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## Super Troopers

Ohio PRO serves the G-20 Summit

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## The EXPO EDGE

Industry innovations displayed in Louisville

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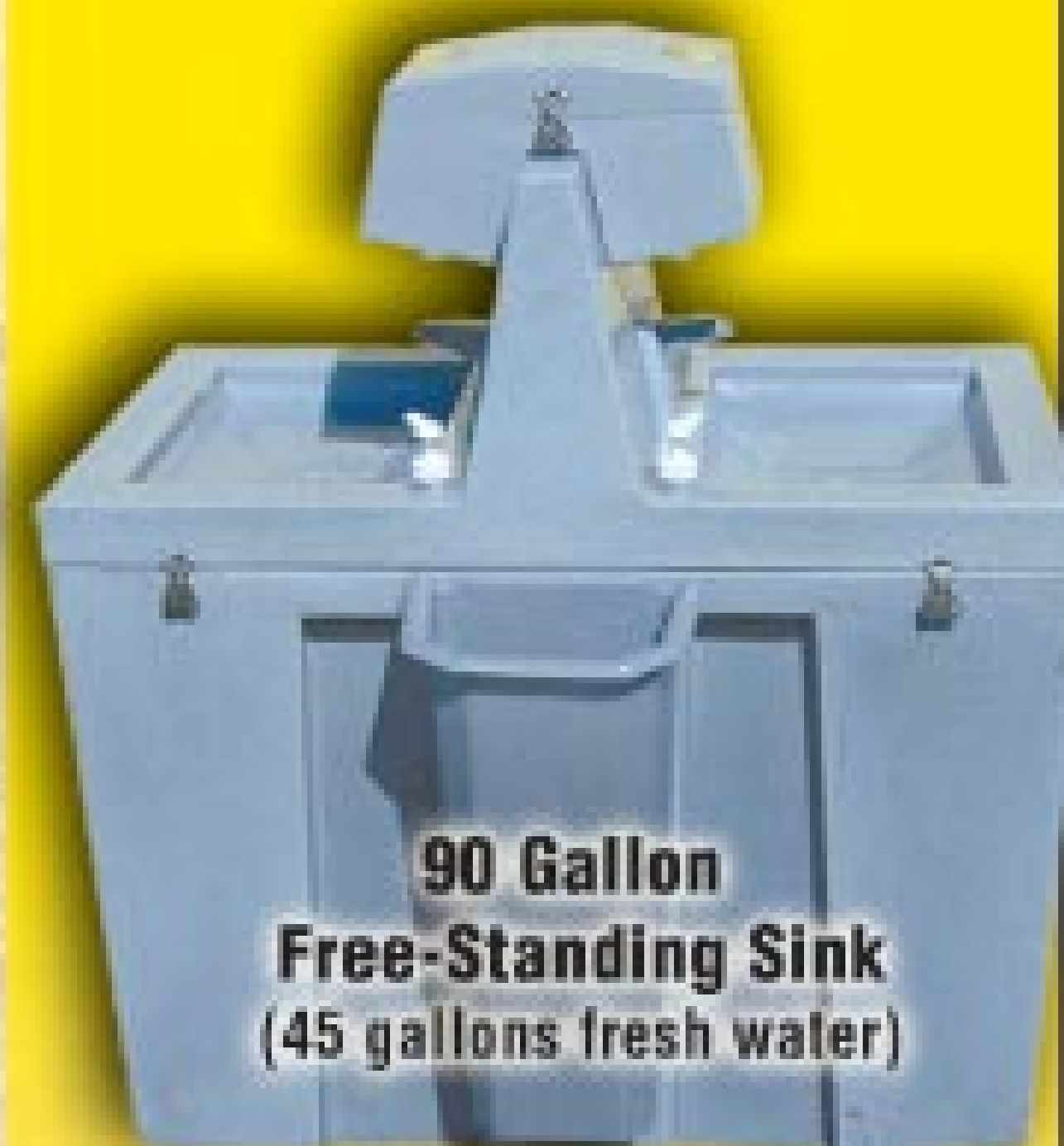
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# Expo Visitors Clean Up

**BASED ON NEW PRODUCT OFFERINGS AT THE PUMPER & CLEANER EXPO, STOPPING THE SPREAD OF GERMS WILL BE A PRIORITY FOR THE COMING BUSY SEASON**

*By Jim Kneiszel*

Over the past year, a major message has been sent out in the portable sanitation industry: cleanliness counts. And industry manufacturers listened. Just about every manufacturer exhibiting at the Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo International in Louisville, Ky., in February was offering a new hand-wash or hand sanitizer option.

