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April 2009  
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**ON THE COVER**  
The Hampel Corp. Sunrise restroom was one of many new products introduced at the 29th annual Pumper & Cleaner Expo in Louisville.  
(Photo by Jim Kneiszel)

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The Lady Integra from PolyPortables Inc. enters the urinal-free zone with a women-only unit. (Photos by Jim Kneiszel)



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# THINK PINK!

Women-only restrooms, new heights in restroom trailer interior design are among industry trends seen at the Pumper & Cleaner Expo

By Jim Kneiszel

**G**reetings from the Pumper & Cleaner Expo show floor, where I've put my feet up to rest for a few minutes after a full day of making the rounds to learn what's new in the portable sanitation industry.

Yes, there's some talk here about the challenging economy. With a massive federal stimulus package in play, serious questions about construction starts in the work season ahead, and uncertainty over lending for new equipment, how could the economy not be a topic on the minds of portable restroom operators?

But a good number of contractors I've met are surprisingly upbeat about the possibilities in their hometowns, contrary to the barrage of bad news they hear in the media every day. A few have stated they're refusing to participate in the recession and are planning for bright days ahead.

at the Kentucky Exposition Center.

PROs are networking like crazy, comparing notes on new equipment and discussing Education Day presentations about effective sanitation service marketing.

Diversification is a watchword for contractors. Within their typical specialties, it seems like pumping professionals are seeing more calls for one type of work over another. For instance, if the portable sanitation construction business is slow, they are expecting an uptick in special events work this year. If they clean septic tanks or grease traps, that end of the business may or may not be generating more calls than the restrooms.

And they're always looking to add to their menu of services, hoping that further diversification will help sustain their businesses in the future.

## SEEING IS BELIEVING

Every year out, I look around the exhibit hall and notice some distinct portable sanitation trends. Manufacturers are always on the lookout to identify demands in the marketplace and come up with products to address those demands. This year was no different. Here are a few trends I've noted on the Expo floor:

## INNER BEAUTY

Restroom trailers aren't changing too much on the outside, but there are innovations aplenty on some of the better-than-

**One Expo trend never changes. It's the quality of the people who make the trip to Louisville. I've dealt with a lot of small business owners over the years, but there is no more friendly and down-to-earth group than those in the portable sanitation industry.**



The fireplaces inside the Rich Restrooms Ritz model trailer were a topic of conversation among PROs at the Pumper & Cleaner Expo.



home upscale models. Amenities including wood trim packages, real-wood flooring, solid surface countertops and flat-panel televisions are becoming the norm on trailers parked on the Expo floor. But there are always a few new head-turning features on display.

One that comes to mind is a fireplace/heater unit found in the Ritz model from Rich Restrooms. The company's Sheldon Rheinheimer explained that he included the electric fireplaces because they doubled as a heating unit and would set the trailers apart from others on display. With cabin space at a premium in restroom trailers, he said it's important to make sure the fireplace units both look good and are functional.

Working with Louisiana-based contractor Elite Portable Restrooms, JAG Mobile Solutions showed a refined custom unit that will make its first appearance this month at the PGA Golf event, the Zurich Classic of New Orleans. To be set up for tournament VIP guests, the unit sports rare details like real bamboo accent walls and stylish vessel sinks with hands-free faucets. Elite's Robin Young designed the interior to impress high-end users and implement trendy "green" concepts wherever possible.

Vessel sinks were a trend, as several companies veered away from plain china or stainless steel varieties that may remind users they're in a mobile facility. Sinks like the opaque green bowls shown in the Zapata Series trailer from Mexico's Escumovil were a distinct reminder that you can enjoy at-home quality service at a remote location.

#### PRETTY IN PINK

For a few years, manufacturers have gone out of their way to explain that portable restrooms should be designed to satisfy the needs of women, the demographic that most needs

to be swayed toward acceptance of portable sanitation. They took it a step further this year, providing not only cabin amenities aimed at women ... But a colorful way to invite them inside for a peek.



It's the year of pink restrooms.

PolyPortables Inc. made its women-only statement with the Lady Integra, a urinal-free unit that in all other ways mirrors the Integra that has been available in many other colors for some time. Henry Davis of PolyPortables said the unit — which can be ordered with an optional flushing unit — has been popular with contractors who plan to order one or two for special events or women-only functions.

A new entry in the restroom market, PortaJane.com introduced the PortaJane restroom, which is designed to appeal to women and raise money for breast cancer awareness. The pink unit with breast cancer awareness ribbons thermoformed into the walls, uses interior components, including a standard flush unit, built by PolyJohn

Enterprises. The walls are made at Allied Plastics. PortaJane's Chris Christian said there are no plans to expand into other models.

#### THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

The trend toward stylized, shapelier restroom units continues with Hampel Corp's Sunrise model, which can be seen on this issue's cover. It joins the Aspen and K2 models, formerly from Five Peaks Technology and now being produced by Satellite Industries Inc. and the PortaJane. Piccadilly Concepts showed a two-dimensional likeness of a restroom in development, which looks like an English phone booth. Piccadilly's Tom Gebka said he hopes to have the real thing on display at the 2010 Expo.

Lance Hampel of Hampel Corp. mentioned two interesting advantages that have been discovered about the swoopier restroom designs. First, because PROs have to space the units a little farther apart to accommodate their bulging shapes, wall ventilation works better. Secondly, unit-strapping for transport is more effective because straps tend to hug the curved corners.

#### YOU NAME IT

PolyJohn made a splash with a new restroom designed for easy assembly and durability. But don't ask what they call it ... It won't have a name for about a month. Since the design was based on customer feedback over the past four years, PolyJohn decided to let the customers name the unit. Along with the new unit, the company unveiled a contest to give it a name. Take a look at a photo of the restroom in our Expo product roundup story in this issue, read the description and take a crack at giving it a name. PolyJohn continues to accept potential names, and will announce the new name April 30. The winner receives — what else? — one of the new restrooms.

#### IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT THE PEOPLE

One Expo trend never changes. It's the quality of the people who make the trip to Louisville. I've dealt with a lot of small business owners over the years, but there is no more friendly and down-to-earth group than those in the portable sanitation industry. At the Expo, it's great to match smiling faces to the names of the many contractors I talk to throughout the year. Many thanks go out to all of you who share your opinions and expertise in support of the industry. ■



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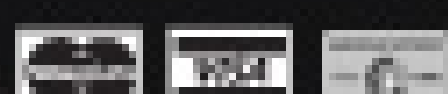
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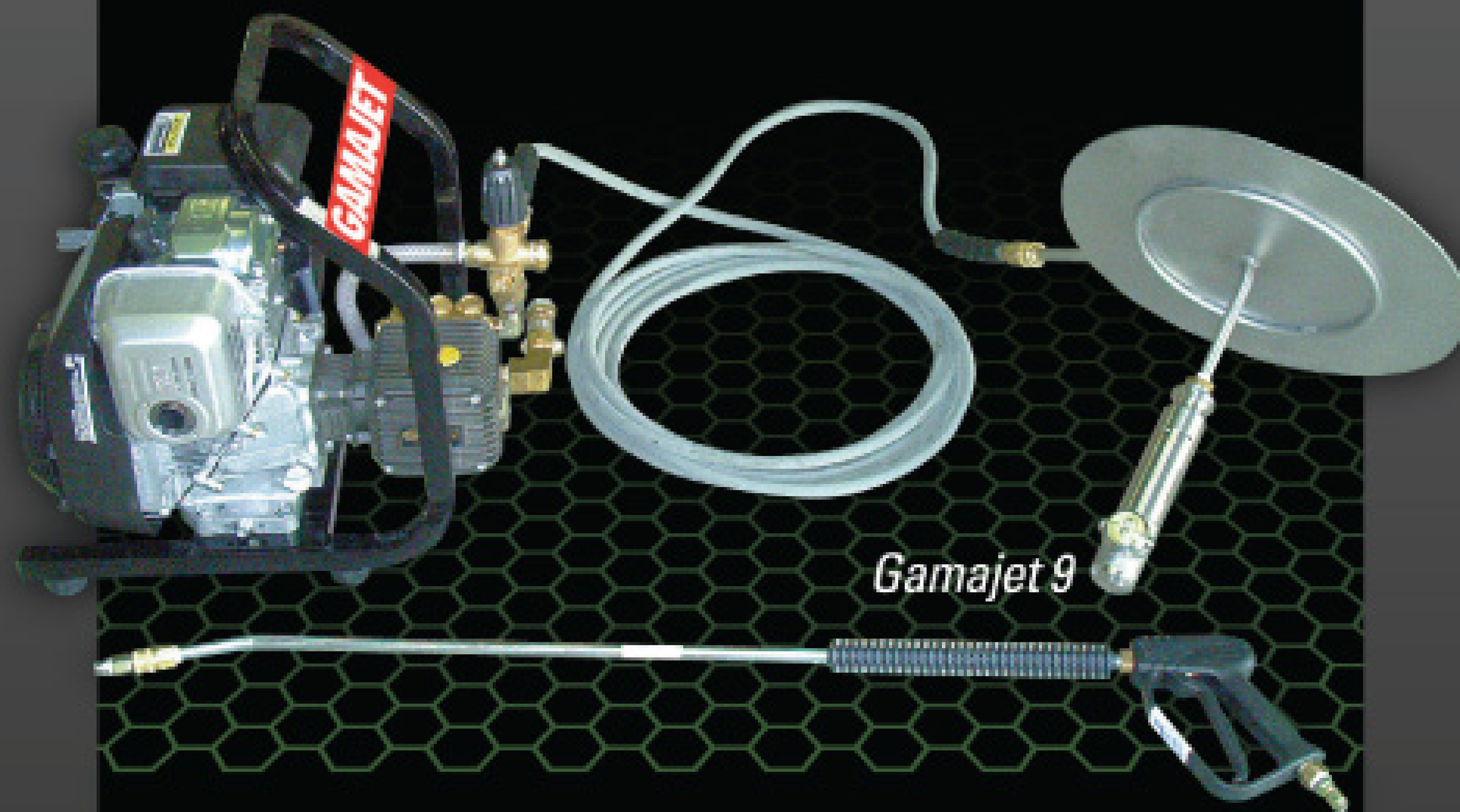
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# Summer Job Safety

**Hiring teens for the summer is a win-win situation. You get extra help during the busy season; they get some great experience and return to school with pockets full of cash. Just promise their moms you'll keep them safe on the jobsite.**

*By Judy Kneiszel*

**W**hile writing this column for *PRO* each month is a challenge, nothing compares to the trials I face in one of my other jobs ... being the mom of two boys.

At ages 12 and 9 their summer "jobs" have been pretty much limited to dog walking, weed pulling and a little bit of lawn mowing, but I already obsess about their safety; imploring them to watch for cars when crossing the street and reminding them to wear their bicycle helmets when they hit the road.

I anticipate a time in the not-too-distant future when their seasonal employment will be somewhat more dangerous and I won't have any control over the situation. My mind flashes back to college friends who worked construction in the summer and were required to operate heavy equipment without any meaningful training. In their youth they thought it was a blast; now they realize they are lucky to be alive.

Then there's this newspaper reporter I know who manages to be a darn quick typist despite only having nine fingers. He lost one the summer he came home from college to work in a brewery and his foreman neglected to tell him wearing his class ring on the job wasn't a good idea. The ring got caught in the mechanism of a bottling machine.

I hope when the time comes for my boys to seek real summer employment they have bosses and co-workers who are more concerned about safety than my friends' bosses were. In fact, I hope their future employers are as concerned about their safety as I am, though I'm not sure if any employer worries as much about a person's safety as a mother does.

## THE NUMBERS

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration estimates that each year, about 6 million young people, ages 16-19, join the national workforce by taking summer jobs. They work in service-oriented jobs and

other fields. These jobs provide them with work experience and a paycheck, while also contributing to the national economy. Unfortunately these jobs will also provide some of them with traumatic injuries ... or worse. On average, OSHA reports, three teens die every week due to a workplace injury.

Does that mean you shouldn't take the risk and hire teens? No. It means you need to make sure you have created a culture of safety for all workers, including teens and temporary summer help. You've got to take the time to

*The Occupational Safety and Health Administration estimates that each year, about 6 million young people, ages 16-19, join the national workforce by taking summer jobs. ... On average, OSHA reports, three teens die every week due to a workplace injury.*

properly train summer help and you've got to communicate safety policies and procedures to teens. Remember, this may be their first real job. Advice you think is intuitive, like "don't wear a ring around industrial equipment," might not be obvious to them.

