gauge (\$2 to \$4) and the needle-style gauge (Slime brand, \$6.99 at AutoZone).



A psi range of 5 to 150 pounds is a big selling point for the Slime Sport Gauge (\$9.99 at AutoZone).

gauge to a tire's valve stem. But these gauges are notoriously inaccurate. Don't believe me? Try using several pencil gauges on the same tire and you'll probably get markedly different results. Or simply use the same gauge on the same tire several times. Sometimes the stick doesn't pop out and it's difficult to get a good, consistent air seal when applying these gauges to a valve.

You'll spend a few more dollars, but you can get a much better gauge today for less than \$10, whether it's a better mechanical dial-style gauge or a digital gauge. Typically, sturdier gauges preferred by professional drivers cost \$30 to \$50 and up. It stands to reason that better gauges that give more consistent results will help you keep your tires inflated to the optimum range for fuel economy.

MORE BENEFITS

It's clear checking the tires pays off in better fuel economy, but there are other reasons to make sure you and your drivers include the task in daily or weekly truck inspections.

Longer tire life is another financial incentive. Just like your fuel, tires are made from petroleum products. If you've bought a set for one of your trucks recently, you know tire prices are never dropping. Conservative driving habits and proper tire inflation are the two most important things you can do to make sure your tires reach manufacturer's specs for tread wear before you have to replace them.

Perhaps the most important payoff of proper tire inflation is the continued safety, both of your drivers and drivers and pedestrians they encounter on the road. Well-inflated tires keep the meat of the tire on the road at all times, and ensure firm, predictable handling in corners and while braking. This is important for any heavy vehicle, but critically important for a vacuum truck filled with waste. You can't afford to roll on mushy tires.

BONUS COMMON SENSE FUEL SAVING REMINDERS

Plan better routes

No matter how skilled we are at navigating our hometown streets, we can all travel a little more efficiently. Portable GPS mapping systems cost a few hundred bucks, but through direct mapping they may pay for themselves in short order. Not only can using these devices shave a few miles off your daily route, they can save the time it takes you to open a road map and search for the best way to get from here to there.

Beyond the readily available mapping systems, sophisticated computer mapping programs can lay out your service route automatically, planning every stop in the most direct manner. At the end of the day Friday, your office staff can have all your driver routes precisely diagrammed, printed out and laying on their dashboards first thing on Monday.

Reduce idling

A caller to National Public Radio's *Car Talk* recently asked hosts Tom and Ray Magliozzi if it used less gas to leave a vehicle idling or turn it off and restart it when they ducked into a store to run an errand. When I learned to drive, my dad told me it's better just to leave the car running when I stopped for a minute or two. He said the car used more gas starting up again than it would idling. Of course, this was in the stone age — or pre-fuel injection — when excess gasoline flooded the engine with every start.

Today, the Car Guys said, cars use far less gas starting up, and

that it's always a good idea to turn the car off rather than idle. And if you think of all the time you spend idling — taking a cell call or reading a map or job order, for instance — you realize you can probably put a pretty good dent in your daily fuel consumption by turning the ignition key.

Find the speed sweet spot for fuel economy

I used to hover just above the 65 mph speed limit on the highway, high enough that I could get where I was going quickly without risking a speeding ticket. But when gas inched its way toward \$4 a gallon, I let up on the accelerator ... And it made a difference. By dropping down to 59, 60 mph, I added as much as 3-4 miles per gallon.

Each vehicle is geared to get the best fuel economy at a certain speed — typically around 55 mph — and even slight increases can burn a lot more fuel. But I think there is another contributing factor to my own improvement. I find that when I drive at 60 or less, I seldom come up to slightly slower vehicles that I have to accelerate to pass. And fuel-wasting merging traffic usually sneaks in ahead of me, so I don't have to pull into the left lane, then accelerate to find my spot in the slow lane again.

Shed some pounds

No, I'm not talking about joining Weight Watchers, although dropping a few pounds would help many of us lead healthier lives. What I'm suggesting is that there's probably an excess 50 or 100 pounds of equipment you really don't need to carry to every job. As an example, I carry a bulky 2-inch hitch receiver on one of my cars for when I haul a trailer. Of course, I only haul a trailer several times a year, so I should probably stow the chunk of steel I won't be needing for a while.

What's in your toolbox that you really don't need? Do a toolbox inventory when you have a few minutes, and transfer to your workshop toolbox anything you haven't used in the field over the past year. Plan your service calls carefully and offload liquid waste when you can, rather than carry excess gallons when you don't have to. Don't keep an extra restroom on the carrier if you don't think you're going to place it today.

READ ON

Fuel economy and vacuum truck selection and maintenance are a big part of this issue of *PRO*. Look inside for a special report ("Pain at the Pump," by Greg Northcutt) explaining factors driving the high cost of diesel fuel, along with a sidebar on the role biodiesel and hybrid technology may play in lowering your fuel costs. Also, check out our *Truck Corner* writer Robert Carlson's take on preparing your service trucks for winter ("Batten Down the Hatches"). ■



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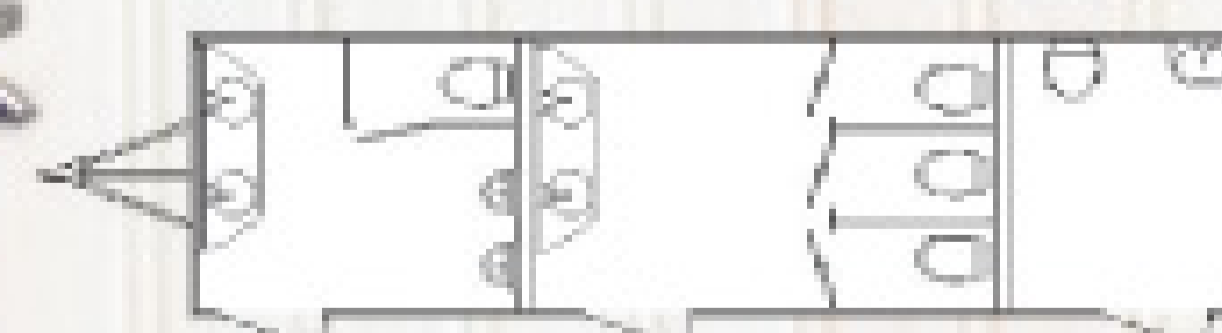
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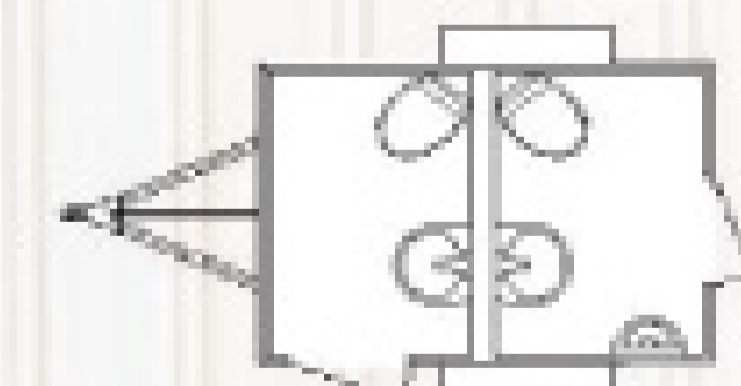
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Writer Judy Kneiszel has operated her own small business for a decade and is familiar with the many rewards and challenges of business ownership. Write to her with questions, comments or topic suggestions at thewordhouse@ameritech.net.

46 Ways to Pay Taxes



Understanding individual state laws, keeping good records and a big supply of antacid tablets can help you survive a sales-tax audit

By Judy Kneiszel

In 1930, Mississippi became the first state to adopt a general sales tax. Since then, all but four states have jumped on the bandwagon, and 46 states means 46 sets of rules, regulations, rates and exemptions.

For many years, sales tax laws in other states weren't of much concern to small businesses. It was mostly big companies that engaged in interstate commerce.

Today, however, the world is one big shopping mall, and with a few keystrokes consumers are able to buy goods in any state from Maine to California. But in a 1992 decision, the United States Supreme Court exempted out-of-state retailers from collecting sales taxes in states where they have no physical presence, like a store, office or warehouse. (And if the question ever comes up at a cocktail party or on Jeopardy, the legal term for this physical presence is "nexus.")

The best defense in any kind of audit is thorough record keeping. Detailed documentation could save your company big money in taxes and penalties, while decreasing the amount spent on defending an audit.

Although the Supreme Court decision involved a mail order company, the ruling has been applied to all remote sellers, including online retailers. The result? Companies have increased their geographic market, costing states billions in sales tax revenue.

So, what are states doing to rectify this situation? Many are trying to strengthen "use tax" compliance.

A use tax applies to transactions not subject to sales tax

where tangible personal property, bought in one state, is used and/or stored in another state. The use tax is generally imposed at the same rate as the state's sales tax, and should be remitted to the state by the individual or business making the out-of-state purchase. That means you may owe use tax on the office computer you ordered from a different state and didn't pay sales tax on.

Use tax looks like sales tax, smells like sales tax and costs like sales tax, so states are making up for sale tax loses and enforcing the collection of use tax by conducting "sales/use tax audits."

What all this means to you and your company — whether you do business in one state or 10 — is that you need to be prepared. There has been a noticeable increase in sales/use tax audits as states attempt to recoup those lost sales tax revenues.

NO TWO STATES ALIKE

Because tax laws vary so much from state to state, I can't address specific sales tax questions here. I can only offer tips on how to survive an audit. If you think I'm exaggerating the differences between states, consider this: Massachusetts has multiple pages of legal jargon when it comes to the question of whether or not sales tax is charged to customers renting portable restrooms. Here's a sample:

"If charges for the rental of the portable toilet units are separately stated from charges for servicing them, it does not matter whether the cost of the units is consequential or inconsequential in relation to the total cost. Sales tax is imposed only on the separately stated rental charges. Lessors of portable toilet units are required to collect and remit sales tax in accordance with the rules explained in Massachusetts Regulation 830 CMR 62C.16.2: Sales and Use Tax Returns and Payments."

The State of Washington, however, answers the same question in one simple paragraph: "Rentals of portable chemical toilets are not rentals of tangible personal property. Typically, the owner both rents units to consumers and provides maintenance. Thus, the service is taxable under the Service and Other Business Activities B & O tax classification. The charge is not subject to retail sales tax or Retailing B & O tax."

And here's a quirkier example of the differences between state sales tax laws: Antacids are exempt in Connecticut, but are taxable once you cross the state line into Massachusetts. It doesn't take much research to realize learning all the differences in sales tax laws from state to state would require more antacids than both those states combined could hold.

IF YOU'RE AUDITED

The best defense in any kind of audit is thorough record keeping. Detailed documentation could save your company big money in taxes and penalties, while decreasing the amount spent on defending an audit.

Some of the records that may be reviewed include: sales tax returns, worksheets, canceled checks, federal income tax returns, state tax returns, general ledger, general journal and closing entries, sales invoices, exemption documents supporting non-taxable sales, charts of accounts, fixed asset purchases/sales invoices, expense purchases, merchandise purchases, bank statements, canceled checks and deposit slips, cash receipts and depreciation schedules.

A state sales/use tax audit usually begins when an auditor contacts you by letter or phone to schedule a pre-audit meeting. In this meeting, the auditor will typically present an audit authorization letter and other documents for you to sign. He or she will then explain what records are required to complete the audit and ask for additional information such as details of your accounting procedures.

To prepare for the scheduled audit, you will need to gather and organize the records requested by the auditor. Don't provide too much or too little information ... just what they ask for. Too much information can potentially uncover liabilities they weren't even looking for and waste a lot of your time and theirs. Too little information might raise the auditor's suspicions and cause the scope of the audit to be expanded.

While sales tax and use-tax regulations vary slightly for retailers, laws vary wildly for construction, manufacturing, distribution and other businesses like portable restroom providers that have mixed taxable and nontaxable transactions. To help you understand where you may have sales tax exposure and get a jump on a possible audit, learn the laws of your individual state and the states where you have nexus.