It doesn't appear that the H1N1 virus, or swine flu, posed the major public health threat that was forecast for the past winter, and thank goodness for that. But a looming pandemic may have been the motivation necessary to get the American public serious about an effort to stop the spread of germs through hand contact in public restroom situations.

I say it's about time. For years, I've wondered why hand-wash stations or hand sanitizers weren't a standard feature for portable restrooms placed at construction sites and special events throughout the land. It always mystified me why your clients would pinch pennies when it comes to keeping their workers or the general public safe from the spread of disease.

A couple of longtime restroom contractors I talked to at the Expo explained their No. 1 training tip to new employees on restroom service routes: "If you wouldn't send your mother or grandmother in there, it's not clean enough for our customers." This is simple and true; how many of you would send your mother into a portable restroom if there was no way for her to wash her hands afterward?

And have you wondered, while refreshing a bank of restrooms at a fair or festival, how restroom users could go right from your unit to a food tent and order lunch without washing their hands first? I'm sure the failure to place hand-wash products at some special events hasn't been for lack of trying on your part. It comes down to your customers wanting to make cleanliness a priority and showing a willingness to

spend a few extra dollars to do their part for the greater public good.

If the new products shown at the Expo are any indication, special event organizers and construction foremen are starting to take the hint. Major restroom manufacturers at the Expo introduced new sanitizing stands to the wheeled sinks that have been on the market several years. You can see a sampling of new products from the Expo in the feature "The Expo Edge" in this issue.

## TIDE IS TURNING

PolyJohn Enterprises Corp. added a compact, two-sided sanitizer stand to join its four-sided SaniStand model. Satellite Industries introduced the HandiStand four-sided model. PolyPortables introduced the Sanitizer Station. T.S.F. Company Inc. brought the Handy Hand Sanitizer. The new products typically allow for installing several types of disinfectant dispensers, from wipes, to foams to gels.

In addition to the sanitizing stands, manufacturers also showed new hand-wash sink products, including Armal's dual-sided AquaStand and PolyPortables' electric heated TagAlong station.

Manufacturer's reps said providing a hand-cleaning option with a restroom is coming closer to being a prerequisite for customers, either simply through demands from the end-user or by regulation in some states. PROs I visited with at the Expo agreed, though they said some customers are holding out due to the added cost.

I think the tide is turning quickly, and as the economy bounces back, more and more customers and state health officials will demand



**PolyPortables Poly Mini:** PolyPortables Inc. showed the new shortened Poly Mini unit with lift kit for use on commercial construction sites

*I think the tide is turning quickly, and that as the economy bounces back, more and more customers and state health officials will demand hand-wash facilities with every restroom order. As the financial crisis ebbs — and it will — construction companies and special events organizers will start to build good hygiene into their cost of doing business.*



hand-wash facilities with every restroom order. As the financial crisis ebbs — and it will — construction companies and special events organizers will start to build good hygiene into their cost of doing business. As consumers, we'll all end up supporting the improved public health efforts, but we'll also all benefit from them.

As an industry, it's important we do our part as well. That means not being shy about compelling customers to add sinks and sanitizer stands to their orders this year. Even if a construction contractor or a special event has turned you down flat in the past over adding sinks, you shouldn't stop trying. More than ever, you have the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and local public health officials backing your argument. Make this a big part of your sales pitches this year and let's see if attitudes are changing.

### REVIVING ECONOMY?

With all the talk over the past year about a deepening economic recession, I found it interesting that Expo exhibitors placed a greater emphasis on units designed for high-rise commercial construction projects. Whether they expect infrastructure spending or urban renewal

to take hold, a few restroom makers are concentrating on that construction segment.

Satellite Industries introduced the new HIGHRISE unit aimed at easy, wheeled transport via freight elevators or lifting by crane. PolyPortables showed the new Poly Mini shortened unit with wheels and a lift kit to serve the same purpose. And PolyJohn displayed its own — but not new — PolyLift model.