And the old adage, "don't send a boy to do a man's job" rings true, too. There are many age and job restrictions for people under 18. Here are just a few examples: Minors under age 18 are not allowed to operate certain

power equipment you may have in your yard, including backhoes, skid loaders, forklifts and cranes.

Even if your summer employees are over 18 and can legally operate the above-mentioned equipment, that doesn't mean they know how to do so safely if no one has taught them.

## DO'S AND DON'TS

Different rules apply for different industries and some rules may be different when it comes to employing your own children. For some basic guidelines however, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health offers the following "do's" and "don'ts" for hiring young people:

- Know the laws and check on your compliance.
- Do not hire someone younger than 16 except for office or sales work.
- Train young workers on what job tasks they can and cannot legally do.
- Do not give young workers tasks that require power tool use or heavy equipment operation.
- Make sure young workers get clear instructions for each and every task.
- Do not allow young workers to do tasks for which they are not trained or that violate the law.
- Make sure young workers know the federal and state youth employment rules.
- Do not establish work schedules that violate laws. Federal laws, and some state laws, prohibit certain young workers from working too long or too late.
- Ask young workers to demonstrate they understand what was taught to them.
- Do not assume young workers understand what they have been told.
- Provide young workers with appropriate and properly sized personal protective equipment, such as steel-toed shoes and hard hats.
- Provide adequate supervision.
- Correct mistakes.
- Stress safety to supervisors.
- Encourage supervisors to set a good example for safety attitudes and safe work habits.
- Do not let young workers work alone.

## LEARN MORE

For more information, look at OSHA's teen worker Web pages ([www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers)) and the federal Department of Labor's Web site on the topic: [www.youthrules.dol.gov](http://www.youthrules.dol.gov). Advise your teen employees to check out these sites too.

Make it a productive, safe summer for your entire company and especially your young workers. Make sure they return to school this fall with all 10 typing fingers. They will thank you; their mothers will thank you. ■





**part·ner** |'pärtnər| **noun.**

*one that is **united** with another in an activity or sphere of common interest, especially a member of a business partnership*

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# JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT

**With vacuum tank and diploma in hand, this Kentucky PRO has built a thriving and diversified service business**

By Ken Wysocky

Scott McKenzie (left) and Roger Barnette secure the loading ramp as they prepare to make a restroom delivery. A & A Porta-Potty's inventory includes seven vacuum service trucks and 1,100 restrooms. (Photos by Teresa McKenzie)

## **A & A Porta-Potty's Inc.** **Ashland, Ky.**

**Owner:** Andy Zabrieszack

**Years in business:** 17

**Employees:** 7

**Specialties:**

Portable sanitation services/storage and office container rental

**Service area:** 100-mile radius of Ashland

**Web site:** [www.aaportapottys.com](http://www.aaportapottys.com)



**W**hen Andy Zabrieszack finished high school in 1992, his parents gave him an unusual graduation present: a slide-in vacuum unit for his pickup truck and 10 portable restrooms.

Through firm family support, hard work and an emphasis on diversification and customer service, Zabrieszack went out and made good on that initial investment in his career. His company — A & A Porta-Potty's Inc., based in the riverfront town of Ashland, Ky. — now owns an impressive inventory of 1,100 restrooms and seven vacuum service trucks.

But the rest of his inventory really helps his business thrive: 150 shipping containers that he rents as portable storage and office facilities, plus 2,800 chairs and 800 tables that customers rent to furnish those offices. The container/furniture rental business now represents about 40 percent of A & A's sales volume.

### **DIVERSIFY NOW**

"Without diversifying, we would've been out of the portable restroom business a long time ago," Zabrieszack says. "Once we saturate our market, there's no room to grow, unless we want to expand our (territory) farther out. But transportation costs make that expensive, unless you open up a new location, which also is expensive."

Zabrieszack's "aha" moment on diversification occurred in the mid-1990s, when he agreed to supply a customer with 13 hand-wash stations — even though he didn't own a single unit. So he quickly bought 13 stations from Satellite Industries Inc. and had them shipped directly to the jobsite. He soon learned he could charge enough to cover the cost of the units and make a decent profit, too. That, in turn, gave him seed money to expand.



*"As long as it's profitable, I'm willing to try it. My motto is this: I don't want to be the biggest company around, just the most profitable."*

**Andy Zabrieszack**



Members of the A & A team (from left) are Samantha Hartman, secretary; James Hale, service driver; Roger Barnett, service driver; Dennis Howard, service driver; Andy Zabrieszack, owner/operator; Rick Damron, service driver; Scott McKenzie, service driver, and Amy Zabrieszack, office manager. Below: Owner Andy Zabrieszak started A & A Porta-Potty's Inc. in 1992 after receiving a slide-in vacuum unit and 10 portable restrooms as a graduation gift from his parents.

"At that moment, I realized I needed extra things to make the company go," he says. "We grew bigger because the income from those hand-wash stations gave us extra money to play with. Why charge \$5 for a hand sanitizer when you can charge so much more for a hand-wash station?"

That extra cash came in handy when Zabrieszack received a notice in the mail from a small Indiana company that was liquidating its restrooms for \$25 apiece. The timing was perfect, as Zabrieszack needed more inventory to bid on a large job he knew was coming up at a local power plant.

"I bought 100 units, and they were all

junk," he says. "I only paid \$10 or \$15 for some of them. But we washed, repaired and painted them, and suddenly I was the new stud in town. Those 100 units enabled me to do bigger jobs — although I had to carry a drill and screws with me at all times to keep them from falling apart."

#### **THANKS TO MOM AND DAD**

Zabrieszack says he owes his success to his parents, Allen Sr. and Hattie, who also gave his twin brother, Allen, a career as a high school graduation gift: a 2,200-gallon septic service truck.

"My grandpa and dad were in the septic business," Zabrieszack says. "Before Allen and I graduated, Mom and Dad asked us what we wanted to do with our lives. They said that if one of us wanted to be in the septic business and the other in the portable toilet business, they'd set both of us up to get started. We were pretty excited."

The brothers used their initials to name their company and set out to build careers (they later split up amicably and now run their own businesses). Along the way, they received unwavering support from their parents, and emulated their industrious work ethic.

"We got a paycheck whether we made money or not," Zabrieszack recalls. "Without Mom and Dad, we wouldn't be in business today."

How did the young entrepreneur drum up business? He hopped in his truck and



made cold calls at construction company offices and other potential customers, meeting people and handing out business cards.

"That impressed people," Zabrieszack says. "They realized that here was a young man who really wanted to work, and who's willing to come over in person to prove it. If they turned me down, I would tell them I was sorry they couldn't use my services at that time, but that if they ever changed their minds, I'd be right there for them. People appreciated that I was polite."

#### **SAFETY CHECK**

About 60 percent of A & A's portable restroom business comes from local steel plants, refineries and other industrial businesses along the Ohio River. Construction sites and special events generate the remaining sales, Zabrieszack says.

Working with industrial customers imposes additional costs for required training and safety gear. Federal anti-terrorism laws require any unescorted person who enters a port of entry — a business on a river, for instance — to carry a Transportation Worker Identification Credential, a tamper-proof card with a computer chip that proves the carrier has passed a background check. Each card costs \$132.50 and is valid for five years.

In addition, because they're working in a

Scott McKenzie loads a hand-wash station for delivery to a jobsite. About 60 percent of A & A's restroom business comes from local steel plants, refineries and other industrial businesses along the Ohio River.







At left: Roger Barnette (left) cleans a restroom at a construction site while Scott McKenzie assists. At right: Barnette (right) and owner Andy Zabrieszack inspect a restroom. Construction sites and special events account for about 40 percent of A & A's business.

hazard-laden environment, A & A workers must attend one 10-hour safety class sponsored by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, as well as annual 2- to 4-hour regulatory training seminars, Zabrieszack says.

Furthermore, A & A employees must wear a full complement of safety clothing, from gloves, hardhats and flame-retardant coveralls to safety goggles and steel-toed boots.

"They're working in what can be a very dangerous environment, so they have to be alert and cautious at all times," Zabrieszack says.

Because of the risks involved, A & A requires employees to take random drug tests. Plant officials also can ask them to take a test at any time.

"They (employees) don't have a problem with it," Zabrieszack says. "They've got to know what's going on around them. This may be a small business, but it's my business, and I need to know that they're not on drugs so I can go home and sleep at night. I can't afford to lose a contract because someone is on drugs."

#### CONTRACTS HELP

To offset some of the expenses associated with these clients, and guarantee steady business, Zabrieszack tries to obtain contracts for

restroom service. He currently has seven such contracts, which are typically good for one or five years. Without a contract, A & A could invest a lot of time and money, only to have the customer select a cheaper restroom operator a few months down the road, he says.

"There are so many expenses associated with serving these customers," he says. "We charge a higher price for those customers to cover those costs, but in return, they get instant service. When they say jump, we ask how high — and ask if we can wash their car, too."

When Zabrieszack says instant service, he's not kidding. For example, a local refinery recently called A & A at 1 a.m. to obtain 50 restrooms and 30 days worth of daily water deliveries. At 1:45 a.m., service technicians were setting things up at the plant.

"We've learned through the years to always keep two trailers loaded with restrooms," he says. "That way the drivers just have to back up

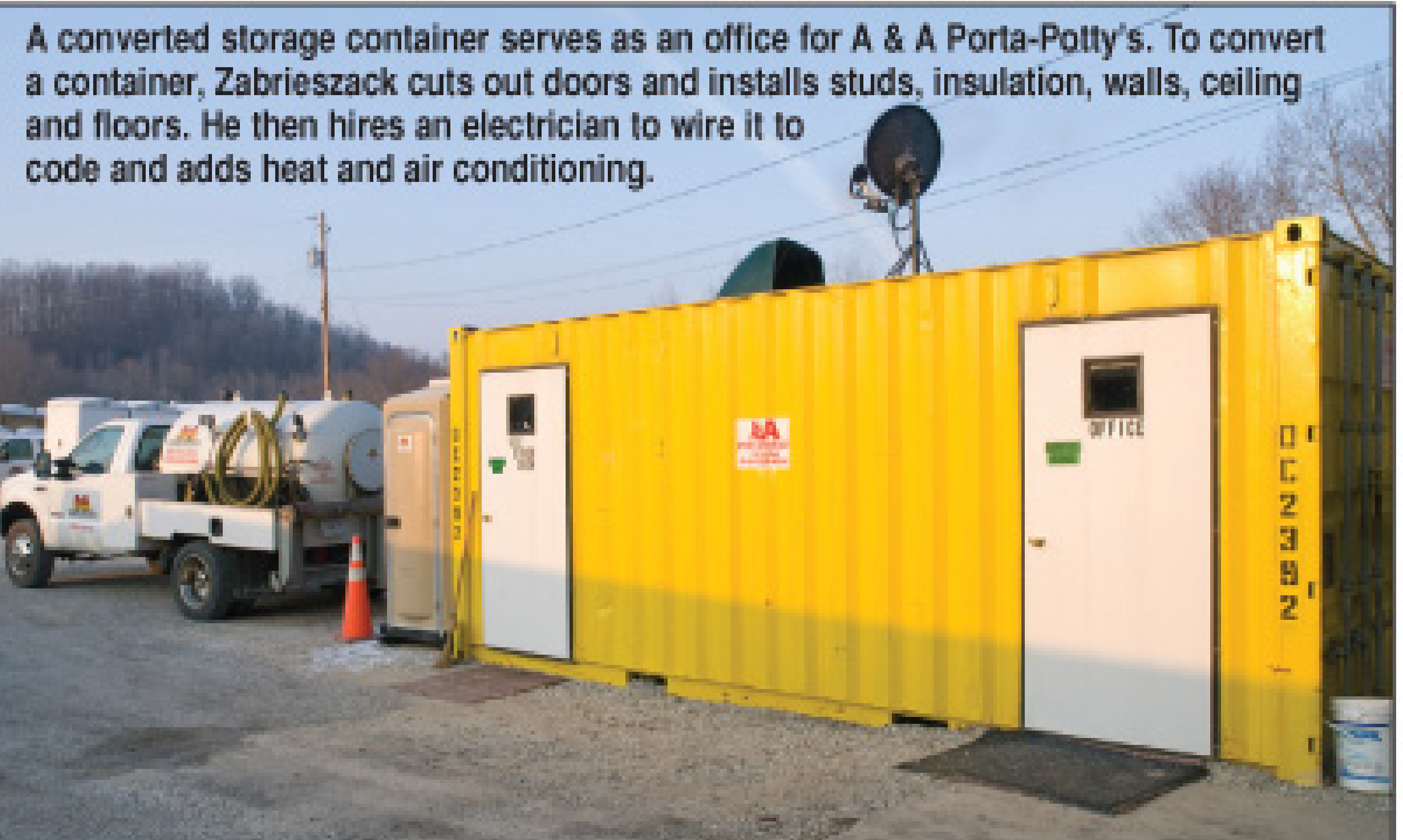
*"There are so many expenses associated with serving these customers. We charge a higher price for those customers to cover those costs, but in return, they get instant service. When they say jump, we ask how high — and ask if we can wash their car, too."*

**Andy Zabrieszack**

to the trailer, plug in the tail lights and pull out. We also keep two more trailers loaded with hand-wash stations. You've got to be loaded and ready."