Most states detail their rules on the Internet. To get started, go to this map www.taxadmin.org/fta/link/default.html on the Federation of Tax Administrators Web site, click on your state and start studying. You'll soon realize those lawmakers back in Mississippi had no idea in 1930 the size of the genie they were letting out of the bottle when they created sales tax. ■

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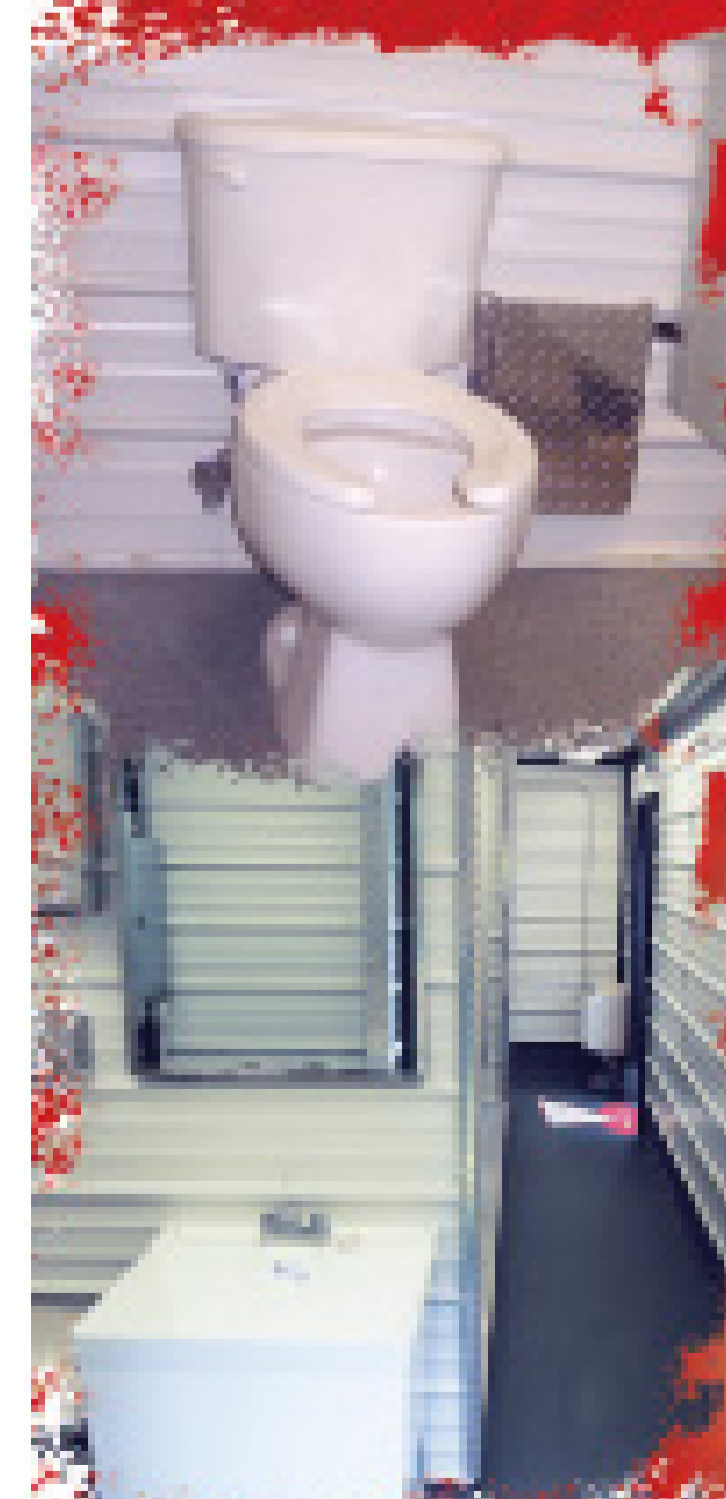
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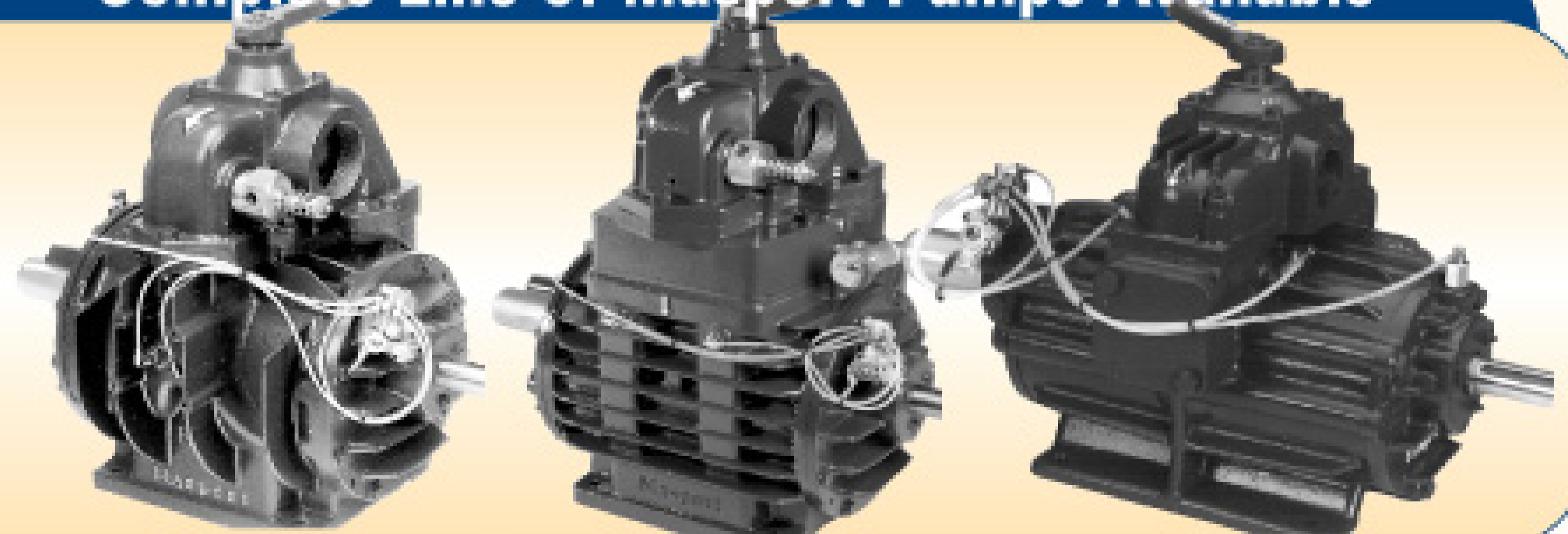
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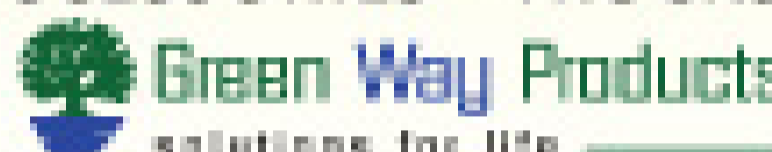
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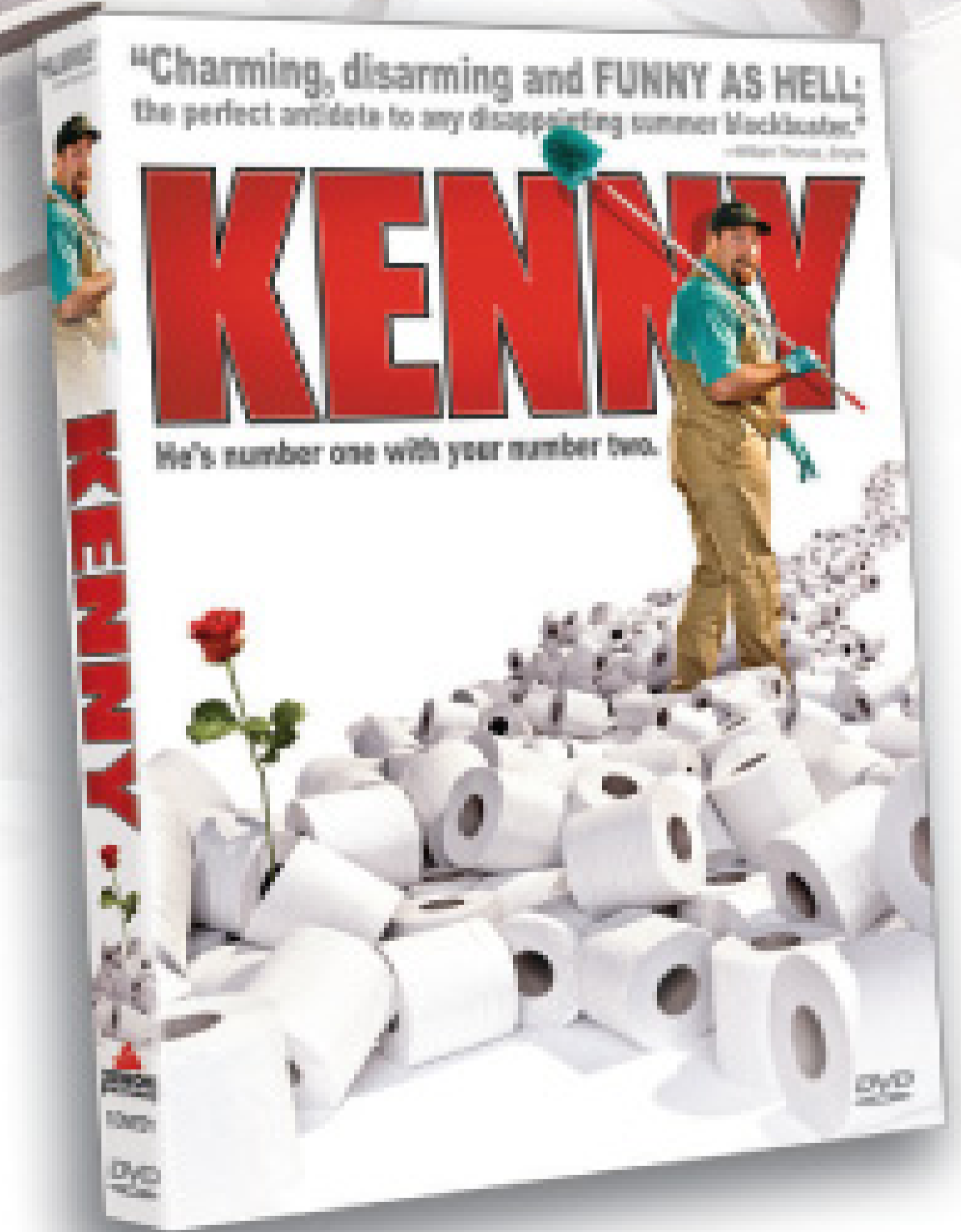
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COVER STORY

SOMETHING NEW

Based in Americana, Brazil, ECOTEC owner Roberto Zeitlin uses his company to educate employees, support social causes and promote human rights. (Photos courtesy ECOTEC Tecnologia Ecologica Ltda.)

Brazil's ECOTEC thrives in an emerging economy where portable sanitation and employee perks are fresh concepts

By Betty Dageforde

When Roberto Zeitlin started his portable restroom business in Americana, Brazil, a decade ago, the country was in the process of recovering from an oppressive and backward 21-year military dictatorship, which ended in 1985 after a popular revolt.

Many things have improved as the

country hastens to become a 21st century industrialized democracy, including portable sanitation services. When Zeitlin got started, equipment choices were limited, there was little perceived need for portable restrooms, and waste was often not safely disposed of. Today he can buy trucks and portable restrooms locally and business is booming.

Zeitlin uses his company as a vehicle to educate employees, support social causes, and promote human rights and responsible

environmental policies. "I try to keep ahead of history," he says. "What I do most of the time is future thinking."

He named his company ECOTEC Tecnologia Ecologica. It means "Ecological Technology," reflecting a forward-thinking business philosophy.

An ECOTEC employee waits for a contractor to sign his work order after servicing a group of restrooms at a construction site.



ECOTEC Tecnologia Ecologica Ltda. Americana, Brazil

Owner: Roberto Zeitlin

Years in Business: 10

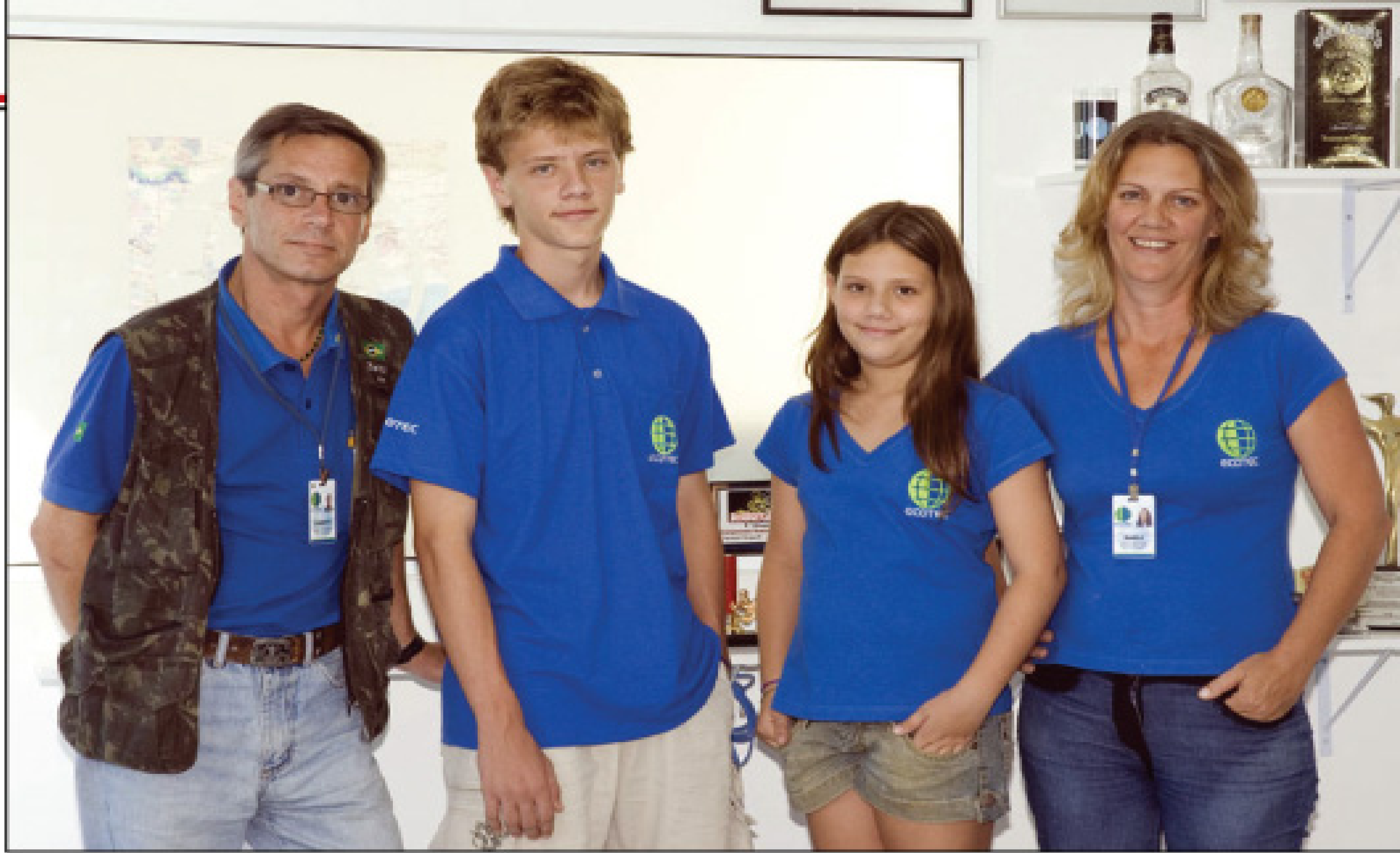
Employees: 40

Services: Portable sanitation

Service Area: Several hundred mile radius of Americana, Brazil

Affiliations: Portable Sanitation Association International





The Zeitlin family (from left) includes Roberto, Felipe, Helena and Marli.