Are these units evidence of a commercial construction renaissance in big cities? What are you hearing from customers? I'd be interested in learning about projects you're working on that require lift rigs and the service challenges that go along



**Satellite HandiStand:** Satellite Industries, with the HandiStand, was one of a number of companies that showed new sanitizer stands.

with such jobs. If you have an interesting job to talk about, drop me a line at [editor@promonthly.com](mailto:editor@promonthly.com).

### FIVE PEAKS RETURNS

Restroom manufacturer Five Peaks Technology, a part of Michigan-based Ameriform Products, returned to the Expo after its products were sold through Satellite Industries at the 2009 Expo. For a brief period, Five Peaks and Satellite had a distribution agreement for Satellite to sell its restrooms, but that agreement was terminated last May.

Ameriform President Dan Harris said demand from past Five Peaks customers convinced the company to redouble its efforts in the portable sanitation industry. "We're going to grow this company and



**Five Peaks:** Five Peaks Technology returned to the Expo this year, showing its Aspen, K2 and Elite restroom models.

bring it back up to what it used to be," Harris said. "We think the market is going to come back and we want to be here when it does."

### GREAT TO SEE YOU!

It was wonderful to reconnect with many PROs at the Expo. Some of you reported that 2009 was your most challenging year, while a few of you said 2009 was your best year ever. In either case, you're expecting or at least hoping to see an economic bounce-back this year. Hope springs eternal, and that's one thing I like so much about the resourceful people in

this industry. To you, the glass is always at least half full.

If you didn't make it to the Expo this year, I hope to see you next year. Mark your calendars for the 2011 event, which will be March 2-5 at the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville. To get a jump-start on planning for next year, visit [www.pumpershow.com](http://www.pumpershow.com). ■