To pull those trailers, A & A relies on two flatbed trucks: a 1995 Isuzu and a 2001 Ford F-450. For restroom service, the company owns a 1995 International 4300 with a 1,000-gallon tank (700 waste/300 freshwater), built by Coleman Vacuum Tank Manufacturing Corp.; a 1997 Ford F-450 with a

900-gallon tank (600 waste/300 freshwater); a 1997 Isuzu with a 450-gallon tank (300 waste/150 freshwater), built by FMI Truck Sales & Service; a 2001 GMC Kodiak with a 1,500-gallon tank (1,200 waste/300 freshwater), outfitted by Lely Manufacturing Inc.; and a 2005 Ford F-350 and a 2006 Ford F-550, both equipped with 950-gallon tanks and built by Satellite Industries Inc. The company also owns a 1998 Ford L9000 with a 4,000-gallon tank used as a rolling holding tank at special events. It allows Zabrieszack to keep smaller trucks dedicated to servicing restrooms, instead of wasting valuable time traveling to and from a disposal site.



A converted storage container serves as an office for A & A Porta-Potty's. To convert a container, Zabrieszack cuts out doors and installs studs, insulation, walls, ceiling and floors. He then hires an electrician to wire it to code and adds heat and air conditioning.





Dennis Howard (right) and Roger Barnette load a storage unit onto a flatbed trailer. About 75 of the 150 containers A & A owns have been converted into office space.

The company's current restroom inventory includes units from PolyJohn Enterprises Corp., Olympia Fiberglass Industries Inc. and T.S.F. Company Inc. About 150 hand-wash stations are mostly from PolyJohn, and three restroom trailers were manufactured by Olympia.

#### CONTAINER NICHE

Zabrieszack got into the storage container business several years ago after meeting a vendor at the Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo International.

"I started out with 20-footers because I couldn't afford a trailer to carry the 40-footers," he recalls. "Then I got a call from someone who wanted to use a container as an office, so I converted a container into one. As it progressed, I started buying 40-foot containers."

To convert a container, Zabrieszack cuts out doors, then installs studs, insulation, walls, ceiling and floors. Then he hires an electrician to wire it to code and has heat and air conditioning installed. About 75 of the 150 containers he owns are office conversions, which he rents to businesses and homeowners who need office space but don't want to add on to their home. Some customers want half office, half storage containers; others use them as break rooms or for tool storage.

"That got us into the rental tables and chairs business," he says, noting that customers started asking where

they could get tables and chairs to stock, say, a break room. Zabrieszack figured they might as well rent them from him.

"I just do what any guy would do if he needed more money to support his family," he says of his willingness to take risks by diversifying. "As long as it's profitable, I'm willing to try it. My motto is this: I don't want to be the biggest company around, just the most profitable. It doesn't do you any good to make \$1 million, for example, if it took you \$2 million to do it."

Along with diversification, Zabrieszack also believes goal-setting is critical to success. When he started out, his goal was to own 100 restrooms and get out of driving a truck.

"Now my goal is to build a company that can provide for both of my kids, if they want to take over the business some day," he says.

Thanks to diversification, he's already got a good jump on that goal. ■

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## Local Networking Generates Business

To find new customers in a difficult economy, business leaders in Ashland, Ky., are relying on the old adage that says success is not based on only what you know, but also who you know.

About a year ago, a local business networking group formed, with about 30 people meeting once a week to share business-building tips, leads on local work and breakfast. Each member pays a \$350 annual fee to belong, most of which covers the cost of the meals. Only one member is allowed from each type of business and new members can only join by invitation.

"We just network and talk about what's going on and new job leads," says Andy Zabrieszack, owner of A & A Porta-Potty's Inc. "You share what you know, and they share what they know. If you had two jobs going on when you came into a meeting, you might have four when you come out."

In addition, if members need services, they agree to call each other first. Members are also allowed to ask each other for free advice — about legal and financial matters, for example — as long as the issues are simple and can be dealt with quickly. The relationships formed are invaluable, Zabrieszack says.

"For instance, I've become buddies with a guy who runs a local heating and cooling outfit who bids on a lot of jobs around here," he says. "He has a lot of contacts, and gets a lot of information about upcoming projects before the actual bids go out."

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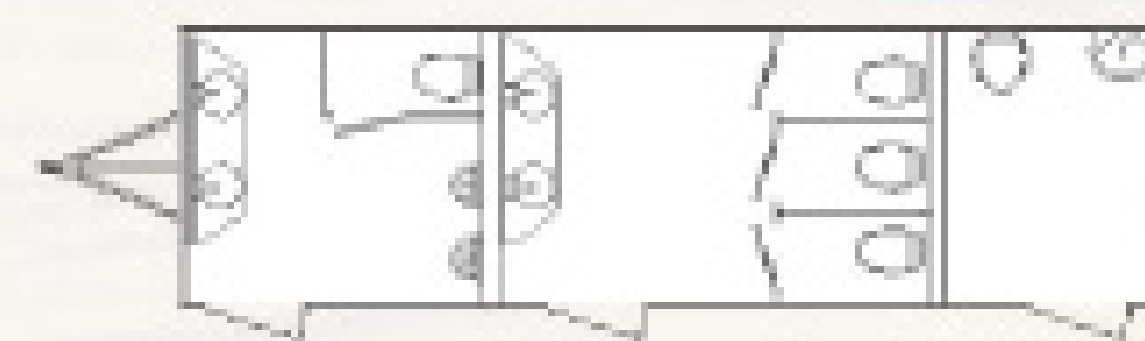
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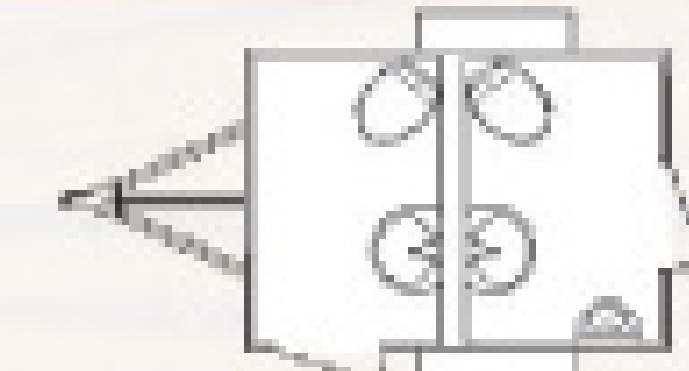
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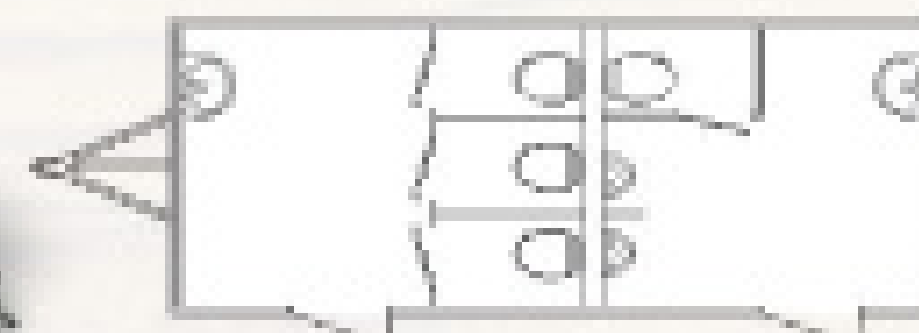
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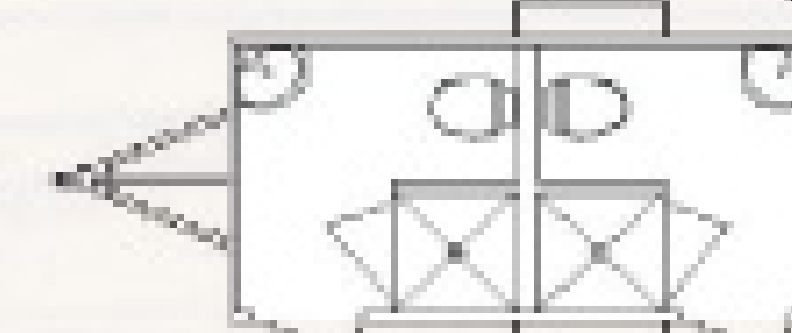
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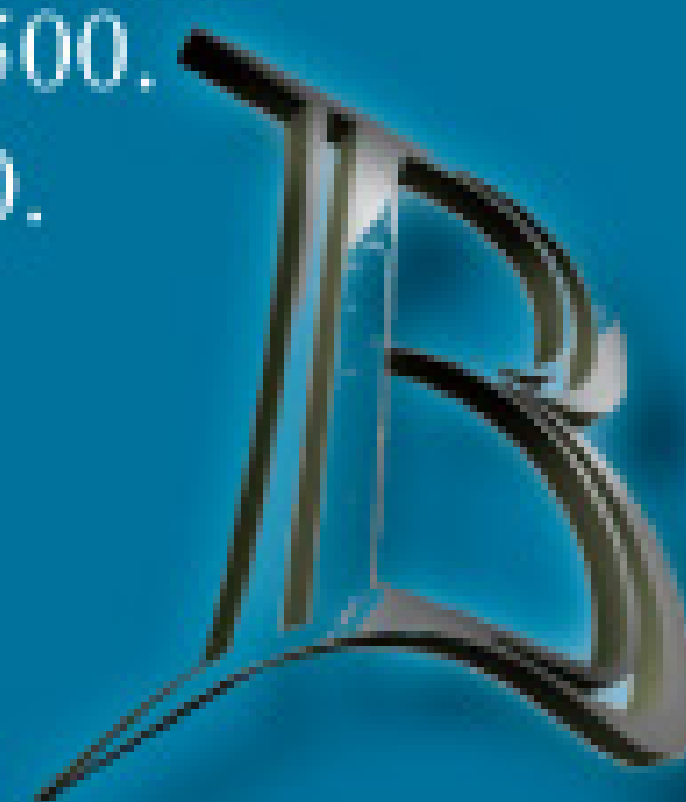
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If you have an issue-oriented story idea or know of a fellow contractor whose success story should be told, please call or write and tell us about it.

Editor Jim Kneiszel may be reached through COLE Publishing by phone at 800/257-7222, by mail at P.O. Box 220, Three Lakes, Wis. 54562, or by e-mail at [editor@promonthly.com](mailto:editor@promonthly.com).

Here's a sampling of features that appear in the pages of *PRO*:

### ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

What's the strangest thing that happened to you and your business this year? You know, that funny or unbelievable portable sanitation story you find yourself repeating over and over to friends and family? Whether it's a tale of misfortune or good fortune, we want to hear about it and share it with readers in *All In a Day's Work*.

### WORKING VACATION

Do you have trouble leaving your work behind when you visit faraway places? If your camera holds images of portable restrooms and associated rental products along with the usual vacation shots of tourist attractions or the family frolicking on the beach, we want to hear from you. We'll share your snapshots and portable restroom travel tales in *Working Vacation*.