RED, WHITE AND BLUE FOUNDATION

Zeitlin spent his first few grade school years in the United States when his father attended Stanford for his Ph.D. in 1971. Besides learning to read and write in English, he says this is where he was educated to think about the environment, a big issue in California schools at the time.

He finished his education in Brazil, and in 1995 bumped into an old friend who owned a portable restroom business. Zeitlin began helping him find clients, and in 1998 they became partners. In 2002, when his partner tired of the business, Zeitlin bought him out.

The early solo years were difficult. He'd be up at 3:30 a.m. doing deliveries and maintenance, then paperwork in the afternoons and special events on weekends. His wife, Marli, helped, but she had a full-time job. To educate himself he attended Satellite Industries' Special Client Education program as well as the Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo over the years.

His first truck had to be imported from the U.S. — a 1998 Ford F-12000 with a steel tank. He took it to a mechanic who disassembled it, then put it back together in a configuration suitable for the local climate, road conditions, and size of operations.

The only available portable restrooms at the time in Brazil were fiberglass units.

He said no to those and imported 70 Satellite Industries Tufways, 20 with flush and hand sanitizers. In 2003, PolyJohn Enterprises Corp. began a joint venture operation in Brazil, enabling him to buy locally.

Today, ECOTEC employs 40 people and has an additional three locations within 125 miles of Americana — Bauru to the west, Ribeirao Preto to the north and Jacarei to the southeast. They have 641 units, 120 from Satellite, the rest from PolyJohn South America. These include standard, luxury, super luxury, and VIP

“Conservation means we can use natural resources today in such a way that the future generations will be able to do the same. Growing economically is important, but that would only happen if we are allied with conservationism and the development of future generations.”

Roberto Zeitlin

units, as well as 18 wheelchair-accessible units.

DOING THE RIGHT THING

“When ECOTEC was established we had two main goals,” says Zeitlin. “One was water conservation, the other social responsibility.”

Protecting the water supply is an important concern for Zeitlin. Raw sewage in Brazil is often buried, which can contaminate the water supply, in particular the Guarani aquifer, one of the largest in the world. ECOTEC began providing a document of proof that the waste it collected was taken to a treatment facility. It's signed by the customer, ECOTEC, and the treatment plant.

One conservation measure the company employs is collecting and storing



An ECOTEC technician uses the company's Volkswagen service vehicle to freshen up units. The truck has an 1,800-gallon capacity (1,300 waste/396 deodorizer/132 freshwater). It also can transport up to eight units and has an extra tank for freshwater.



"I live on my wages. I don't have big dreams of spending big money. I take two one-week vacations a year. You could say I'm a workaholic, but I don't see this as something that I'm addicted to. It's just that I like what I do."

Roberto Zeitlin

rainwater at three of its facilities, which it uses to wash units and dilute deodorizer.

"Conservation means we can use natural resources today in such a way that future generations will be able to do the same," says Zeitlin. "Growing economically is important, but that would only happen if we are allied with conservationism and the development of future generations."

ECOTEC is involved in a number of charitable and social projects. Besides offering wheelchair-accessible portable restrooms early on, the company helps sponsor a school for mentally challenged children, and provides money and equipment for the school's BMX bicycle racing team, as well as food, water, and volunteers to work the races.

ECOTEC belongs to a foundation that fights for the rights of children and youth. The foundation established 10 commitments that corporate members agree to — for example, providing certain rights for pregnant and nursing mothers, not contracting with anyone that employs people under 18. ECOTEC is also working with

BUSINESS BRAZILIAN STYLE

Twenty-six states make up Brazil, the fifth-largest country on Earth by both size and population. The capital is Brasilia, but the largest city is Sao Paulo, with over 18 million people. The climate is tropical, the religion Roman Catholic, and the language Portuguese, as it was a colony of Portugal from 1500 to 1822. Slightly smaller than the U.S., it straddles the equator, the Amazon rainforest, and four time zones.

Carnival is Brazil's biggest and most lavish festival, and one of ECOTEC's largest events. The country shuts down for the four days before Ash Wednesday. As with many festivals, maneuvering through crowds is a logistical challenge, but the company has learned how to handle it. "The time to study the situation and define operational procedures is before," says Zeitlin. "If you don't know what's going to happen before you get there, you will have big problems. Managing a

the legislature for the rights of sugarcane workers, including the right to sanitary facilities in the fields.

business is not magic. It's organized good sense."

Another popular pastime is Brazil's version of soap operas, known as telenovelas. The TV network Rede Globo hires ECOTEC to provide portable restrooms for its on-site shoots.

Truck dealers in Brazil, by law, are given a monopoly in their region, and are required to purchase supplies in that region. Zeitlin can choose the brand of truck he wants, but not the dealer. That's been a problem for him in the past, but now that he has four locations he can get better pricing by forcing the four regions to bid for his work. Besides one Ford F-4000 four-wheel-drive truck to reach difficult areas, the company has nine vacuum trucks, mainly cabover Ford F-1317s.

The tanks and pumps were developed in Brazil. The steel tanks have three compartments — the largest for waste, a smaller one for deodorizer, and the smallest for freshwater. Because of the rainy/humid climate, tank interiors are given an anti-oxidation coating, and exteriors two layers of protective paint. Even with these protective measures, tanks will only last about five years. In fact, Brazilian law forbids the use of trucks older than that when doing work for governmental agencies and con-



Above, restrooms are ready for deployment at ECOTEC's yard in Americana. The company has restrooms from Satellite Industries Inc. and PolyJohn Enterprises Corp. at its four sites. At left, Wanderlei Teixeira fixes a vent screen.



ECOTEC sponsors a school for mentally challenged children and provides funding for their BMX bicycle racing team. Marli and Roberto Zeitlin (far right) are pictured with the team at a recent race.

struction companies that work for them — big clients for ECOTEC.

Portable restrooms in Brazil are always gender-specific. At big events, mainly for safety reasons, security personnel may be on hand to ensure that there is no mixing. Zeitlin developed and patented a two-unit restroom for use in the sugarcane fields in which the doors for each gender-specific unit are on opposite sides of the trailer. A PolyJohn Bravo sink platform in the middle keeps the two units completely separate.

CAREFUL GROWTH

ECOTEC has two distinct lines of business, each with different requirements and serving different purposes.

"The construction market needs constancy and regularity — every Monday at 8 a.m., you must be there, you must clean it every week the same," says Zeitlin. "For the event market, you need to have a disposition for unusual hours and flexibility to attend the customer's needs."

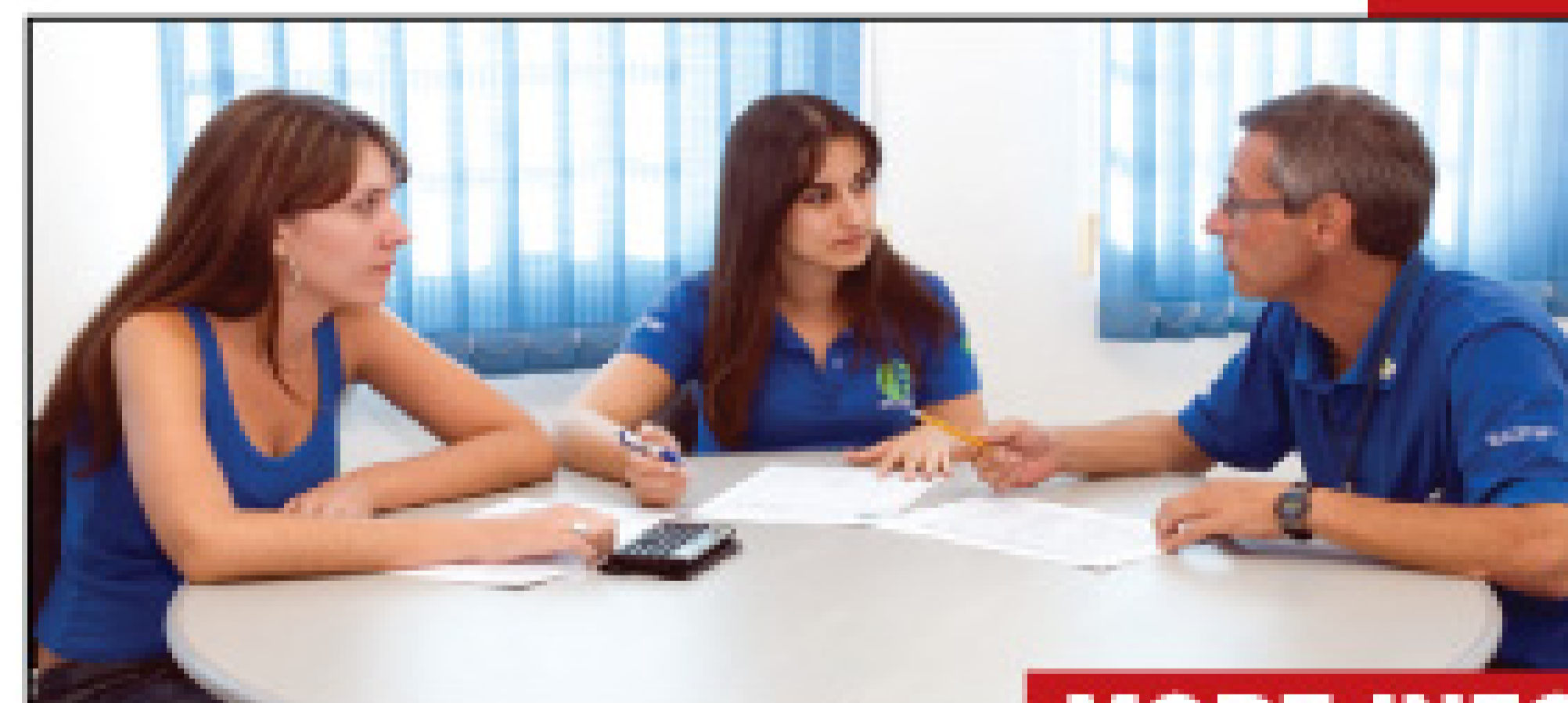
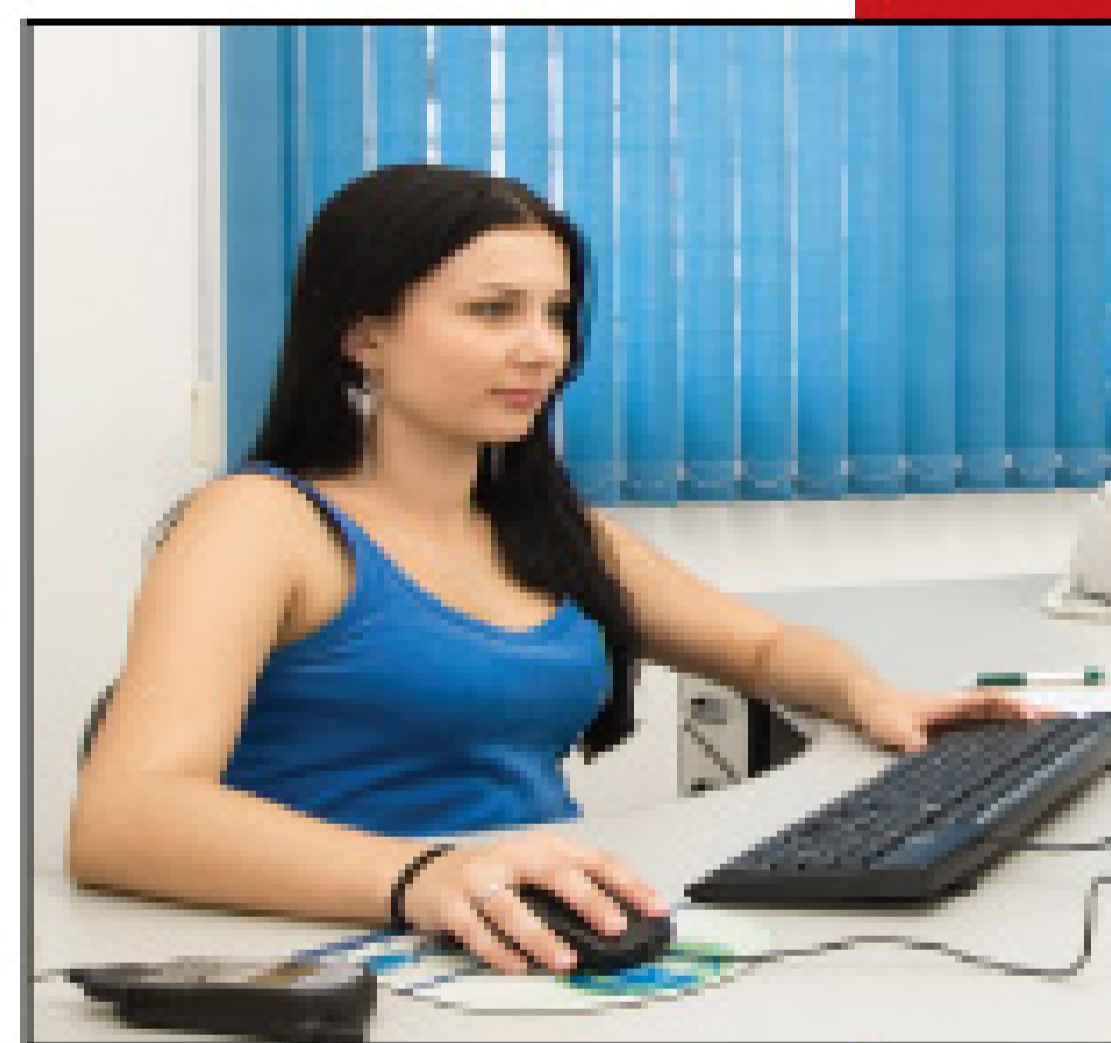
Zeitlin says the construction business is what gives the company stability ("knowing we can pay the bills"). Special events are the "cherry on my sundae."