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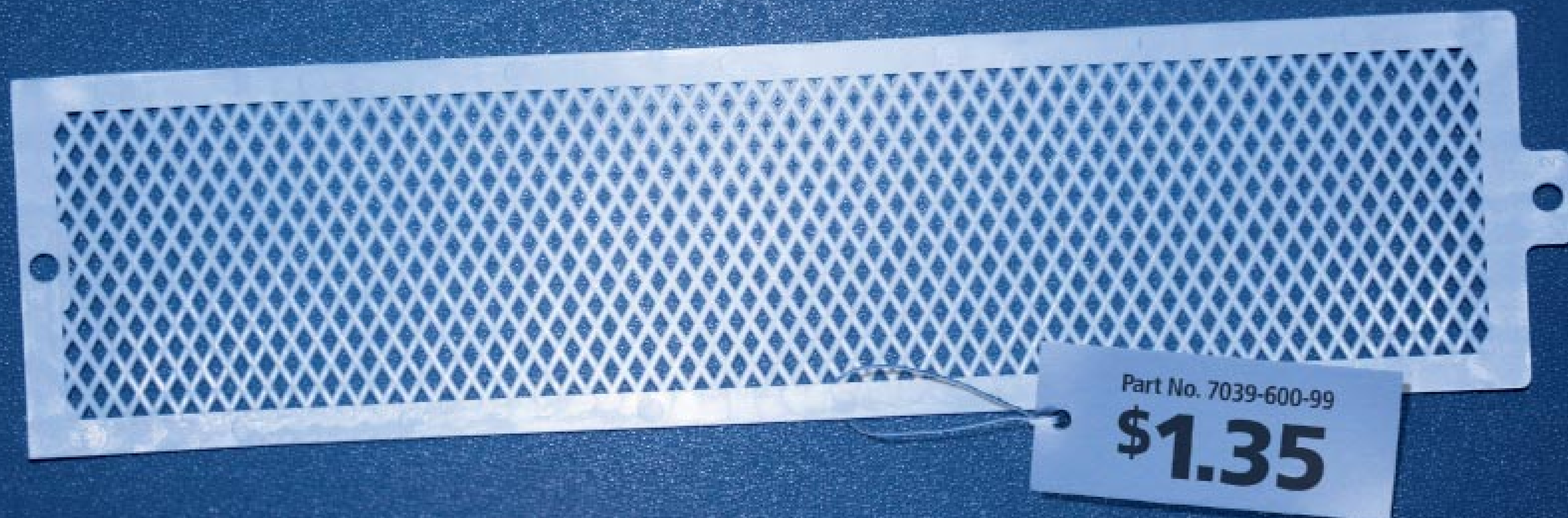
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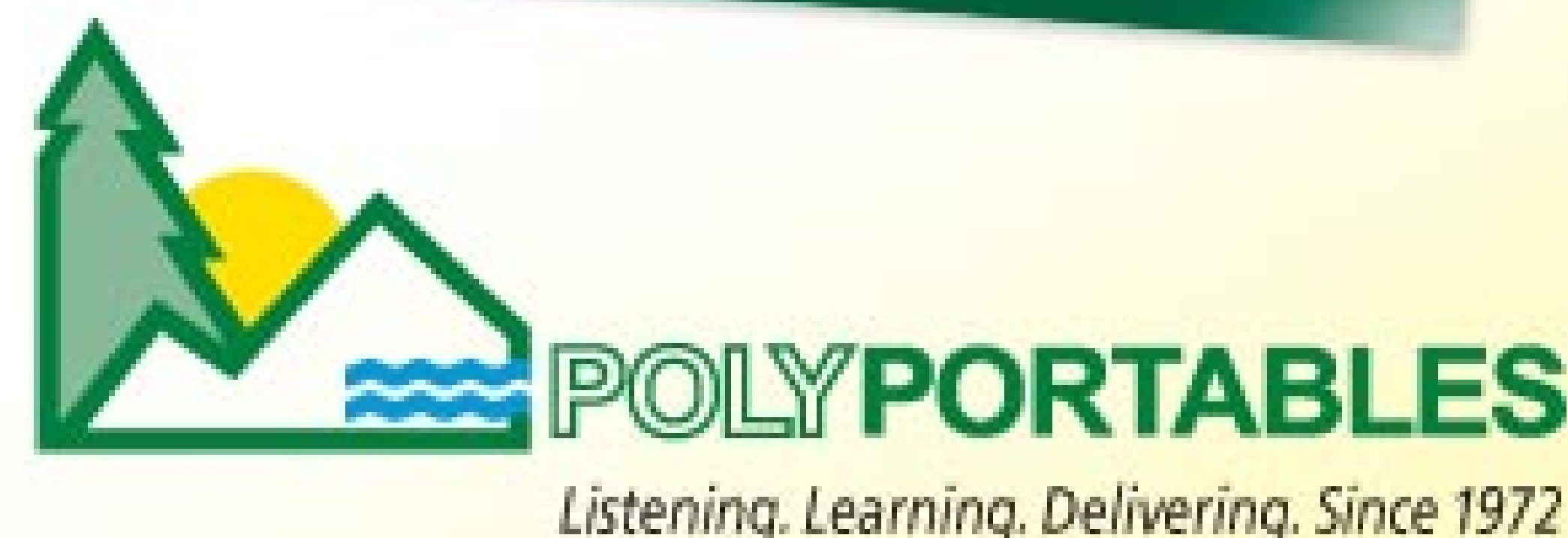
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# An Attitude of Success

**YOU MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO SIMPLY THINK YOURSELF RICH, BUT HAVING A LITTLE MORE CONFIDENCE IN YOUR BUSINESS WILL GIVE YOU A PUSH IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION**

*By Judy Kneiszel*

**R**ecently I talked to a portable sanitation and septic contractor who was kind of down on himself. His equipment was old, he said, but his business was too small to justify new equipment. And he couldn't afford a heated shop where he could do basic equipment maintenance himself in winter. It wasn't that he didn't have any work. He just never had time to do billing, making poor cash flow the main source of his problems. He said he found himself choosing to go out on \$150 jobs rather than staying in and sending out \$10,000 in billing. It almost seemed like he didn't believe he deserved to get paid.

On the other end of the spectrum, that same day I read an article in which the author claimed success was purely a matter of believing you deserve it. You have to have a mindset for prosperity, he said. People fly first class, wear designer clothing and buy expensive jewelry because they think they deserve it. His philosophy was, buy that Porsche coupe and your subconscious mind will create the drive in you to make affording it possible.

Both attitudes seem a bit extreme. One believes he can't afford and therefore doesn't deserve anything, the other says having it all is simply a matter of thinking you deserve it all.