### PRO SNAPSHOT

Many of today's leading portable restroom companies started out with humble beginnings, the company owner building wooden units in the back yard and going on service routes with an old pickup truck in the 1950s and '60s. Scan your favorite old photos and send them, along with a brief history of your company, and we'll share your business story in *PRO Snapshot*.

### TAKE 5

Some days you only have a few minutes over a cup of coffee to take a breather in your hectic workday. We want to help you make the most of those few moments by introducing you to a PRO or industry leader who addresses the five issues that have the greatest impact on their job or business. If you know someone in the industry who could offer valuable insights to others, we'll feature them in *Take 5*.

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An interesting portable sanitation roundtable discussion awaits you anytime at the *PRO E-mail Discussion* at [www.promonthly.com](http://www.promonthly.com). If you haven't already subscribed to this free e-mail idea exchange, check it out on our Web site (click on the *PRO E-Mail Discussion* icon to sign up) and start talking about industry issues with counterparts across the country. We print some of those discussions in the magazine under the headline *PRO Forum Chatter*. ■

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21	15	16	17	18	19	20
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	29	30				

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- WEIGHT:** About your size, big boy
- FAVORITE THINGS:** Winning the pole position
- FAVORITE COLOR:** I have a dozen, but bright colors make me shine
- FAVORITE DRINK:** Fizzy blue Turbos from GWP
- HOBBIES:** Laying into turns on fast pumper rigs
- FAVORITE SAYING:** "Get it in gear Sonny, there's people waiting."
- AMBITION:** A new endurance record
- PET PEEVE:** Anything slow, ugly and smelly
- FAVORITE MEN:** Pumpers who lead the pack

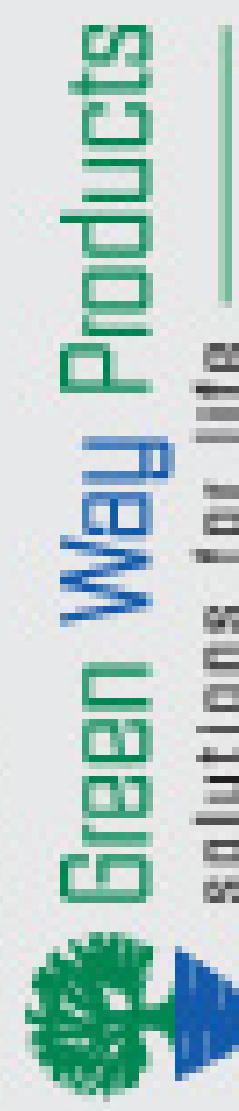
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## ON LOCATION

**THE JOB:** Navy Housing Construction Project, 32nd Street Naval Shipyard

**LOCATION:** San Diego

**THE PRO:** Safiro Portable Toilets, San Diego, Calif.

# DROP ANCHOR!

**Safiro Portable Toilets of San Diego services a 12-acre construction site where the U.S. Navy is building a tower complex to house 9,000 sailors**

*By Patrick Durkin*



Ron Adams of Safiro Portable Toilets cleans a cluster of PolyPortables Inc. restrooms at a new high-rise U.S. Navy housing complex in San Diego. (Photos by Patrick Durkin)

### THE TEAM

Jaime Garcia is the founder of Safiro Portable Toilets in San Diego. In addition to his duties as the company's owner, he handles daily service routes. He is assisted by a full-time staff of four — his daughter, Alicia Garcia, in the office; and son Jaime Garcia Jr., Ron Adams and Alejandro Ramirez in the field.

### HISTORY

Jaime Garcia launched his business in 1997 after working several years for trash collection companies in California. He made the decision after surveying the industry in San Diego and recognizing a shortage of portable restroom businesses. He wasn't sure how to get started, but he talked to people for leads and advice, learned all he could about the portable restroom industry, and purchased the necessary equipment. He bought the company's first new truck in 1998, and then quickly built the company to serve a 70-mile radius from his headquarters near downtown San Diego.



Alicia Garcia and Ron Adams discuss his next job as he climbs into a 1996 Mitsubishi FE-SP service truck from Keith Huber.





Technician Ron Adams unwraps a pump hose as he prepares to service several restrooms at the U.S. Navy housing construction site.

The company now has 1,000 restrooms and hand-wash units, and four trucks. For this job, Adams uses a 1996 Mitsubishi FE-SP with a 1,000-gallon (900 waste, 100 freshwater) tank and Masport pump built by Keith Huber Inc. Safiro's second truck is a 1995 Isuzu Fuso with a 1,200-gallon (1,000 waste, 200 freshwater) steel tank with Masport pump, also built by Keith Huber Inc.

For other jobs, Safiro uses a 1998 Ford F-550 with a 1,200-gallon (1,050 waste, 150 fresh) steel tank; and a 2000 Ford F-650 with a 1,200-gallon (1,050 waste, 150 freshwater) steel tank. Both were built by Lely Manufacturing Inc. and are equipped with Masport pumps.

#### MAKING CONNECTIONS

When the U.S. Navy hired Clark Construction of San Diego to build four 18-story towers to house

single sailors, the contractor contacted Safiro Portable Toilets, which it worked with in the past. Safiro is also conveniently located. Its office and yard is less than a mile from the Navy construction site. Dan Heacock, Clark Construction's assistant superintendent, said Safiro is quick to respond when he calls to ask them to move, repair or rearrange the restrooms. And because the two companies have a long working relationship, Safiro trusts Clark to occasionally move some of its units if they get in the way of a project.

#### THE MAIN EVENT

The San Diego Naval Base is the U.S. Navy's largest facility on the West Coast, and is the principal home port of the Pacific Fleet. It serves as home for about 50 ships and another 50 related commands. To provide modern housing for single sailors who are temporarily in port or on shore duty, the Navy broke ground in November 2006 at the 32nd Street Naval Shipyard for a three-phase construction program. This first phase is scheduled to be

*"You don't want to get bit ... I've opened the door and found snakes or spiders crawling around. That's pretty common, but I'd rather deal with graffiti."*



Alicia Garcia tracks a job on her computer with Adams looking on.

completed this spring. The housing unit consists of three buildings on a 12-acre site, featuring four 18-story high-rise towers connected by a skywalk on the ninth floor. The complex consists of 950 suites housing 9,000 sailors.

#### THE JOB

On any given day, 500 to 700 construction workers are on the site, working anywhere from the basement to the roof of the four towers. During the peak of the job's interior construction, about 850 workers were on site.

Early in the construction, Safiro also provided portable septic tanks for Clark Construction's office trailers until they could tie into the city's sewer system. Safiro coordinates with Heacock or other Clark Construction officials to



Safiro Portable Toilets is located only a mile from the naval high-rise complexes, so Adams can make a quick run to the yard to replace a damaged unit.





At left: Ron Adams removes graffiti from a unit at the naval construction site. Below: Adams replenishes the supply of paper towels in a hand-wash station at the site.



put the units where they're most convenient. This requires constant attention as the construction proceeds.

#### BY THE NUMBERS

Safiro usually maintains about 70 portable restrooms at the construction site. Most are Standard units from PolyPortables Inc., but Safiro also uses some Satellite Industries Tufway units. They place the portable restrooms individually or in clusters. Each of the four to five clusters consist of about eight units, and each cluster includes at least one PolyPortables Inc. SuperTwin hand-wash station.

In addition, Safiro maintains 30 PolyLift Highrise Portable Restrooms from PolyJohn Enterprises Corp. throughout the four towers, putting at least one on every third floor of the 18-story buildings.

Adams, who services the site for Safiro, makes at least three service runs weekly to pump, clean and maintain the ground-based units. Elevator workers from Clark Construction bring the PolyLift units down to the ground floor for servicing. Until the towers' elevators became operational, the company used cranes for this task.

#### LET'S ROLL

To service large construction sites like the Navy housing complex, Safiro must be able to move units and reconfigure the clusters on a moment's notice. Adams and Heacock talk

frequently to redistribute units around the site to put them within quick reach of the ever-shifting workforce.

Adams must also be on site at 2:15 p.m. daily when crane or elevator operators on the towers finish lowering the 30 PolyLift units to the ground for servicing. As soon as Adams pumps, cleans and restocks the roofless PolyLifts, elevator or crane operators return them to their stations inside the towers.

For the workers' convenience, the PolyLift units are stationed every three stories near staircases or elevators. Adams sometimes helps workers move the units off the floor and into the elevators to speed the job. Because these PolyLifts have built-in hooks, Adams says it's easy for crane operators to hook on and lift or lower the units with no spillage.

He says the only problem is toilet paper unwinding because of winds and vibrations while being moved or lifted. To prevent this nuisance, he uses small stickers to tape the end of the roll, or a rubber band to secure the entire roll.

#### KEEPING IT CLEAN

Adams pumps and cleans every unit at least three times weekly, and more often as needed. He usually services the site with the 1996 Mitsubishi FE-SP, which can squeeze into tight spots between buildings, vehicles and the portable restrooms.

As Adams steps into each unit for cleaning and replenishing, he makes

sure all rivets, hinges and door latches are intact. He often makes minor repairs and replaces broken handles, hinges and other items with spare parts he keeps in the truck. But if he's missing a part or can't repair a unit, he swaps it out with a unit from Safiro's inventory.

Hand-wash units require extra attention because of the paints, drywall and stucco compounds workers scrub from their hands and forearms. "I take a Scotch-Brite scouring pad every time," Adams says. "It helps loosen all that stuff. If you don't stay after it, the sinks look like a mess in no time."

#### SPIDERS AND SNAKES

Even though the units see constant use with hundreds of workers on site, Adams always scans their interiors before stepping inside. Whether it's San Diego's warm climate or its proximity to the ocean, there's no shortage of insects and reptiles setting up shop inside the units.

"You don't want to get bit," Adams says. "I've opened the door and found snakes or spiders crawling around. That's pretty common, but I'd rather deal with graffiti." ■

#### MORE INFO:

##### Keith Huber

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[www.keithhuber.com](http://www.keithhuber.com)

##### Lely Manufacturing Inc.

800/334-2763

[www.lelyus.com](http://www.lelyus.com)

##### Masport Inc.

800/228-4510

[www.masportpump.com](http://www.masportpump.com)

##### PolyJohn Enterprises

800/292-1305

[www.polyjohn.com](http://www.polyjohn.com)

##### PolyPortables Inc.

800/241-7951

[www.polyportables.com](http://www.polyportables.com)

##### Satellite Industries Inc.

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## **PRO** PORTABLE RESTROOM OPERATOR DISCUSSION

**QUESTIONS? Get Answers...**

*New PRO Discussion forum brings portable sanitation professionals together over the back fence, 21st Century style*

By Jim Kneiszal

**F**inally ... A place you can go to talk shop with portable restroom operators from across the country ... and around the world. Welcome to the PRO e-mail discussion forum, your cyber home for communicating with other portable sanitation professionals about issues affecting the individual contractor or the entire industry.

PRO Discussion is based on the successful Pumper Discussion that has been a fixture on the COLE Publishing *Pumper* magazine Web site ([www.pumper.com](http://www.pumper.com)) for nearly five years.

### Sharing ideas is as simple as 1-2-3

1. Visit the [promonthly.com](http://promonthly.com) Web site and click on the PRO Discussion link on the left side of the page. Go to the "Join the PRO E-mail Discussion" area and follow the sign-in instructions.
2. Once you've registered and confirmed your forum membership, post an e-mail introduction for fellow PROs.
3. Sit back and wait for e-mail topics to roll in. You and other PROs will meet on the forum and exchange information whenever you like.

When one PRO sends out a question or comment, everyone on the discussion list will receive the e-mail and may respond. The forum is open for a wide range of topics, but there are a few simple ground rules to keep in mind when starting or responding to an e-mail post.

#### Discussion rules

- No soliciting or commercial product endorsements.
- No derogatory remarks about products, services or people.
- No discussing prices or pricing of goods or services.
- No forwarding junk mail, chain mail, jokes, or any other e-mails not specific to this industry.

As easy as it is to join the discussion, it's just as simple to leave — or unsubscribe — and stop receiving e-mails. Instructions to remove your e-mail address from the forum are found on the [promonthly.com](http://promonthly.com) Web site.