Marketing in the beginning was word-of-mouth and by handing out brochures. Later it was done by advertising in specialty magazines. Trucks and restrooms also provide valuable signage, but the most effective tech-

nique has been a well-positioned Internet site.

Zeitlin always has an eye on growth, but is very careful. "I have a commitment with 40 people who depend on the decisions I make to guarantee they'll have their income and keep their families fed and in school, that they can pay their bills and have leisure time and vacations. I can't be so selfish just to worry how much profit the company is going to make," he says.

So, he takes risks, but they're calculated. "It's like an elephant — we have three feet on the ground and only one foot in the air at a time." ■



Top photo: Alesi Praxedes works the reception desk at ECOTEC's main office at Americana. Above (from left): Elida Germano, finance manager; Simone Galo, human resource manager, and Roberto Zeitlin discuss a company report.

MORE INFO:

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Sharing the wealth, from the owner to the route driver

ECOTEC has 40 employees, which Zeitlin prefers to call "collaborators." His investment in them is huge. Although wages differ for drivers, office staff, and managers, benefits are the same for everyone.

Education. ECOTEC provides college scholarships for those with high school diplomas. But Brazil has a huge literacy problem. "Our goal, that will take some time to reach, is that everybody in the company has an elementary degree at least," says Zeitlin. "We have a private teacher who comes every day so guys who don't read and write correctly will have a Portuguese lesson."

Training. "I like to dream that the business will live longer than me," says Zeitlin. That requires extensive training, which is permanent and ongoing. "That's one of the main secrets of our success," he says. This enables him to delegate and empower employees to make decisions. "I know they're learning, so they will make mistakes. I don't get mad. I believe we can learn more when we make mistakes."

Working in Teams. Each truck is staffed with two people, a driver and an assistant. It's a way of monitoring the drivers but it also makes life better for them, says Zeitlin. "It's not the most pleasing thing to clean toilets, but if you have some company, somebody to chat with, it won't be bad. People will be happy and do better work."

Benefits. Besides medical, dental and life insurance benefits, employees receive a basket of basic food items every month — rice, beans and oil. They are also given work clothes — polo shirts and pants with company logos. "They get dirty and shouldn't have to spend their wages to have good clothes," says Zeitlin. When the company buys new uniforms, the old ones are given to a homeless shelter (as are partially used rolls of toilet paper).

Profit Sharing. Ten percent of ECOTEC's profits are given to the employees, who decide how it will be divvied up. "The other 90 percent, I have a commitment with them that it will be reinvested in the business," says Zeitlin. "I live on my wages. I don't have big dreams of spending big money. I take two one-week vacations a year. You could say I'm a workaholic, but I don't see this as something that I'm addicted to. It's just that I like what I do."

LOOKING FOR AN



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the temporary models that looked so pretty just a few months ago are now sitting idle, costing you money and customers, too.

The advantages of Vantage. The double-walled Vantage (right) is a top-of-the-line PolyPortables' restroom. It's engineered with common sense and built rock-solid, just like the rest of the PolyPortables' models.

ADVANTAGE?



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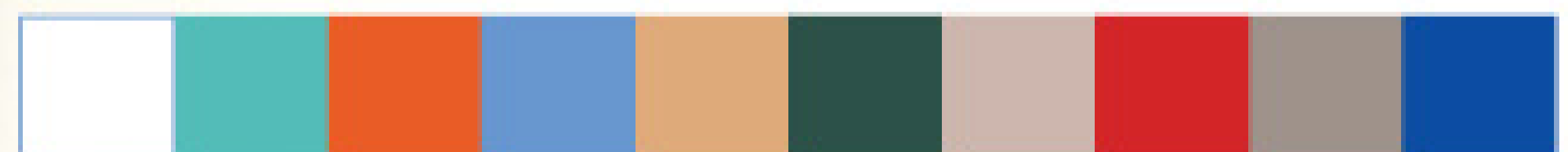
- Look at the size of that door! Tall, wide – easy for customers to enter and exit – even with bulky work gear.
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SITE-FRIENDLY

- Easy to move and handle. 8 oversize handholds, corner strap-down guides and reinforced corners with no corner molds.
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EASY TO KEEP IN ACTION

- Most of the Vantage parts are interchangeable with PolyPortables' Standard and Integra models.



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at the PAIN PUMP

Supply and demand issues have turned fuel prices upside down in recent months as traditionally economical diesel has trumped gasoline

By Greg Northcutt



Pumper Rolfe Garrett of Robyn's Septic Service, Forest Hills, Md., fills a vacuum truck tank. (Photo courtesy of Robyn's Septic Service)

The jaws of more than one vacuum truck driver, not to mention just about anyone else who depends on diesel-powered equipment and trucks to make a living, have dropped in disbelief as fuel prices zoomed sharply and steadily upward the past year.

From July 2007 to July 2008, the national average price of a gallon of diesel fuel in the United States soared 65 percent, from \$2.89 to a record \$4.76 before dropping by a nickel a week or so later.

Even the traditional price advantage that diesel users once enjoyed over gasoline buyers has been turned on its head. During mid-summer peak demand for many septic haulers, the average retail price of diesel was 66 cents higher than the average retail price of regular gasoline.

So what in blue blazes is going on?

It's all about supply and demand. Supplies are limited by diminished refinery capacity and areas of strife in oil-producing regions across the globe. And demand is up all over, especially China and India, which are guzzling diesel like

never before as they ramp up construction and more of their citizens drive cars. And diesel demand, specifically, is growing over gasoline as the fuel of choice for autos in Europe and other countries.

And while experts say you might see a little price relief, it's not just around the corner. Fuel prices will probably never drop to where they were a few years ago, but they might slack off as supply issues start getting resolved in 2009.

"We don't see the global forces pushing up oil prices over the past four years letting up immediately ... There's always a certain degree of uncertainty in the world oil market. So many things can happen to prove us wrong."

Tancred Lidderdale

A CLOSER LOOK

Appearing before a U.S. House of Representatives hearing on retail gasoline prices in May, Lucian Pugliaresi, president of the Energy Policy Research Foundation, stated that: "Over the last 10 years, the world oil market has clearly experienced an unprecedented number of new and sustained impediments to development. At the same time, global oil demand has grown robustly."

"It's basically a matter of supply and demand forces at work," adds Ben Montalbano, a senior research analyst for the foundation. "But, the main point to realize is that demand for diesel is being met. There have been no shortages."

If there's any other good news about diesel fuel economics, it's that analysts with the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration, or EIA, expect the rate of increase in

diesel prices — which shot up about 40 percent during the first half of 2008 — to begin tapering off significantly between now and the end of 2009. But that's barring further changes in crude oil supplies or demands — a big *if* these days.

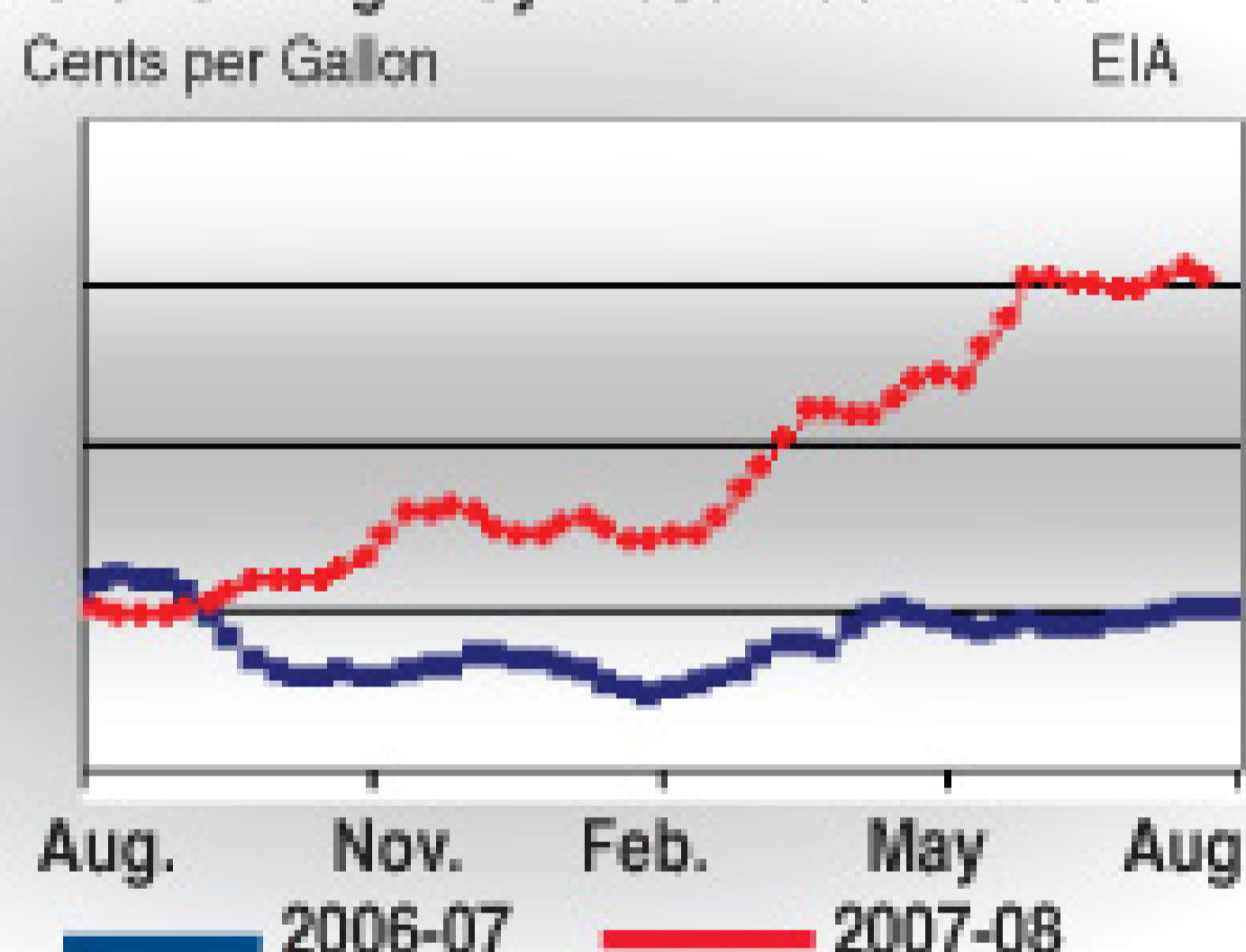
WHY THE RISE?