The successful small business owners I've observed have an attitude somewhere between "poor me" and "I'm king of the world." After all, too many people believing they deserved more than they could afford was what caused many of our nation's recent economic woes, especially when it came to housing and credit cards.

These days, lenders are more likely to keep you from buying more equipment or anything else than is justified by your income. But that doesn't mean you have to operate junk held together with chewing gum and duct tape either. Here are some tips on achieving not "wild prosperity," but "respectable income growth," through an attitude of success.

## **Get paid.**

Make a date with yourself each week to send out billing. Or hire someone else to do it for you so that you are sure it gets done. Invest in bookkeeping software and learn how to use it. And/or get yourself a good accountant. You'd be surprised how much more fulfilling work can be if you get paid for it.

*If it's not a top-of-the-line brand new truck, maybe it's a few years old and no one can tell. Having the tools to do the job right will make you and your employees more confident and the job will be done right.*

## **Charge what you are worth.**

On a similar note, don't always strive to be the lowest bidder. Know what you have to charge to cover your costs and make a fair profit. And don't fall

into a bidding war where even if you win, you'll lose because you'll be essentially working for nothing. There will always be upstarts who come along and try to steal customers by undercutting your price. They won't be able to keep it up, so ride the storm out and courteously take those customers back when the new guy folds up the tent and leaves town or customers learn the hard way that you get what you pay for.

## **Buy the best you can afford.**

If it's not a top-of-the-line brand new truck, maybe it's a few years old and no one can tell. Having the tools to do the job right will make you and your employees more confident and the job *will* be done right.

## **Keep it clean.**

It doesn't cost much to keep your trucks, restrooms, uniforms and equipment clean and it will make you feel like your company has more value.

## **Put your name on it.**

Have an attitude of pride. If you have the best equipment you can afford and you're keeping it clean, claim it; be proud of it. Put your company name on it.

## **Dress the part.**

If your equipment looks great but you and your employees are wearing raggedy, dirty, mismatched clothes, this does not say "success" to customers.

## **Be courteous and confident.**

You've heard it since you learned to talk: say please and thank you. Adding "yes ma'am" and "yes sir" once in awhile doesn't hurt either, nor does the occasional, "Is there anything else we can do for you?" An attitude of courtesy is part of an attitude of success. This also means don't drive on someone's lawn without asking, arrive without arranging the time before hand or walk on anyone's carpets with dirty shoes. The golden rule is never out of date.

## **Become active in your community.**

By joining the Rotary Club, sponsoring a youth soccer team or spiffing up your truck for a parade you are showing the community that you are proud of your business. The result will be that you and your employees will stand a little taller, work a little harder and, yes, have an attitude of success.

## **A FINAL THOUGHT**

If you slowly make positive changes in how you run your business, you will look and feel more successful, and then I believe your subconscious just might lead you to greater prosperity. Think yourself rich? Maybe not. Become more successful by adopting a more professional attitude? Absolutely! ■



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# The EXPO EDGE!

COVER  
STORY

By Jim Kneiszel  
and Ed Wodalski

## PROS HEAD TO LOUISVILLE TO LEARN ABOUT THE LATEST PORTABLE SANITATION INDUSTRY INNOVATIONS

**P**ortable sanitation contractors interested in staying on top of their game gathered at the 30th annual Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo International Feb. 24-27 in Louisville, Ky. At Education Day seminars they learned about industry best practices and new service techniques, while the show floor at the massive

Kentucky Exposition Center displayed dynamic new products aimed at helping contractors build more profits for the 2010 busy season.

In all, 493 industry exhibitors showed their wares to 8,784 attendees from 3,921 companies. Here's a sampling of products displayed at the Expo for the first time:



### SANITIZER STAND

To answer growing concern over spreading illnesses, **T.S.F. Company Inc.** introduced the **Handy Hand Sanitizer** stand in a variety of eye-catching colors. Making its debut at the Expo, the sanitizer stand is a three-piece rotomolded unit that comes assembled with a top, base and stem. The sealed base with port allows for adding five gallons of water to improve stability and prevent tipovers in heavy winds. The unit carries any combination of two to four sanitizer units of the customer's choosing. Two sanitizer stands fit inside a standard restroom for convenient transportation. Color offerings include orange and pink for better visibility in a grouping of restrooms at special events. **800/843-9286; www.tuff-jon.com.**