Remember, there's strength in numbers. When we all get together and share ideas at [promonthly.com](http://promonthly.com), we strengthen our service businesses and the portable sanitation industry. ■

# At the EXPO!



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COVER STORY

## Latest portable sanitation technology takes center stage at the Pumper & Cleaner Expo

By Jim Kneiszel  
and Ed Wodalski

There was no shortage of innovative portable sanitation technology at the 29th annual Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo International, Feb. 25-28, in Louisville, Ky. And despite concerns about a down economy, the event attracted 8,868 attendees

and 3,780 companies. A total of 519 exhibitors displayed the latest in upscale restroom trailers, lighting, accessories, management software and environmentally friendly deodorizers.

Here's a sampling of what attendees found on the show floor:



### EASY-ASSEMBLY RESTROOM

**PolyJohn Enterprises Corp.** unveiled a new restroom design that aims at greater strength and rigidity in a unit that can be assembled easily with a few tools and the fewest possible fasteners. The yet-unnamed-restroom model has some of the same convenience features as the longstanding PJ3 restroom, but has been engineered with a stronger base, corners and roof. Most of the components can be snapped together, while the unit has only two rivets, used to attach the toilet paper dispenser. The restroom replaces

the traditional one-piece skid with four feet that are anchored from all sides for greater strength. The roof is rotational molded, the door has a twin-sheet thermoformed design, and many smooth interior surfaces promote easy cleaning. The corner tank placement makes a roomier cabin and minimizes spillage in the event of a tip-over. The unit is 48 inches deep, 43 1/2 inches wide and 92 inches tall and weighs 170 pounds. **800/292-1305; www.polyjohn.com.**

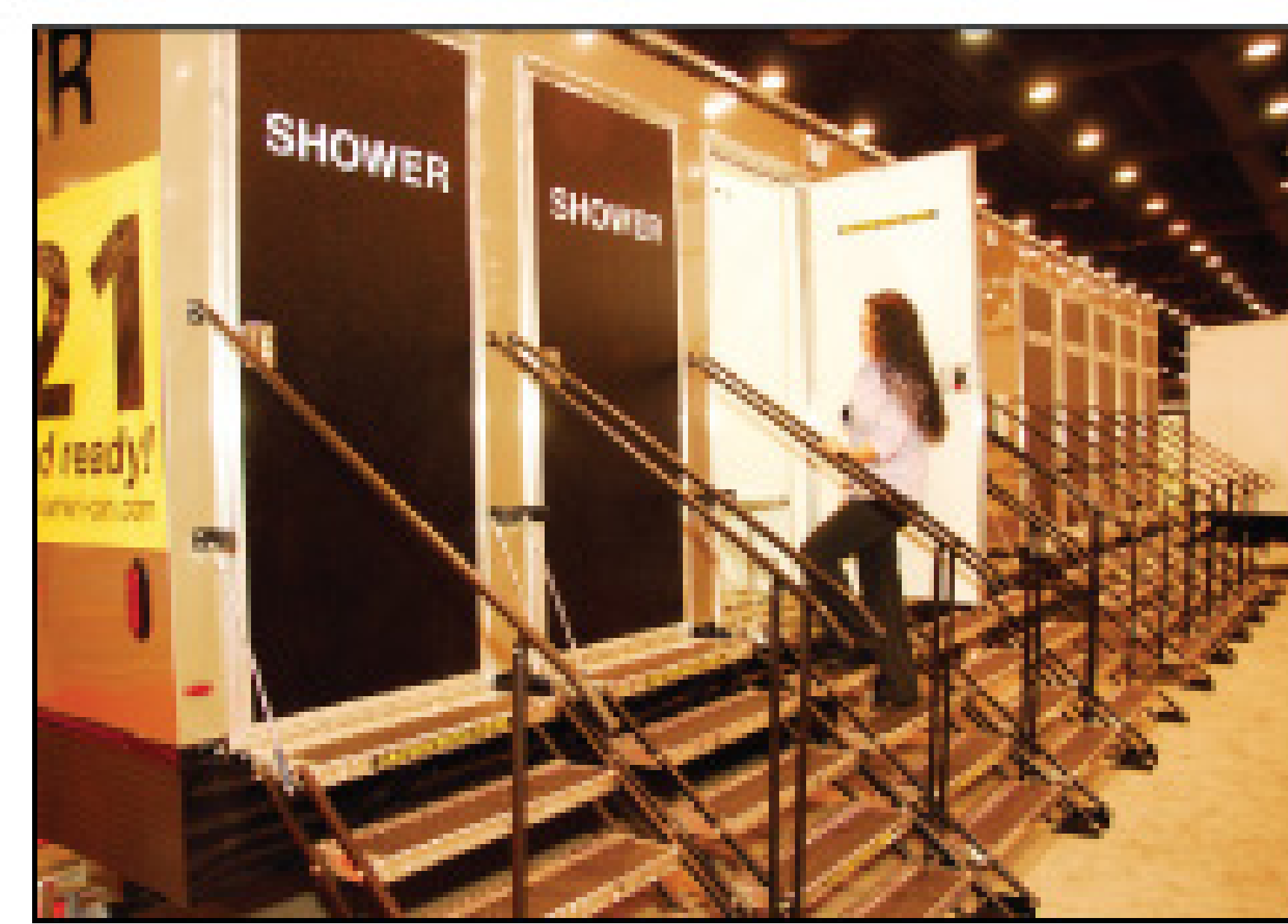


### STYLIZED PORTABLE RESTROOM

**Hampel Corp.** debuted the **Sunrise portable restroom**, a curvier unit designed to make a fashion statement at special event placements. The unit uses decorative panels that bulge outward to provide a modern look and enhance roominess. The panels incorporate a large oval-shaped flat surface on all four sides for improved signage opportunities. The units come in three configurations: the Standard model with single-wall construction and traditional T-extrusions at the corners; a Twin Lock model with replaceable interior wall panels; and the Heavy Duty model, with beefier corners for increased durability. The Sunrise door is 27 1/2 inches wide, 4 inches wider than previous restrooms, and features a three-roll toilet paper holder and a shelf with an integrated coat hook. Though it has a new appearance, the unit retains popular features from the standard Global model, including an offset holding tank and Dirt Buster base. The unit carries a lifetime warranty on door handles, springs, hinges and corner extrusions, and a 10-year warranty on other components. **800/549-1558; www.hampelcorp.com.**

### PRIVACY SHOWER TRAILER

**Ameri-Can Engineering** introduced its **837 Shower Trailer** with 10 individual shower cabins, on-demand hot water and integrated 1,450-gallon wastewater tank. Rather than split the trailer into dedicated men's and women's rooms with shower units, the trailer has 10 unisex stalls for enhanced privacy and better customer flow. The model can be outfitted with four to 18 showers to fit a variety of needs. Using a mitigating tank system, instant water heaters and a simple mixing valve design, the unit provides consistent 101-degree water, 20 pounds of water pressure and a 1.5 gpm flow. A pushbutton control provides a measured amount of water, preventing depleted freshwater supplies due to a valve being left open. Showerheads have a variety of massage features. Each cabin has heat, air conditioning and ventilation. With plastic-coated walls and one-piece rubberized floor, the interiors are easily washed between users. The triple-axle trailer has an aluminum exterior. **574/892-5151; www.ameri-can.com.**



### RESTROOM TRAILER AMBIENCE

**Rich Restrooms** introduced two new restroom trailers, the mid-level **Everest** and the upscale **Ritz**, aimed at special events customers. Both models utilize an aluminum frame and durable, dent-resistant and paintable fiberglass gel coat exterior walls and water-resistant floor decking laminated on both sides. The Everest features foot flush RV-type porcelain toilets that use one pint of water per flush. The CT817 model at the Expo had three toilets on the women's side and one toilet and two urinals on the men's side. The Ritz uses an electric toilet with a wall switch for flushing. The SP816 model at the Expo had two toilets on the women's side and one toilet and one urinal on the men's side. The Everest interior is designed with durable materials for heavy use, while the Ritz features maple cabinets and an electric fireplace/heater for an upscale appearance. **260/593-2279; www.richrestrooms.com.**







### PORTABLE SHOWER

**PolyPortables** introduced its individual **Fresh Start shower**. The unit features an on-demand propane-fueled hot water system, separate hot/cold water controls and 1.4 gallon-per-minute shower head flow rate. A 20-gallon propane tank provides 18 hours of use and larger tanks can be used. The containment skid collects 18 gallons of graywater through the grated floor and a containment tray collects another 25 gal-

lons. The shower unit includes a spray soap dispenser, coat hooks, vanity shelf and comes in 14 standard colors. It has an interior height of 83.5 inches, stands on a 41-inch square base and weighs 154 pounds with skid and heating unit. **800/241-7951; www.polyportables.com.**

### SHAPELY PINK RESTROOM

The pink **PortaJane** restroom from **portajane.com** was displayed as a women's-only restroom with a standard flushing feature and breast cancer awareness theme. With panels manufactured by Allied Plastics Inc., the PortaJane design incorporates an hourglass look with cutouts in the back corners. The thermoformed front and side walls feature the recognizable breast cancer awareness ribbon design. The 40-gallon waste tank and other components are built by PolyJohn Enterprises. A sink is the only option available on the PortaJane, with paper towel dispenser, hand sanitizer, flex ventilation pipe, hover handle, coat hooks, shelf and mirror as standard equipment. **970/729-1232; www.portajane.com.**



### RESTROOM MOVER

**Allied Forward Motion** introduced its collapsible **Mini-Metro Mover** portable restroom dolly. The mover weighs 52 pounds and measures 15 inches wide, 48 inches long and 26 inches high when folded. The space-saving device features four pneumatic tires and steel construction. **920/493-2987.**



### E-MAIL INVOICING, BILL PAYMENT

**Clear Computing Inc.** introduced the **Total Activity Control 2009.next** bulk e-mail invoicing and secure online bill payment program. The operations management software is designed to save processing time and postage costs. Other features include the ability to customize reports, view multiple panels and work with existing mapping tools, such as Google, Yahoo and Microsoft. The program also offers advanced routing and optimization, including forced start-of-day service and end-of-day service. **888/332-5327; www.clearcomputing.com.**



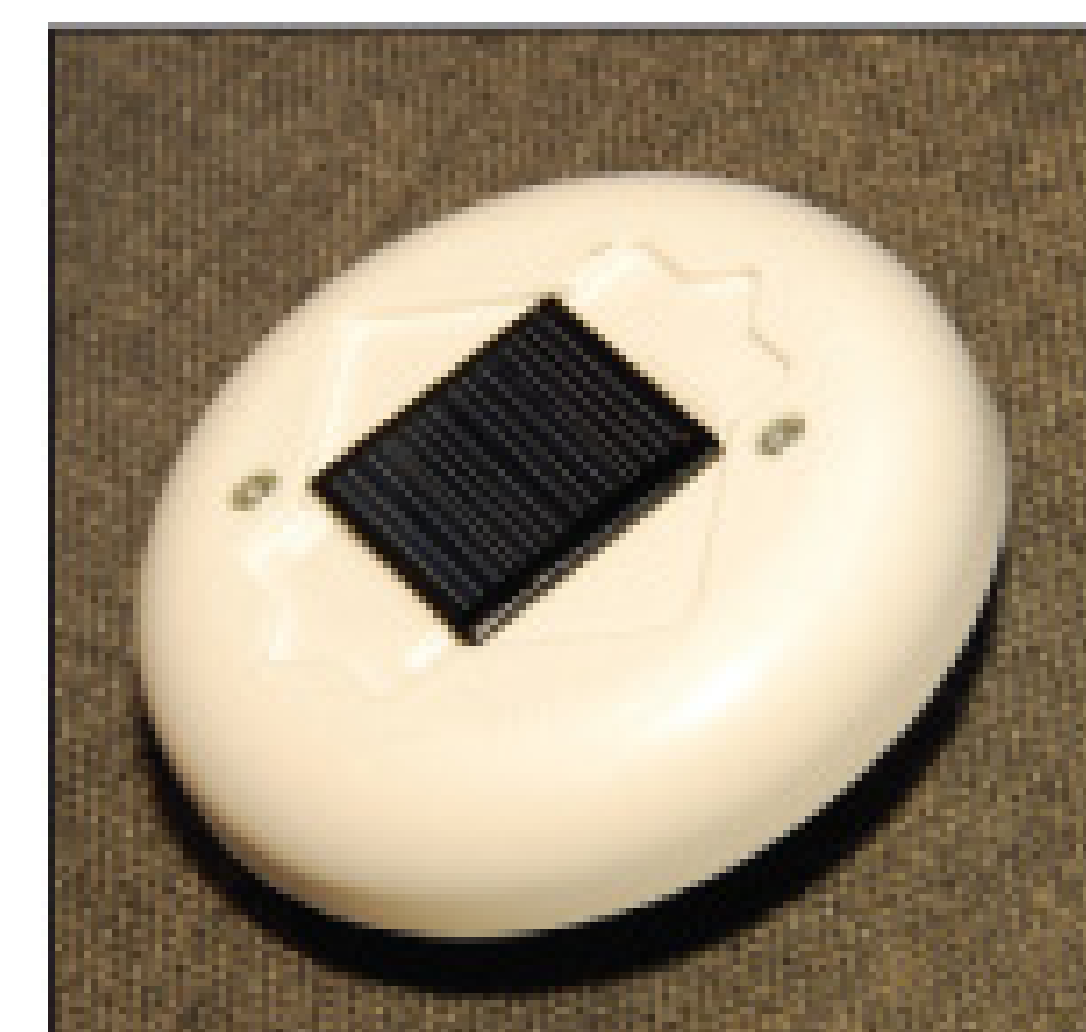
### PORTABLE SINK ON WHEELS

The **TJ Jr. single sink** from the **T.S.F. Company Inc.** is designed for ultimate portability, sized to fit in any T.S.F. restroom for convenient transport to the jobsite and featuring 12-inch wheels to easily roll over any terrain, whether empty or full. The one-piece unit that debuted at the Pumper