Diesel is one of several middle distillates refined from crude oil. The price of No. 2 distillate, the main source of motor diesel fuel in the U.S., is affected by a number of factors. The primary one is

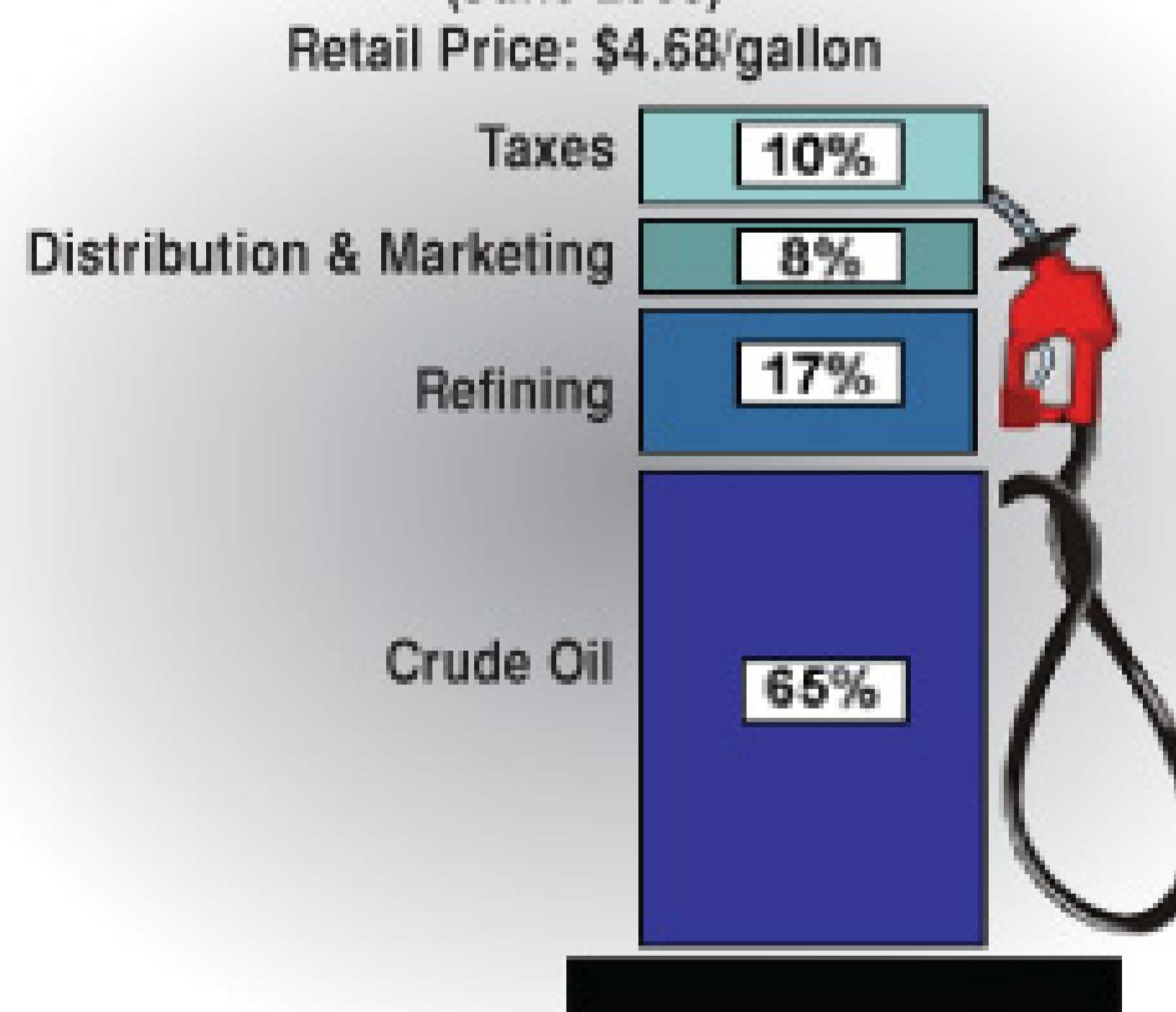
the price of crude oil. It accounts for nearly two-thirds of the retail price of a gallon of diesel. "The rule of thumb is that every \$1 change in the price of crude results in a 2.4-cents-per-gallon change in the price of diesel," says Tancred Lidderdale, a senior economist with the EIA.

Even then, the EIA points out, diesel prices on the West Coast

U.S. On-Highway Diesel Fuel Prices



What We Pay For in a Gallon of Diesel (June 2008)



tend to be higher and more variable than elsewhere in the country. That reflects higher state and local taxes, relatively few refineries (which can lead to tight supplies and higher prices, if more than one experiences operating problems) and long distances from the Gulf Coast (source of nearly half of the diesel produced in the U.S.) and foreign refiners.

The price of crude oil, in turn, is affected by a number of other factors, as well:

Growing demand

World oil consumption continues to grow despite seven consecutive years of increasing prices, the EIA reports. Rising incomes in many areas of the world, including India and China, have increased the demand for diesel significantly. In fact, most other countries rely more heavily on diesel fuel than the U.S.

“There’s been a huge worldwide increase in oil demand, particularly in developing countries,” says Tavio Headley, staff economist with the American Trucking Associations.

This increased demand is also being fueled by other factors, Headley reports. China, for example, has stockpiled diesel to power backup generators to provide electricity for this year’s Olympic Games in the event of power grid problems. The country has been using diesel fuel to power equipment used for repairing damage in central China’s Sichuan province caused by an earthquake in May.

Government subsidies for gasoline and diesel have also sparked increased demand for crude oil. “These fuels are heavily subsidized in many countries,” says Montalbano. “In Venezuela, motorists are paying 12 cents a gallon for gasoline. In a lot of the oil-exporting countries in the Middle East, the pump price for gasoline is about 40 to 50 cents per gallon.”

However, elsewhere, he notes, countries including China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Nepal are starting to reduce these subsidies, which have taken a large chunk out of the government budgets.

Tight supplies

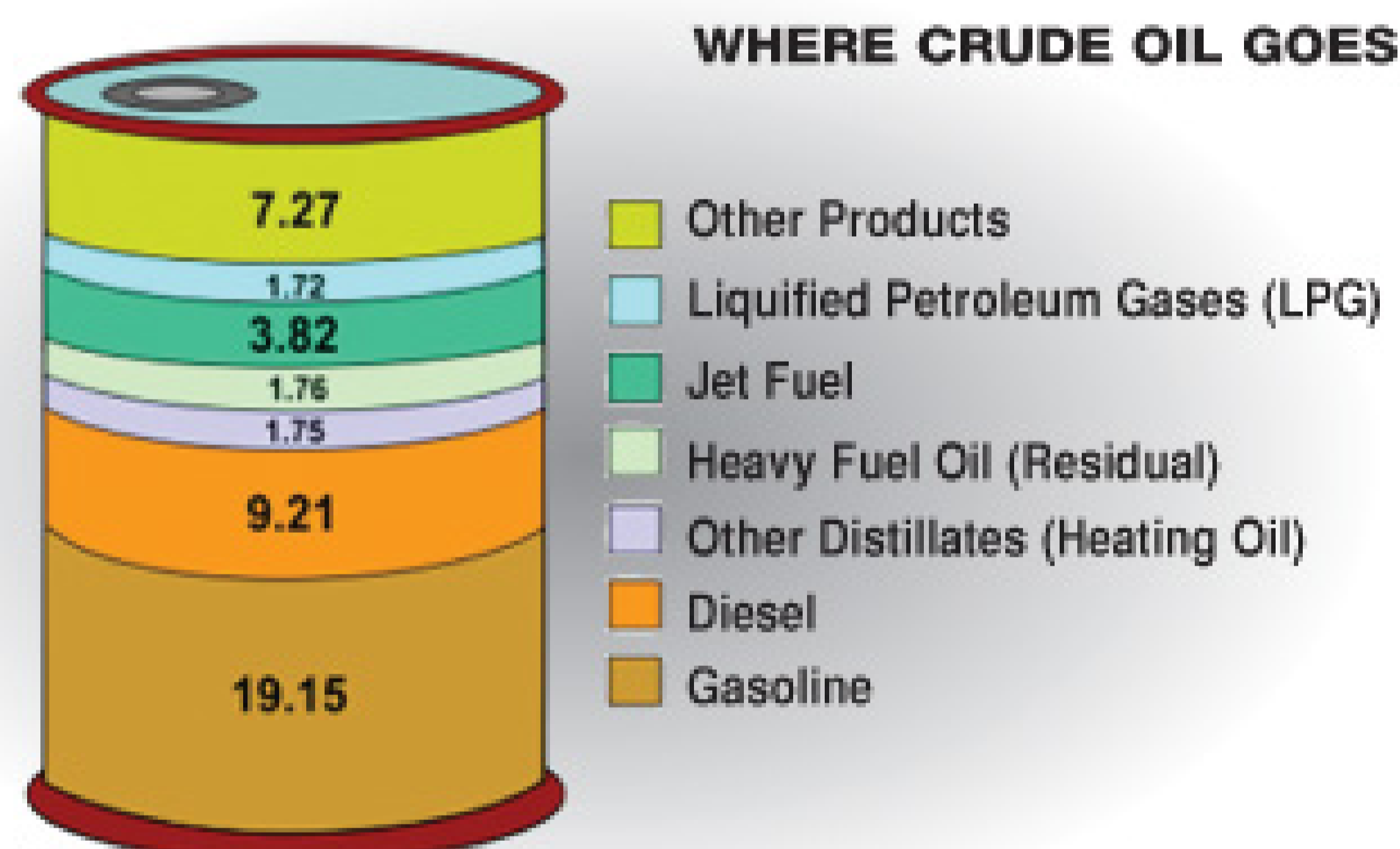
The oil market remains tight, as shown by rising prices, low surplus production capacity and concern that global supply growth may not keep pace with demand growth, at least in the short run.

Two years ago, the U.S. was consuming 20.7 million barrels of petroleum products a day, 60 percent of which were imported. Almost half of these imports came from the Western Hemisphere.

That compares to the current world supply of crude oil, which the EIA estimates at about 86.5 million barrels per day.

“The market these days is calling for just about all of that supply immediately,” says Montalbano.

What’s more, Montalbano notes, current world oil supplies are about 2.5 to 4.5 million barrels per day less than were predicted at the beginning of this decade. He attributes this shortfall to a variety of factors over the past several years. They include attacks by rebels on Nigeria’s oil infrastructure; fighting in Sudan, which has slowed development of new production in many oil fields; declining oil production in Argentina since the country’s oil sector was nationalized in 2004; forced renegotiation of contracts with foreign oil companies by Kazakhstan, which could hinder investment in oil pro-



duction in that country; declining oil production since 2004 in Mexico, where lack of funding for the country’s state-owned oil monopoly, Pemex, prevents exploration and development of new fields.

“The refining capacity for diesel and other middle distillates is just about maxed out,” says Montalbano. “There will be significant new capacity in the next two years, which might — depending on crude oil prices — ease the refining burden.”

In 2002, OPEC-member countries had an excess oil pumping capacity of 5.8 million barrels per day. Today, that number has shrunk by nearly two-thirds to around 2 million, according to Montalbano.

“Saudi Arabia has increased production twice in the past few months and fuel prices still continued to go up, partially because Middle Eastern demand for crude has risen quickly,” he says.

Risks to production

The price of diesel is also tied to the risks — both actual and perceived — of a reduction in supplies of crude or refined oil. Those risks range from war and weather-related threats to production and transportation facilities to government policies affecting development of oil resources. The higher the risks, the more money demanded by oil investors and buyers.

“These risk premiums are more of a factor than they were several years ago,” Headley notes.

In fact, the various risk factors have conspired in the past few months to cause crude oil prices to swing wildly. Over a three-day period in July, the price of a barrel of oil spiked up 8 percent from \$136 to a record \$147. The factors included fears of possible disruptions in oil supplies caused by rising tensions between the U.S. and Iran, the threat of a strike in Brazil and another

drop in the value of the U.S. dollar against other major currencies. Five trading days later, the crude oil price had tumbled by almost 11 percent for the biggest one-week drop ever to \$131 as these same fears subsided.

Cleaner-burning fuels

The phase-in of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards to reduce sulfur content of diesel fuel, implemented in 2006, helped pressure diesel prices upward, according to the EIA. These standards required that 80 percent of on-highway diesel fuel sold in the U.S. had to be Ultra-Low Sulfur Diesel by June 1, 2006, increasing to all on-highway diesel by Dec. 1, 2010. Phasing in of clean-fuel requirements for off-highway began last year. Nearly all diesel fuel used in the U.S. must be ULSD by the end of 2014. In the meantime, the costs of preventing or correcting any contamination of ULSD with higher-sulfur content diesel and the higher costs of production ULSD could continue to influence diesel fuel prices, the EIA reports.

“Hybrid systems can have a major impact on reducing the more than 38 billion gallons of diesel fuel the U.S. trucking industry consumes every year — but only if our industry and government apply creative thinking to the commercialization of this technology ... Our research indicates that hybrid electric systems in heavy-duty trucks could save as much as 35 percent of the fuel consumed by conventional vehicles.”

Paul Vikner

Market speculators

Soaring crude oil prices have prompted calls in the U.S. Congress for closer scrutiny of trading in oil futures contracts and limiting the role of speculators. Critics charge that speculators are manipulating oil prices.

As the value of the U.S. dollar has fallen, says Headley, investors have been buying petroleum futures contracts as a hedge against inflation. "The big question is how much this is contributing to the run-up in crude oil prices. The federal Commodity Futures Trading Commission is looking into the matter."

DIESEL OVERTAKES GASOLINE

Historically, the pump price for diesel has been lower than that of regular gasoline, except during some winters when demand for heating oil was high. However, since fall 2004, diesel prices have generally been higher than gasoline prices. One reason is an increase in federal tax on diesel fuel. Another has been the steadily increasing demand for diesel around the world.

European countries, for example, have used taxes to encourage use of cleaner-burning diesel over gasoline. This has resulted in excess production of gasoline in that part of the world, notes Montalbano.

"When you refine crude oil into diesel, you also produce a certain amount of gasoline," he says. "There's not enough demand in Europe for all this gasoline, so they export it to the U.S. Those imports have helped keep gasoline prices in the U.S. from rising as much as they would have otherwise."

NO SUDDEN PRICE DECREASES

As of July, EIA analysts were projecting the rate of increase in the average spot price of West Texas Intermediate, or WTI crude oil, to moderate over the following few months, peaking at \$140 per barrel in the fourth quarter of this year, before declining to \$127 by the fourth quarter of 2009.

At the same time, analysts expected a similar trend in the refinery price of diesel fuel, rising from \$3.67 per gallon in the second quarter of this year to \$4.01 in the fourth quarter. That price is then predicted to fall to \$3.53 by the fourth quarter of 2009.

In their July, 2008, *Short-Term Energy Outlook* the analysts reported, "WTI prices, which averaged \$72 per barrel in 2007, are projected to average \$127 per barrel in 2008 and \$133 per barrel in 2009. Diesel fuel retail prices in 2008 are projected to average \$4.35 per gallon, up from \$2.88 per gallon last year, and increase to an average of \$4.48 per gallon in 2009.

"We don't see the global forces pushing up oil prices over the past four years letting up immediately," says the EIA's Lidderdale. These higher prices reflect strength in diesel demand, particularly in emerging markets, which has significantly increased the margins between diesel prices and crude oil costs from those of last year, the analysts noted.

Lidderdale attributes the slowing rate of price increases through the rest of this year and into early next year to increased production in the United States as two oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico come on line and to new production in Brazil and the Siberian region of Russia.

However, he advises caution in viewing this forecast. "There's always a certain degree of uncertainty in the world oil market," he says. "So many things can happen to prove us wrong." ■

Biodiesel may be a key to moderating fuel prices

In addition to common sense equipment operating practices, such as reducing idling time of diesel engines and keeping tires properly inflated, biodiesel offers an alternative for dealing with high diesel fuel prices.

Although most biodiesel is currently made from soybean oil, it can also be produced from other oil crops, such as canola, sunflower and camolina, as well as animal fats, recycled cooking oils and trap greases.

A PROVEN FUEL

"Biodiesel is one of the best-tested alternative fuels and the only alternative fuel to meet all the testing requirements of the Clean Air Act," says Amber Pearson, with the Biodiesel Board. "Biodiesel can be operated in any diesel engine with little or no modification to the engine or the fuel system.

While some engine manufacturers continue to test the suitability of using 100 percent biodiesel, it's typically blended with petroleum diesel fuel at concentrations up to 20 percent (B20).

Nearly all U.S. engine manufacturers accept the use of at least B5. Case, Caterpillar, Cummins and John Deere have approved the use of B20 or higher in some or all of their diesel engines, Pearson notes. New Holland supports the use of B100 in all equipment with New Holland-manufactured diesel engines, including electronic injection engines with common rail technology.

"Thanks to the June approval of biodiesel blend levels by the standard-setting organization ASTM International, engine makers will be more receptive to adding to their warranty statements higher blend levels of biodiesel, like B20," Pearson says.

Annual sales of biodiesel in the U.S. increased from 500,000 gallons in 1999 to 500 million gallons in 2007. "Last year, biodiesel displaced about 20 million barrels of petroleum oil," she reports.

Biodiesel is also helping to keep a lid on petroleum prices. "Earlier this year, a commodity strategist with Merrill Lynch estimated that oil and gasoline prices would be about 15 percent higher if producers of biodiesel and other biofuels were not increasing their output," Pearson says.

HYBRID ENGINES

In January, Mack Trucks demonstrated the use of hybrid technology, which converts braking energy into electrical power in a 64,000-pound Mack truck. The vehicle was developed in conjunction with the U.S. Air Force and the Volvo Group, Mack Trucks' parent company.

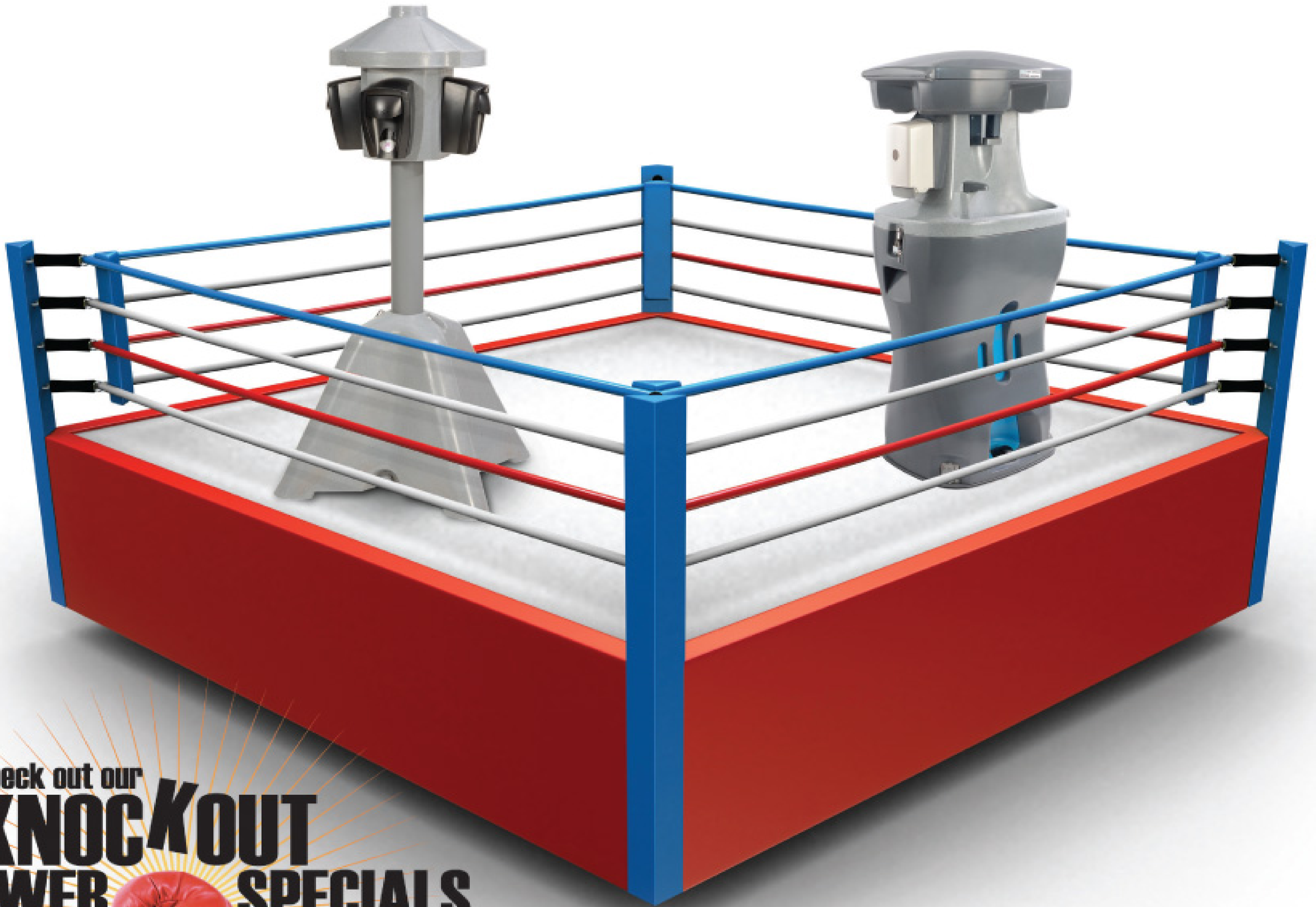
"This project has persuaded us that hybrid systems can have a major impact on reducing the more than 38 billion gallons of diesel fuel the U.S. trucking industry consumes every year — but only if our industry and government apply creative thinking to the commercialization of this technology," says Paul Vikner, president and CEO of Mack Trucks Inc. "Our research indicates that hybrid electric systems in heavy-duty trucks could save as much as 35 percent of the fuel consumed by conventional vehicles."

Meanwhile, diesel fuel-saving hybrid vehicles are starting to show up in construction equipment. For example, New Holland Construction, in cooperation with Kobelco Construction Machinery America Co. Ltd., has developed a prototype hybrid 7-ton hydraulic excavator and in March of this year Volvo unveiled a pre-production prototype of its L220F Hybrid wheel loader. Two months later, Komatsu introduced the PC200-9 Hybrid excavator to the Japanese market.

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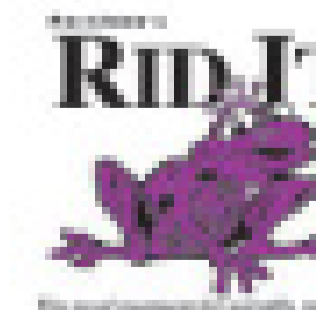
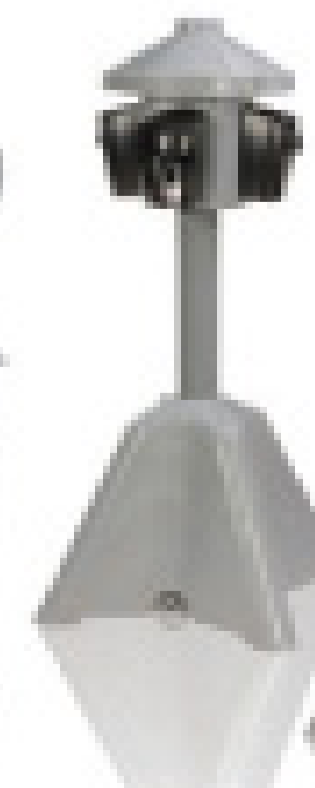


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When Customers Own the Units

PROs debate the merits of pump-only jobs where clients purchase and place their own restrooms

If you're missing the *PRO Discussion Forum*, you're missing out on valuable advice and informal banter among folks in the portable restroom business. Where else can you go to shoot the breeze with others in your specific industry from across the country?

Question:
I do septic and drain cleaning, and have a friend that has an establishment requiring six restroom units. How do any of you charge? Most use is during weekends and holidays for seven months out of the year. These are the only restrooms I want to add to the business.

Answers:
Why don't you have your friend buy the units and take care of them? You can just come and pump them out. This would save you having to deal with rental fees, repair to the units, buying supplies, hauling enough water to clean and restock them, etc. Your pumping fees should be easy to figure.

There is more to taking care of a restroom than pumping it out. For the customer to get what they need, they need a professional service. This ensures that their customers are, in turn, happy also. Eventually the (pump-only) arrangement, more than likely, will not work out and (the customer) will get someone else to do the work. I would not invest my money in this venture.

At the end of the day, it is better to have the customer than lose them over an extra charge. But go with your gut, and if you think they will damage your restroom no matter what, maybe it isn't worth your time.

Are damage waivers worthwhile?

Question:
We are thinking of charging customers a monthly damage waiver fee for portables if they don't sign and return the customer service agreements. Have any of you ever done this? Do you have any suggestions?

Answer:
I looked into customer agreements and service charges a while back and determined that the expense of the paperwork versus the actual amount of damage we receive in a year did not make it worth it for me.

Another thing I noticed was the better service I provided and the cleaner I kept the restrooms the less damage I got.

At the end of the day, it is better to have the customer than lose them over an extra charge. But go with your gut, and if you think they will damage your restroom no matter what, maybe it isn't worth your time.

Come Join Us Online

The PRO Online Discussion Forum is found at www.promonthly.com. The forum is conveniently split into several topic areas: General Discussion, Business, Chemicals & Deodorizers, Parts & Accessories, Portable Restrooms, Portable Restroom Trailers, Portable Restroom Service and Trucks. Simply register with a user name and password and join the discussion! Information and advice in PRO Forum Chatter is offered in good faith by industry professionals. Readers should consult in depth with appropriate industry sources before applying the advice they read here to a specific business situation. ■

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The service bay at VandenPlas Sanitation Inc., Denmark, Wis., allows for convenient truck maintenance at any time. (file photo)

Batten Down the Hatches

Before the snow and sleet flies, get your fleet of service vehicles ready for the worst Mother Nature can throw at you

By Robert Carlson

Even with all the global warming discussions all over the world, winter in America is coming on and it's time to start thinking about maintaining our vacuum trucks for the changing weather. Everything is affected by cold weather.

Let's take a look at some of the things we can do to make sure our equipment runs smoothly and efficiently through the chilly

It's also a good rule to make sure there's no water left in the hoses or anywhere in the system. The bottom line is that when water freezes, it expands. So when water left in the pump freezes it expands, and when there is nowhere for it to go, the pump housing cracks.

days ahead. Of course, all these maintenance tips are going to depend on exactly where you are. Being in Phoenix is going to be different from being in Minneapolis. This article focuses on the people who are in for real winter weather, but these tips can come in handy no matter where you live and work:

CHANGING VACUUM PUMP OIL

Pump manufacturers recommend going to a lighter weight oil in the winter. The lighter oil will ensure

the pump does not bog down in lower temperatures. Masport, for example, recommends going from a GST ISO 68 Turbine Oil to GST ISO 46 Turbine Oil in colder climates.

If you have any questions or doubts about the oil in your vacuum pump, pull out your operating manual and check manufacturer recommendations. If your manual has disappeared (shame on you), call the people who sold you the unit, or go directly to the pump manufacturer for advice. Don't assume that since everything is running well today, it will run just as well tomorrow.

THE EFFECTS OF WATER

Your vacuum system can be a source of trouble if you don't watch it carefully. More than one pumping contractor can tell you stories about his vacuum pump freezing up, and as a result the housing cracking or the vanes breaking. Either way, digging into your bank account to pay for repairs is not the best way to go.

Often, the problem is water. The secondary needs to be drained every day after the truck has done its duty. It is never a good idea to drain the secondary the following day before starting out.

Obviously, a lot of water is pumped in the course of a day. It

makes it past the primary and settles into the secondary. It is critically important that all that water is drained off. If you are pumping and the secondary is full or nearly full, the water ends up in the pump. The overnight temperature drops below freezing and when you start the pump the next day, vanes break. No pumping today!