& Cleaner Expo is rotomolded for sturdy construction and smooth surfaces throughout. It holds 20 gallons of freshwater in a perimeter tank. Graywater is emptied into a central sump for easy cleaning. The sink comes in blue, green, tan and gray. **800/843-9286; www.tuff-jon.com.**

### SOLAR RESTROOM LIGHT

The **MoonLite** solar-powered light from **Dr. Shrink Inc.** offered a simple roof-mounted retrofit to bring light into portable restrooms. All that's required to install the light is a hole drilled in the restroom roof to attach the interior light unit to the exterior solar collector. The 0.5-watt LED lamp, powered by two rechargeable AA batteries, has a life expectancy of 60,000 to 100,000 hours and can run up to four nights without a charge. The light automatically turns on at dusk and off at dawn. There is an on-off feature to turn off the lamp when the restroom is not in use. **800/968-5147; www.dr-shrink.com.**



### PORTABLE VACUUM SYSTEM

**Armal Inc.** introduced the **T-Easy vacuum tank**, designed for servicing portable restrooms in close quarters, including construction sites, campgrounds and special events. Available in two sizes, Model 1000 offers 336 gallons of waste capacity, 114 gallons of freshwater and weighs 1,300



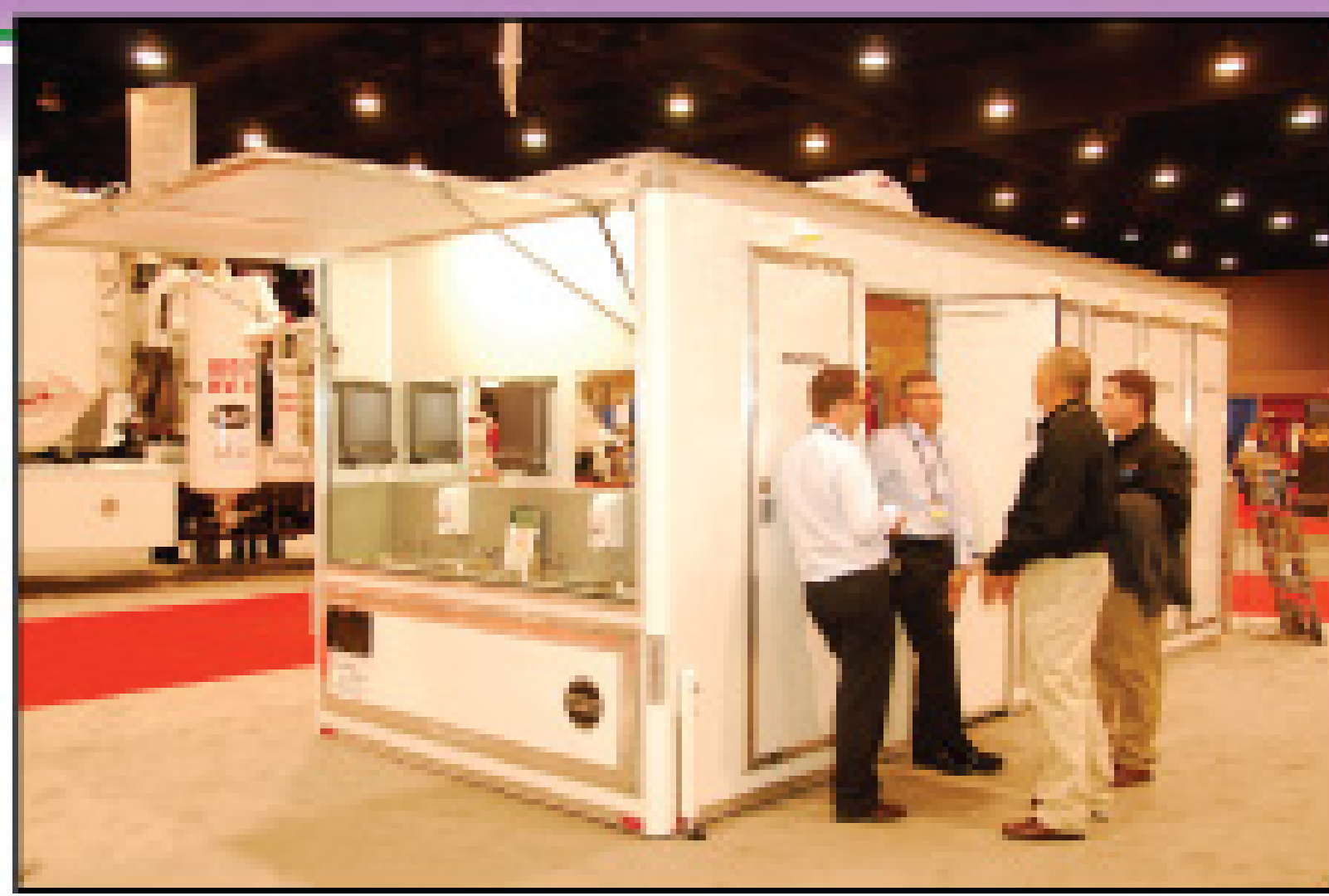
pounds. Model 1300 offers 528 gallons of waste capacity, 153 gallons of freshwater and weighs 1,653 pounds. The unit also features a self-retracting washing hose. **866/873-7796; www.armal.biz.**

### DEBRIS COLLECTOR

**Imperial Industries Inc.** introduced its **Aluminum Debris Collector** for screening septage and portable sanitation waste at the tank discharge. Though aimed at mainly septage land application users, the tank with a 3-foot stainless steel screening comb can also be used for initial screening of waste being transferred to a storage tank. Once the unit is mounted to a truck via 2-inch receiver bars, waste runs through a 6-inch inlet and is screened through the comb with 3/8-inch teeth. Trash is trapped by the comb and the tank can be periodically cleaned through an end cap. The unit has grab handles for easy installation. The manufacturer builds a variety of spreading pans at angles to match different discharge configurations. **800/558-2945; www.imperialind.com.**







### PRIVACY RESTROOM TRAILER

**Wells Cargo COG** introduced the **Comfort Elite X** restroom trailer, featuring five individual unisex restrooms on each side of the 20-foot trailer and four exterior sinks at the rear. The trailer is designed for heavy special event use, with

spray-on liner for the floors, heavy-duty doors and hinges, stainless steel sinks, aluminum exterior, easy wash-down cleaning and hand sanitizers in addition to the sinks. The trailer has a hydraulic lowering system with leveling jacks to eliminate the need for stairs and railings and removable drawbar/hitch for a clean look. It uses a pushbutton vacuum flush toilet and macerating pump to liquefy waste, which reduces demand for freshwater and increases efficiency. Waste is pumped to an exterior holding tank or directly into a sewer. Utilizing fluorescent lighting, the entire unit is powered by two 15-amp, 110-volt outlets. **888/574-4222; www.wellscargocog.com.**

### DEODORIZER PUMP

No mess was the word on **J & J Chemical Co.'s** maintenance-free **GoatThroat GT300** liquid deodorizer pail and hand pump. Designed for a 5-, 7-, or 15-gallon pail, 55-gallon drum or 275-gallon tote, the pump dispenses precisely measured amounts of deodorizer with one touch of the tap. An internal pressure relief valve prevents over-pressurizing the deodorizer container. **800/345-3303; www.jjchem.com.**



### UPSCALE CUSTOM TRAILER

**JAG Mobile Solutions** teamed with Louisiana-based portable sanitation company **Elite Portable Restrooms and Showers Inc.** to produce a **luxury 18-foot special events restroom trailer** displayed at the Expo. The unit features rich accents, including

African walnut and cork flooring, bamboo accent walls, custom floating cabinet and Corian countertops, flat panel televisions, vessel sinks, hands-free faucets, recessed lighting and an entertainment system with iPod.

Components, including low-flow flush valves, were selected with "green" solutions in mind. The exterior features gold seamless laminated fiberglass side panels, custom paint, integrated skirts and a seamless triple-sealed roof. **800/815-2557; www.jagmobilesolutions.com.**



### ALFALFA URINAL BLOCKS

**Earth Friendly** displayed **EnviroMint urinal blocks** made from alfalfa. The 3-ounce blocks are designed to work beyond 30 days and 2,000 flushes. They also are made to prevent mineral deposits and stains, while neutralizing and emulsifying oils and grease. The blocks are available in five different fragrances: cherry, NaturFresh, pine, lemon and bouquet. **800/753-1548; www.earthfriendlychemicals.com.**



### COMPACT TRIPLE-CABIN TRAILER

The **14-foot Three Room Trailer** from **Black Tie Manufacturing** was built specifically for Wisconsin-based **Arnold's Environmental Services** and includes three private unisex restrooms, components for cold-weather service and upgraded entry steps with a deck. Each chamber has its own sink and decorative wood trim. The trailer has an integrated 225-gallon freshwater tank and 450-gallon wastewater capacity. Insulation and heating pads keep the tanks from freezing. **877/253-3533; www.blacktiemanufacturing.com.**



### SUPERSIZED CONSTRUCTION SERVICE

**DropBox Inc.** displayed the **40-foot Sanitation Station** running water restroom for busy industrial or construction site settings. The modified storage container offers a men's side with three toilet stalls and a women's side with a single toilet. The unit has a 2,100-gallon tank for freshwater and wastewater and operates with a 220-volt, single-phase hookup. The unit is insulated, has air conditioning and heating for comfortable use in any weather and is built with a rugged Rhino Liner interior floor for durability and easy cleaning. The heavy-duty unit is meant to augment traditional portable restrooms, typically placed at busier central break areas at large worksites. **888/388-7738; www.dropboxinc.com.**