It's also a good rule to make sure there's no water left in the hoses or anywhere in the system. The bottom line is that when water freezes, it expands. So when water left in the pump freezes, it expands, and when there is nowhere for it to go, the pump housing cracks. Again, no pumping today!

TRUCK ISSUES

You'll want to check the oil systems operating your truck. First, you may want to thin the engine oil based on what your manufacturer suggests. Cold weather thickens the oil and hinders proper lubrication of a lot of expensive parts. You also should take a look at the oil in the rear-end differential because most manufacturers recommend shifting to a lighter weight gear oil.

The bearings need proper lubrication to operate efficiently. Again, don't wait until you have problems before you pay attention to these areas. Preventive maintenance will save you a whole lot more than it will cost. And you already know what it means to say, "No pumping today." Not only have you lost some of your income, but the odds are pretty good that somebody else is picking up that account and maybe more.

OVERALL TRUCK CONDITION

Winter is coming on. Know the overall condition of your truck. Some items always need to be checked: air pressure in the tires, oil levels (having the right weight oil isn't going to help if you're two quarts low), and the overall lighting system. Make sure the braking system is going to keep the driver safe. When you hear strange, unfamiliar noises, don't pass them off thinking they are just going to go away.

Looked at your tires lately? Tire tread wears down quicker in summer due to the heat and hot stopping. So now with ice and snow on the road, are you going to be slip-sliding away? Think about winter tires and better traction, and depending on your location, what about tire chains? Nothing says productivity loss like the whirring sound of tires spinning round and round.

Even more basic to the smooth operation of your truck are things like anti-freeze and heated collars. Make sure the cooling system is refreshed and ready for your coldest temperatures and that heated collars are working properly. Snow also brings roads covered with salt, and nothing eats away quicker on your vehicle than salt. Maybe it's time for a regular schedule of visits to the car/truck wash.

A simple tune-up will help with the operation of your truck as well as helping with your fuel efficiency. With the price of fuel being as high as it is, a well-tuned engine will help you get the most out of every gallon.

As summer shifts to fall and winter, every pumper needs a properly maintained truck and a safe truck. Taking care of those items now will save you money and minimize unfortunate work stoppages.

Robert Carlson is half of the team that answers reader questions in the Truck Corner column in PRO. He can be reached at truckcorner@promonthly.com. ■



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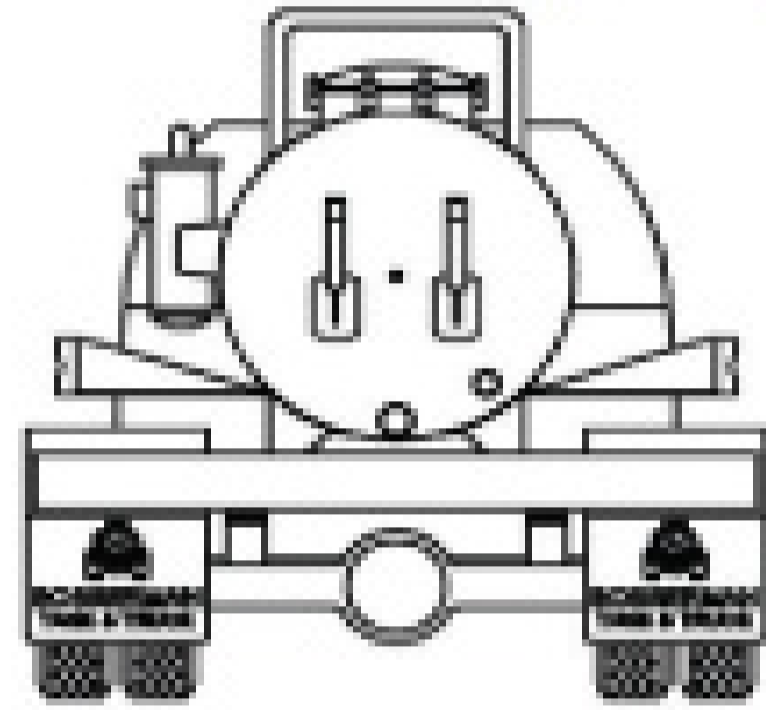
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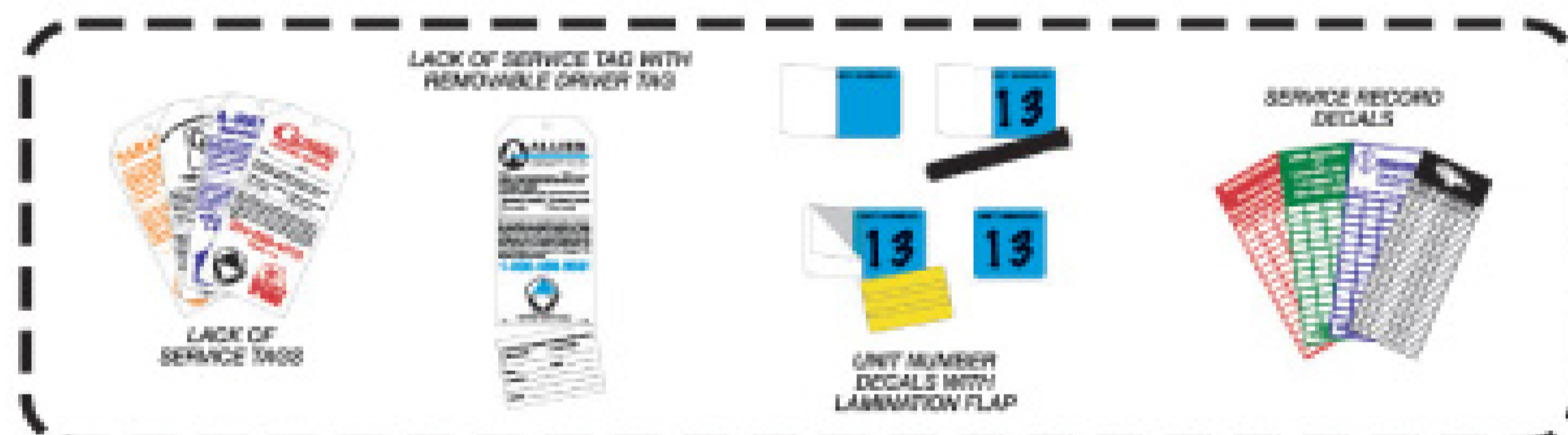
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Mary Shafer writes about issues important to PROs. Direct comments or questions to Shafer at thinktank@promonthly.com.



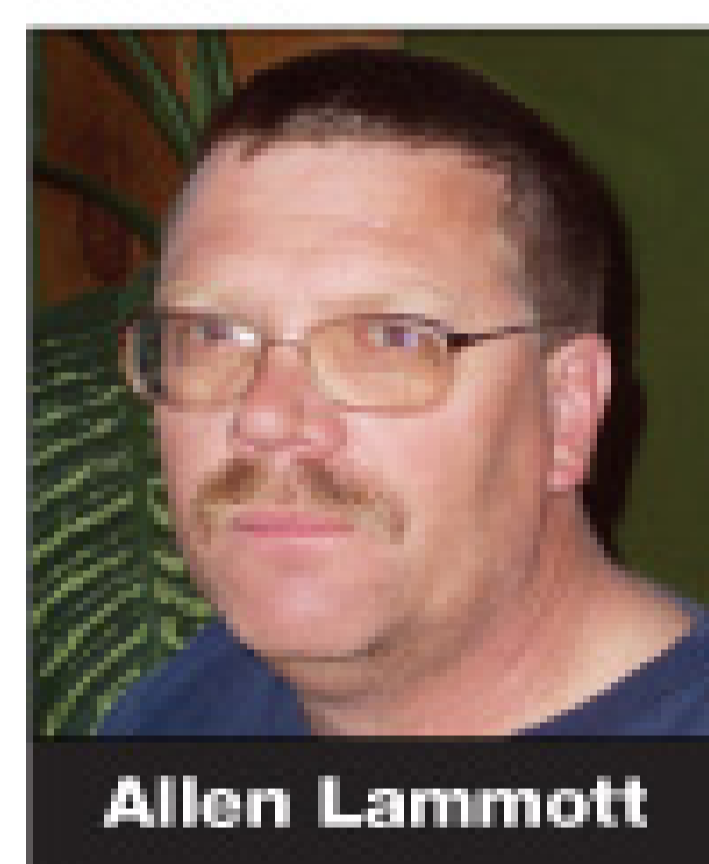
The Maintenance Routine

PROs share their secrets for keeping pumping fleets in tip-top shape

By Mary Shafer

Portable sanitation businesses run on their wheels, so keeping those trucks in prime condition is a high priority. And a routine maintenance schedule is the key to keeping your fleet in tip-top shape. Otherwise, it's too easy to take a well-performing truck for granted and simply let things slide. That type of situation never lasts for long. Small problems can quickly turn into big breakdowns if not addressed, and those breakdowns always seem to come at the worst time, when workload is backed up and pulling a vehicle from the route rotation is impossible.

Two PROs share their maintenance philosophy and process, detailing what keeps their vehicles on the road and producing revenue.



Name: Allen Lammott, owner
Company: Richmond Sanitary Service
Location: Marcellus, Mich.
Employees: 2
Years in Business: 60

Primarily, Allen Lammott is a service center proponent. He keeps the trucks for his septic pumping and portables business on a regular service schedule according to manufacturer recommendations. The majority of that work is done at a local garage in their territory, about 20 miles southwest of Kalamazoo, Mich.

"We do our truck maintenance on a mileage basis with yearly updates, as the manual says," Lammott reports. "We take them in to a mechanic for scheduled maintenance and mandatory

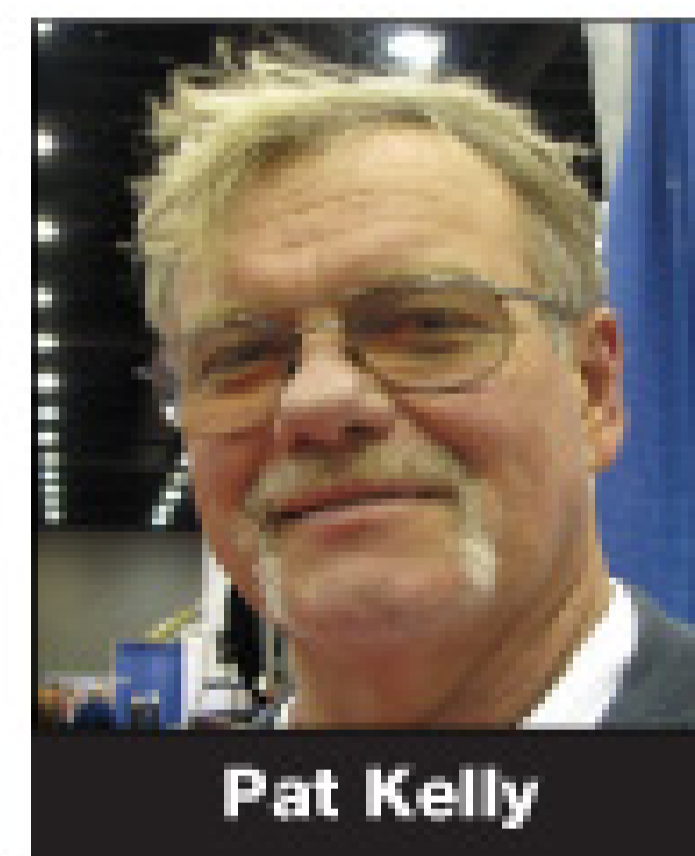
"We do our truck maintenance on a mileage basis with yearly updates, as the manual says. We take them in to a mechanic for scheduled maintenance and mandatory inspections. In between, we do oil changes, grease jobs and any minor repairs ourselves."

Allen Lammott

inspections. In between, we do oil changes, grease jobs and any minor repairs ourselves."

Lammott performs a daily inspection of lights, tires and other everyday functions before setting off on his route. "Kind of along the lines of a DOT inspection" is how he describes this procedure.

Such careful attention to the smaller details of maintenance is a good idea for drivers whose trucks endure a climate with extreme changes in temperature and humidity. Road salt, sand, ice and potholes all take their toll on vehicles, and the small annoyances they cause — rust spots, rot and out-of-alignment wheels — can all turn to big problems if not caught early.



Name: Pat Kelly, owner
Company: Got-A-Go Rentals
Location: Florence, Ky.
Employees: 6
Years in Business: 18

Pat Kelly depends on his fleet to place and service 1,000 portable rental units in northern Kentucky, southwest of Cincinnati. Four vacuum trucks and six service vehicles make up that fleet, and Kelly is proud of the regular attention it receives from his maintenance crew.

"We change the oil in our trucks every 3,000 miles and clean the vacuum pumps every two weeks," he says. "We run kerosene and diesel through the pumps." That work is all performed in-house. "We also pressure wash our trucks and dry them off every day, including cleaning the inside."

Tire pressure usually gets checked once a month, but it's not a regular maintenance item. "Usually only when we get a flat tire," jokes Kelly. ■

BONUS Vehicle Maintenance Checklists

If you perform your own vehicle maintenance, it's easy to forget little things you may not need to think about every day. Fortunately, there are some excellent resources on the Web that you can adapt to your own needs.

If you're interested in setting up a Department of Transportation-level daily inspection to keep your trucks safe on the road, the Alliant Energy site offers downloadable PDF format documents you can print as often as you need them at www.alliantenergy.com/docs/groups/public/documents/pub/p012355.hcsp.