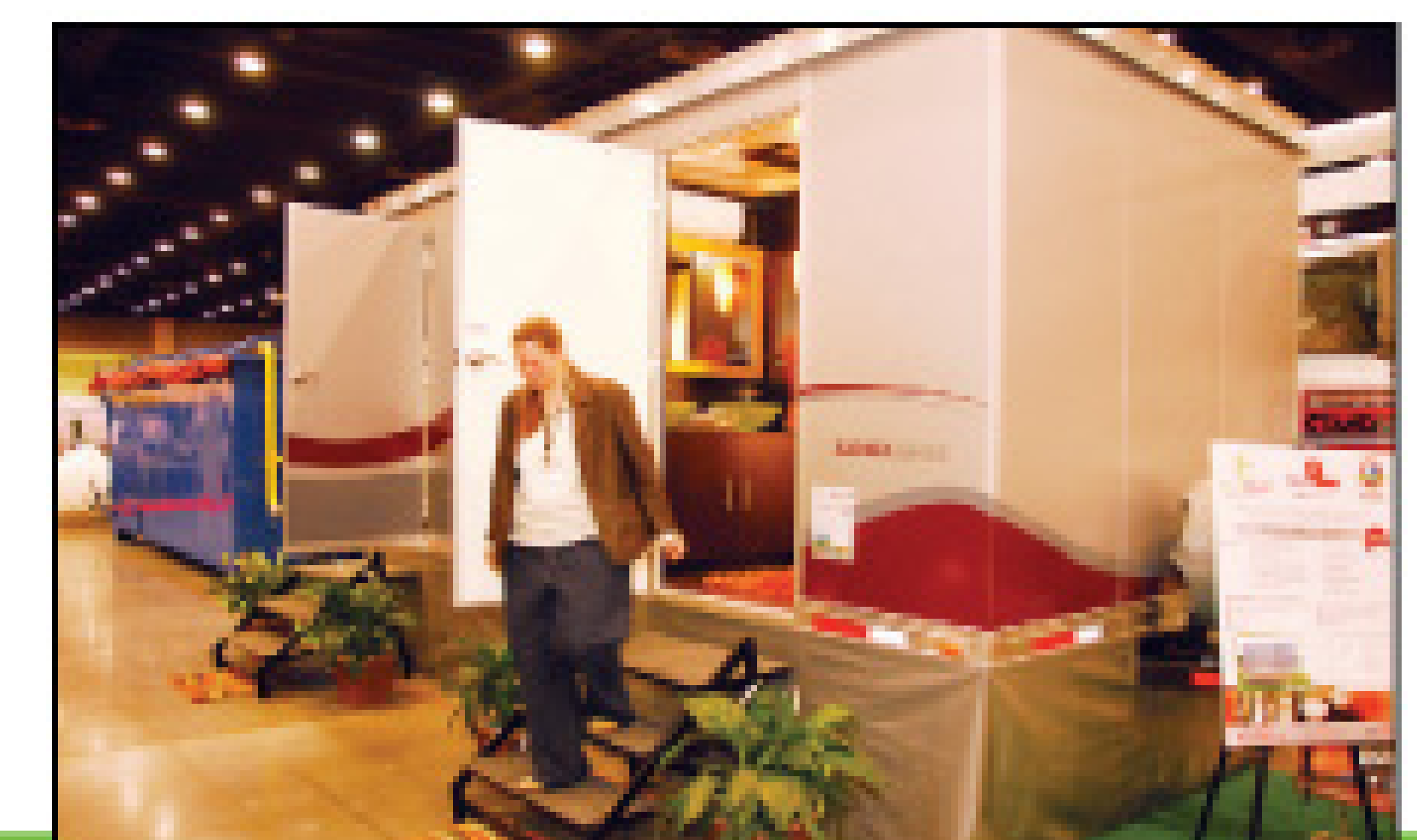
### NEW BRANDING FOR ASPEN, K2 RESTROOMS

**Satellite Industries Inc.** reintroduced the stylish **Aspen** and **K2** restrooms formerly produced by Five Peaks Technology. Satellite is rebranding the restrooms under its company name, including the patriotic red, white and blue Aspen model shown at the Expo. The units combine a bold, angular design on the outside with a host of convenience features on the interior, including cupholder, coat hook and three-roll toilet paper holder. The units also feature molded-in skid grab handles and heavy-duty twin-sheet door and jam for added durability. The K2 adds dual panel walls for easy cleaning and enhanced appearance. **800/328-3332; www.satelliteindustries.com.**

The units combine a bold, angular design on the outside with a host of convenience features on the interior, including cupholder, coat hook and three-roll toilet paper holder. The units also feature molded-in skid grab handles and heavy-duty twin-sheet door and jam for added durability. The K2 adds dual panel walls for easy cleaning and enhanced appearance. **800/328-3332; www.satelliteindustries.com.**

### RESTROOM TRAILER FROM MEXICO

**Escumovil** showed the **Zapata Series** restroom trailer manufactured in Guadalajara, Mexico. The 18-foot unit on display had two toilets on the women's side and one toilet and three urinals on the men's side. The Zapata comes in sizes 8 to 53 feet. Features include laminated wood flooring, standard heat and air conditioning, Formica walls, fully enclosed stalls, Bose sound system with CD and MP3 and ceramic RV-style toilets. **619/220 01 09; www.escumovil.com.**





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**Bio-Active** septic tank treatment packs and **Exodor Porta-Tab** holding tank and waste treatment tablets were introduced by **Walex Products Company Inc.** Bio-Active comes in 12-packet jars meant to be flushed into a septic system monthly to add bacteria and septic-specific enzymes. The tablets are designed to counteract the destructive effects of household products such as bleach, detergents and chemicals. Porta-Tabs have a special coating for easy handling, are designed for use in any portable restroom application and are biodegradable and non-staining. **800/338-3155; www.walex.com.**



**SAFETY LIGHTING**

**A & L Systems** put the spotlight on its **9016LED series StarBeam** and **M-Tech LED** mini-bar safety lighting. Both feature 360-degree light output in amber, clear or red dome colors. Made of durable polycarbonate, the injection-molded domes are fully gasketed to protect against moisture, while potted circuitry protects against shock and vibration. Also on display was the N200 HID (high intensity gas discharge) work light. Designed to produce near-daylight illumination, the xenon light is extremely

resistant to shock, vibration, water and dust. **800/592-5253; www.a-and-lsystems.com.**

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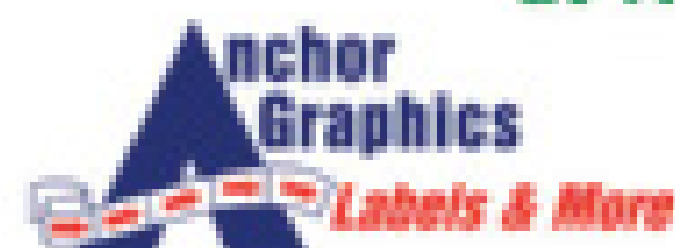
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## Adding to the Menu

**PROs talk about diversifying business offerings to better weather tough economic times**

By Mary Shafer

In an uncertain economy, there are few better business survival strategies than diversification, and one of the obvious options for PROs who already service construction contractors is to add related services.

Not only does this leverage the 80/20 rule for existing customers — that businesses derive 80 percent of their revenue from 20 percent of their customers — it also opens doors to new customers who may previously not even considered you as a vendor.

This month, we talk to two PROs who've diversified with new services, and find out what it's done for their bottom lines.

Knight's Pumping and Portable Services Inc. has an inventory of 3,000 restrooms, and already offers related services such as holding



**Name:** Tracey Lince, vice president, business development  
**Company:** Knight's Pumping and Portable Services Inc.  
**Location:** Bakersfield, Calif.  
**Employees:** 50  
**Years in Business:** 25

tanks, water tanks, temporary fencing and power poles to its commercial customers. This side of the business is split

evenly among construction, agriculture and the petroleum production industries. Knight's also serves special events, and recently bought a restroom trailer because the company was feeling pressure from competitors who have more upscale options.

"We want to be able to compete on the same playing field with our competitors for special events," says Tracey Lince, the company's vice president of business development. "The construction market in California — like most other regions — has really taken a hit, so we're lucky to have our business spread into oil and agriculture, too." It's an understatement, given that Knight's does 90 percent of its volume with

these commercial customers.

This dependence led the company to add temporary fencing at the turn of the century, in an effort to position itself as a full temporary site service provider for this important sector of its business. The other ancillary products quickly followed. Lince says there's a possibility that the company may soon add dewatering to its repertoire in response to severely tightening restrictions on disposal, especially for grease trap waste, which Knight's also pumps. This would allow yet another revenue stream in taking waste from other pumping contractors.

Lince says the addition of related site services not only helped the company better serve its existing customers, but also helped sales efforts to expand its customer base.

"We offer 250 portable restrooms and about 150 roll-off Dumpsters," reports Nick Plummer, who has owned the portables side



**Name:** Nick Plummer, owner  
**Company:** Plummer's Disposal Service  
**Location:** Byron Center, Mich.  
**Employees:** 5  
**Years in Business:** 3

of the family business, Plummer's Disposal Service, for three years. "We're now looking to get into temporary fencing."

Along with these services, Plummer's offers septic pumping, drain cleaning, hydroblasting and hauling of non-hazardous waste. The company had offered portables 17 years ago, but had gotten out of that end of the business until Plummer decided to bring it back. The company was already renting roll-off containers before re-establishing portables service, so the restrooms were actually the first ancillary construction site addition.

Plummer says the additional services are a bid to both further service existing customers and to add business from new ones. "With current customers, we can tie it in to a package deal, multiple services from one vendor. They love it. And then for new customers, we can go in and say, 'Hey, you're dealing with three vendors now, we can do it all. Then if something goes wrong, you've only got one throat to choke,'" he adds, laughing. ■

*"With current customers, we can tie it in to a package deal, multiple services from one vendor. They love it."*  
**Nick Plummer**

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# Strength in Numbers?

In challenging economic times, mergers and acquisitions may be an effective business building strategy

By Mike Adams

Growing a business the old-fashioned way — one new customer at a time — is becoming more difficult in light of the current economy. But even in today's uncertain business climate, there are ways to grow your company. Joining forces with a friendly competitor or buying another company could be an alternative path.

Many portable sanitation companies today are learning the fastest growth strategy in a mature market comes through acquisitions or mergers. In an ideal situation, you may be able to buy great customers and excellent employees from your competitors by buying their companies.

## THE BIG QUESTION

Ask yourself how long it would take to grow from scratch what you could go out and buy today. If the answer is many, many years, perhaps you should consider the alternatives.

Acquisitions aren't just about the big fish gobbling up the little fish.

*The ideal merger would be with a competitor in your area who you have known and respected for years. Sometimes a partnership can result in a company becoming stronger than the sum of its parts, making it better able to fend off competition from other local companies.*

Depending on your company's management experience, business plan, cash position and credit profile, it may be possible to get financing or even venture capital to help you buy multiple companies or even companies much larger than your own. However, if you work with venture capital you must be prepared to give

up a significant portion of ownership, in the form of company shares.

Mergers can be a little trickier, especially if they require bringing on new business partners rather than just new employees. The ideal merger would be with a competitor in your area who you have known and respected for years. Sometimes a partnership can result in a company becoming stronger than the sum of its parts, making it better able to fend off competition from other local companies.

## SWING YOUR PARTNER

What should I look for in an acquisition or new partner? Consider these key factors when looking to acquire another company:

### Geographic location

Does the acquisition candidate work in an area that overlaps your own? Will savings be created through better route density and improved efficiencies? Or is the acquisition intended to help you penetrate a new market? A company that helps you increase route density may be more profitable. However, if your company already has suitable route density, then it may be wiser to gain a toehold in a new market.

### Market specialty

Would the acquisition target fit your company's marketing strategy? Or are you willing to change your marketing strategy to fit the new company? If you specialize in restrooms for the construction market, do you have the expertise to merge with a company that specializes in serving large events? If you are seen as the "high quality choice," do you want to merge with a company that is seen as the "budget alternative?"

The easiest acquisition is one that dovetails smoothly into your current operation. However, companies have also been successful by controlling different segments of a market by creating independent divisions. Don't make the mistake of thinking you can convert the customer to your way of doing things. Ironically, customers are the most valuable part of your acquisition, yet you have no legal claim to keep them.

### Employee talent

Before you merge another company into yours, be sure the employees you gain will fit into your way of doing things. Be sure they have good, clean work records with low turnover, and that they are well trained. Also, be sure new employees will not cause morale issues if they are unhappy with your pay and benefits structure. If a difference exists, expect that you'll have to bring everyone, including your current employees, up to the higher level.

Is the owner of the target company planning to walk away or stay on as management after selling? Will the former owner's expertise be useful, or will you have too many "cooks in the kitchen"? In my experience, it has usually been the latter.

### Business property

Will you be using the real estate, if any, that comes with the new business? Does the new business have long-term lease agreements you could be saddled with? Is your current yard large enough to accommodate the merging of both companies' restroom inventory and trucks?

If you won't be using the real estate, office furniture or other assets, have they been independently appraised? Assess the market to be sure you will be able to sell or lease the assets without taking a loss. If you will need to run the company from two locations, how will this affect management? Will it be necessary to sell both current properties to buy a single larger property?

### Economies of scale

Will the merging of the two businesses save money by making operations more economical? Will it make larger contracts easier to win and service?

### Brand identity

What will the acquisition or merger do to customer perception of



your business in the market place? Is the company you are acquiring as well-known and respected as your own? Will the merger make it more difficult or less difficult to win new customers going forward?

**Condition of assets**

How old is the equipment that comes with the deal? Are the trucks running on borrowed time or are they relatively new and well maintained? Are the restrooms, sinks and holding tanks in good shape and of high quality? Will you be getting equipment that expands your ability to provide service?

**Customer records**

Will you be gaining high-quality customer information, organized on computer records that will be easy to use for sales and billing purposes? Or is everything handwritten on route cards that will be difficult to convert to your data management system?

**A FINAL WORD**

If you're looking to grow through acquisition, be sure to discuss your plans with a lawyer or accountant who specializes in this field. A professional can act as your agent to find target companies, review their suitability and negotiate terms, allowing you to do what you do best, which is keeping your own business running smoothly during the process. ■

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Text for the truck advertisement, including 'The PRO portable toilet is a critical component of almost any construction site...' and 'When it's not your second home, it's your first home...'.

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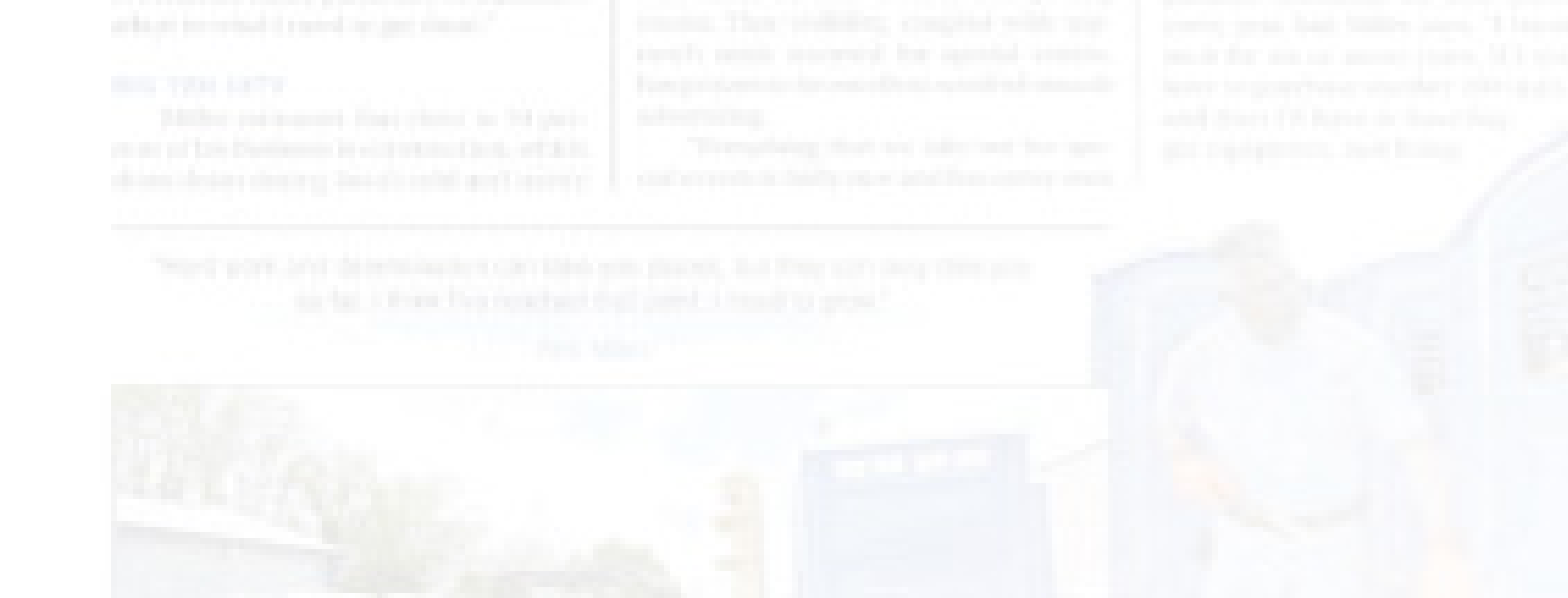
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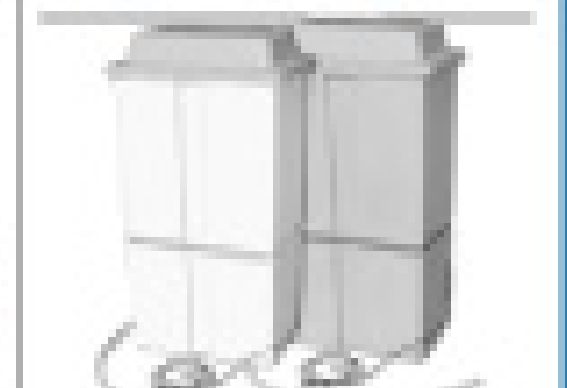
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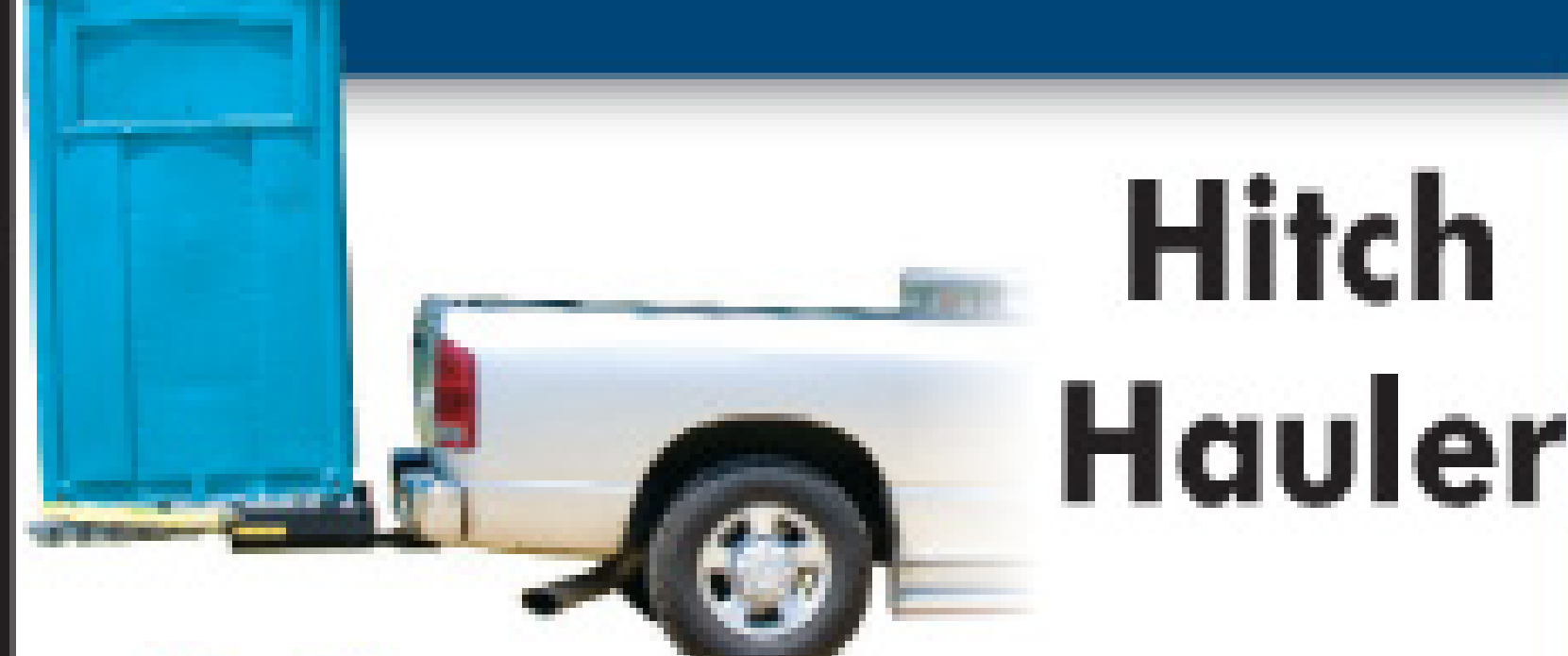


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**2002 International Pumper Truck:** 4700 series, DT466, automatic, air brakes, 1200 gallon waste, 300 gallon fresh water, Masport 75 pump. CCI/Brian Touey 805-896-3777. (PBM)

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Bob Carlson (left) and Jerry Kirkpatrick answer your questions in Truck Corner.



## PTO Replacement Tips

**Double-check the specs of your replacement gearbox before installing and firing up the vacuum pump in the field**

**Q QUESTION:** I recently replaced the PTO on my truck and my truck is running faster than before. I used the same brand and model of PTO for the replacement. What could be the problem?

Jeremy Rivington  
Little Rock, Ark.

**A ANSWER:** Having the same PTO brand and model number does not necessarily mean you have the same percentage of speed running off of it. Whenever you replace the PTO on your truck, check the rpm of the PTO before you put it into operation. Never assume that because it looks like an identical swap that your performance will be the same.

The different speeds and percentages of a PTO make all the difference. Putting on the wrong percentage PTO can cause your pump to heat up, burn up, crack and be left totally useless. These percentages range from 86 percent of the power from the transmission up to 150 percent.

Obviously, the goal is to get your pump to turn at the manufacturer's recommended speed. You simply need to use a tachometer on the shaft to measure the rpms. Then using simple math, get the appropriate PTO to turn the pump. Most pumps run around 1,000 to 1,200 rpm. Double-check your pump manufacturer's operating manual. Running your pump at the optimum rpm will increase its life.

**Q QUESTION:** I have a new vacuum pump system that runs off the hydraulics. This is my first year using this type of system. It ran fine last summer but as soon as things started turning cold, it began running real slow. Seems like the pump is struggling. What could it be?

Ray Sanchez  
Albuquerque, N.M.

**A ANSWER:** Your hydraulic oil is getting thicker during the colder weather. This "thickening" causes everything to move slower. There are two things you can do: Put a tank heater in your hydraulic tank, which will keep the oil warm and fluid, or change the hydraulic oil to a lighter weight. This will help your performance. The cold weather will have a lesser effect on the lighter weight hydraulic oil.

**Q QUESTION:** My Woods coupler is rubbing on my pump mount housing. But my pump mount is not bent. This eats up my Woods coupler and I am replacing it more than I want to. What can I do?

Dave Wannake  
Fresno, Calif.

**A ANSWER:** Check the alignment of the pump. Most likely, the pump has shifted and the alignment of the coupler and the hub to the pump is no longer true. So realign the pump with your gearbox and the problem should be resolved. This problem can be caused by driving on bad, bumpy roads, or the bolts holding the pump to the base have loosened. It's a simple fix for a relatively simple problem.

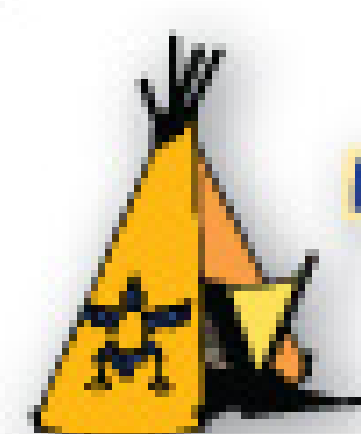
**Q QUESTION:** I used to run a vacuum pump and now I'm putting a blower pump on my truck. I'm going to use the same primary and secondary. Are there any precautions I need to take or is there anything else I need to know before I go to work?

Desmond Davies  
Athens, Texas

**A ANSWER:** Yes, it is OK to use the primary and secondary from your previous system as long as they are rated to handle the cfm of your blower. Double-check to make sure your primary and secondary are clean and in good working condition.

A blower is more temperamental than a vacuum pump. A blower has metal lobes rather than vanes. Vanes will break in a vacuum and stop working, while lobes will break when debris enters the blower. This causes the blower to break and a new blower will be required rather than just a set of vanes that would be used on a vacuum pump. It's a good idea to put a pre-filter on the system to catch the small particles before they have a chance to get into the system.

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](mailto:truckcorner@promonthly.com). ■



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