There, you'll find samples of:

- DOT Annual Vehicle Inspection checklist with a check-off grid detailing 13 points, with room for notes
- Preventive Maintenance Checklist for Medium and Heavy Trucks for a 43-point inspection

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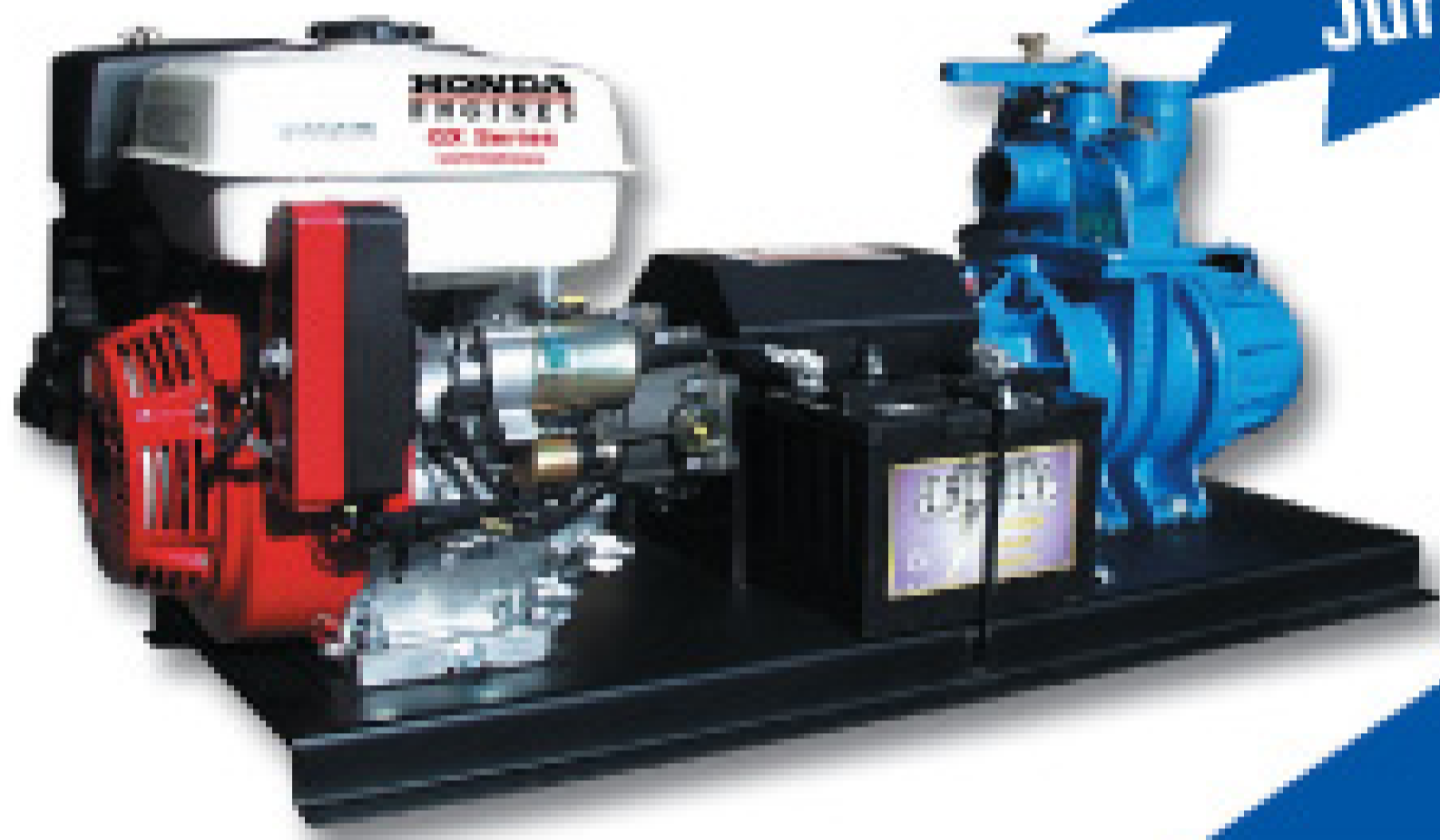
Truck Mounted Units:

Basic configuration includes primary shutoff, full length rails (straight or tapered), 4" discharge nipple and 3" intake valve.

Check out some of the options:

- ✓ Manways (20", 25", 36")
 - ✓ Full open door (2 types)
 - ✓ Primary & secondary shutoffs
 - ✓ Valves for loading & unloading
 - ✓ Oil catch mufflers
 - ✓ Suction hose & couplings
 - ✓ Mounting rails & kits
 - ✓ Vacuum pumps (Jurop, Masport, Moro, Fruitland, and others)
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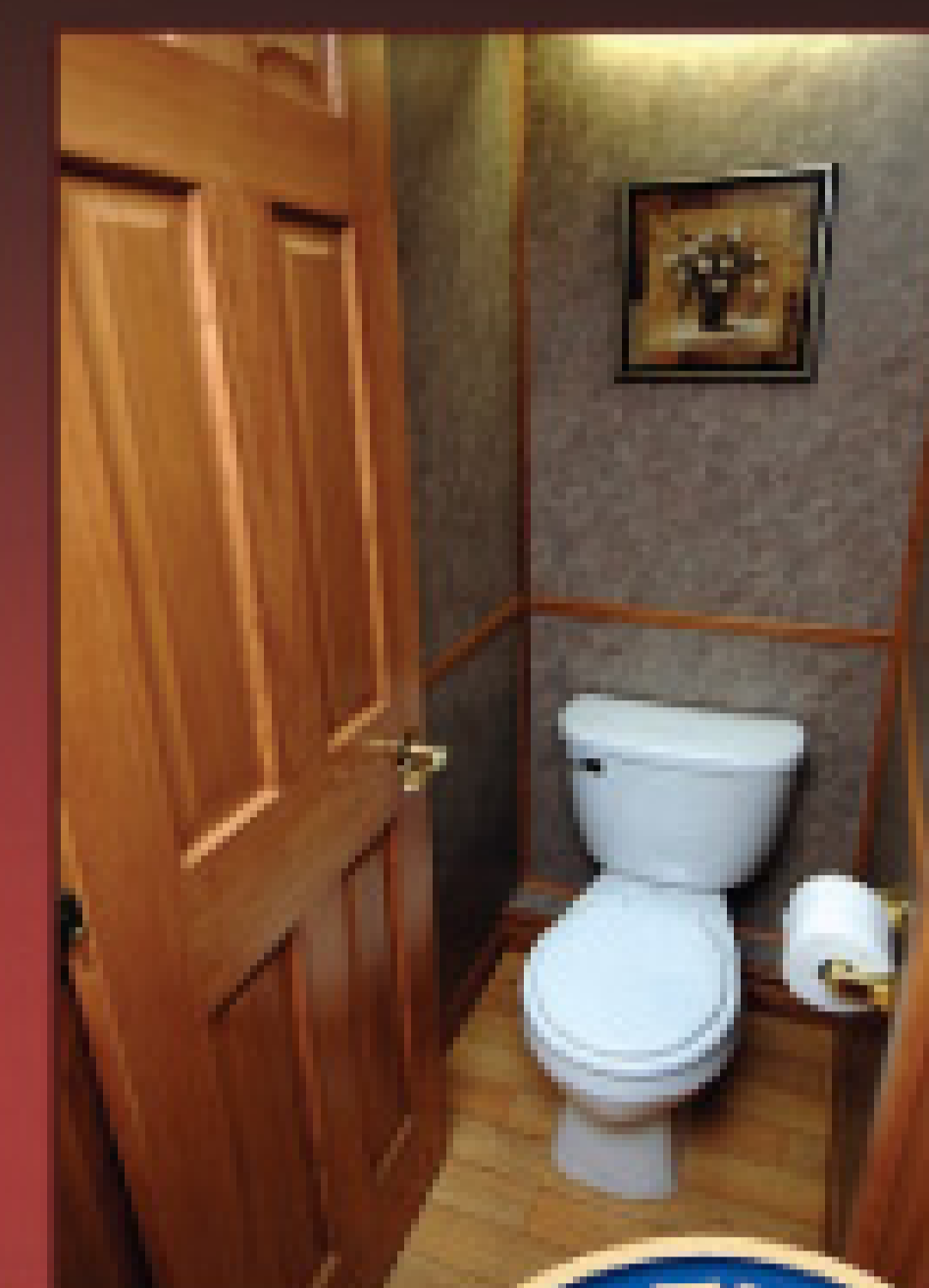
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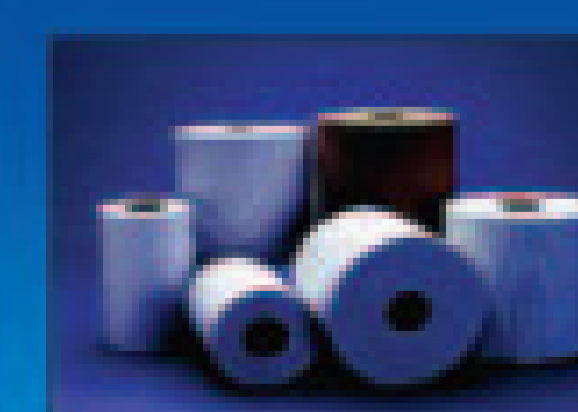
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Bob Carlson (left) and Jerry Kirkpatrick answer your questions in Truck Corner.



The Efficient Rig, Part II

More than simply a tank and pump, a vacuum truck requires a system of components that ensure you'll be profitable over the long haul

Vacuum truck operator Hal Parker of Buffalo, N.Y., asked us to elaborate on the basic requirements for an efficient vacuum service truck. To create a primer for readers to use the next time they order a service vehicle, we decided to answer his question in three parts. Last month, we covered matching the right chassis to the right vacuum tank and pump. This month we look at critical truck accessories.

ACCESSORIZE FOR SUCCESS

The primary shutoff on top of the tank protects your pump from waste and debris. As the vacuum pump pulls air out of the tank, the first stop along the path is the primary shutoff. As debris is pulled through the line, the weight of the material and gravity cause it to fall in the basket of the primary shutoff. You don't want anything but air getting to the vacuum pump.

The secondary moisture trap sits on the side of the tank and, as named, it offers a secondary line of defense to protect your pump. If waste materials manage to make it past the primary shutoff, then the secondary is there to — hopefully — catch it and prevent it from moving to the pump.

The primary and secondary should be sized appropriately based on the airflow, which is created by the pump. If the primary is sized too small, the airflow will pull the float ball up — regardless of the presence of waste — and shut down the airflow.

Most vacuum truck operators rely on these accessories to protect their pump. Still, there are some who say they are not needed. To the extent that a vacuum pump hooked up to a tank will pull a vacuum, they are correct. But without any checks on the flow of materials, it usually isn't long before the pump is filled with debris — and requires costly repairs.

VACUUM AND PRESSURE RELIEF

The vacuum relief and pressure relief valves put limits on how much vacuum and pressure your tank will handle. When

the vacuum reaches a certain level, the vacuum relief valve opens and allows air into the tank, which stops the vacuum from building beyond the level your tank can handle. The same is true for the pressure relief valve. If you are off-loading and the pressure inside the tank is rising to unsafe levels, the pressure relief valve opens and releases some of the pressure.

Like anything else, some pumpers think these valves are unnecessary. But they are two simple safety devices that can help prevent your tank from collapsing under excessive vacuum or exploding from too much pressure. And yes, tanks collapse every year and tanks do explode.

The pressure/vacuum gauge monitors the amount of vacuum (in inches) or pressure (pounds per square inch) inside the tank. It's a good habit to read your gauge every day. It gives you a good indication of what's normal and will give you clues when things aren't working right. For example, suppose you've been getting 19 inches of mercury from your vacuum pump for many months and then, one day, the best your pump will do is 14 or 15 inches. Something is wrong and it's time to check out the system.

OIL CATCH MUFFLER

The oil catch muffler serves two purposes. First, it catches the excess oil that is being spun off from the pump. Every vacuum pump spins around 1,100 rpm and oil is required to keep the pump lubricated and prevent overheating. Some of the oil moves on to the oil catch muffler. So that takes care of the "oil catch" part. The muffler part tries to quiet the sound of the pump.

One could argue this part isn't necessary but without it you have one incredibly loud screaming pump that people aren't going to want in their neighborhood. Secondly, in this day and age of everyone going "green," the excess oil will get you in trouble if you don't control where it goes.

So it's your call. Knowing and understanding the parts of a vacuum truck are critical to your success. We recommend all the parts listed in this column. They are relatively inexpensive and can save you thousands of dollars over time.



Next month, in the third and final installment of the answer to Hal's question, we'll take a look at some of what we consider optional accessories.

Bob Carlson and Jerry Kirkpatrick of Arizona-based Glendale Welding have over 50 years combined experience dealing with portable sanitation truck issues. Fax questions to them, addressed to Truck Corner, at 623/937-3688, or send Bob and Jerry an e-mail at truckcorner@promonthly.com. ■

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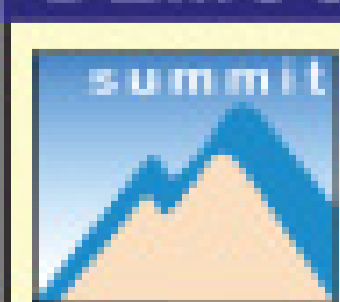
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