### ADA-COMPLIANT RESTROOM UNIT

Italian restroom maker **Armal** introduced a prototype of a new handicap unit, the **HN**, which complies with the dimension requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The unit has two horizontal and two vertical metal grab handles integrated into the restroom walls for greater strength and stability. The large floor space allows for 360-degree wheelchair rotation and room for an attendant. The unit has an optional 26-gallon wash station that is easily added and removed. Additional features include a three-roll paper holder with built-in shelf, a lowered 53-gallon tank for disabled users and optional bicycle-style wheels that can be easily added to move the unit. The HN weighs 253 pounds and is 63 inches wide, 83 inches deep and 90 inches high. **770/491-6410; www.armal.biz.**



### SANITIZER STATION

#### **PolyPortables Inc.**

unveiled the **Sanitizer Station**, a stand-alone ADA-compliant sanitizer dispenser to accompany portable restrooms at construction sites and special events. The heavy-duty stand is made of gray extruded plastic panels that are bolted together, creating supply storage in the center post. A flip-top cover protects dispensers from the elements and allows access to the storage area. The unit weighs 44 pounds, has an 18- by 18-inch base and measures 53 inches tall. The unit comes with either gel or alcohol-based atomizing dispensers and refills, or can be purchased without dispensers. One of the four dispenser stations is at wheelchair height. The base of the unit can be tied down for added stability. **800/241-7951; www.polyportables.com.**



### HIGH RISE CONSTRUCTION UNIT

The convertible-top **HIGHRISE** unit from **Satellite Industries Inc.** is a versatile wheeled restroom aimed at commercial renovation or construction projects. The unit was designed to fit through standard doorways and for easy loading onto freight elevators in high-rise buildings. It can be purchased with or without the angled roof section. The roof section can be removed or folded down. The lift kit tilts down to fit through low doorways or in elevators. The sturdy single-wall unit is built with galvanized frame and floor to resist corrosion in challenging jobsite environments. It rolls on 6-inch locking wheels with sealed bearings to prevent wear from dust infiltration. The unit also has integrated grab handles to easily move it around the jobsite. The unit comes in Patriot blue. **800/328-3332; www.satelliteindustries.com.**







### COMPACT SANITIZER DISPENSER

**PolyJohn Enterprises Corp.** introduced a smaller companion to its SaniStand sanitizer station, the **Hand Sanitizer**. The unit uses back-to-back touch-free foaming dispensers or can be outfitted for use with sanitary wipe dispensers. Greater portability was a goal of the new sanitizer stand – several stands can be shipped inside one standard restroom unit. The top and bottom sections separate, and water or sand can be added to the base for greater stability. The unit also has a display area for advertising. **800/292-1305; www.polyjohn.com.**

### ADA RESTROOM TRAILER

**Rich Restrooms** introduced the **Model 715** restroom trailer, which meets ADA wheelchair-accessibility requirements. After transport to a job, the trailer is lowered to the ground, providing easy accessibility with a wheelchair ramp for one large restroom station, and two non-ADA restrooms. The trailer has a 345-gallon holding tank and a mechanical room for ramp storage. The trailer is part of the company's Everest line. The ADA station's stool, sink and floor plan are designed for the greatest accessibility. **260/593-2279; www.richrestrooms.com.**



### MACERATOR PUMP FOR ADA RESTROOM TRAILER

**Ameri-Can Engineering** updates its line of ADA-compliant restroom trailers with the **Sani-Lav** macerator pump. The sealed electric pump assembly with stainless steel blades conveys wastewater from a ground-hugging ADA section of restroom trailers into a central holding tank, eliminating the need for a small waste tank dedicated to the ADA unit. Black- and greywater are collected from the lowered unit. The 3/4-hp pump can move the effluent as far as 300 feet out and 30 feet up. The Sani-Lav pump also can be used to create ADA-compliant shower trailer units. **574/892-5151; www.ameri-can.com.**



### MOVABLE HITCH ADAPTER

**Williams Innovations** introduced the **TeleSwivel** hitch adapter. The swivel enables an individual to connect a truck and trailer in a single pass. The adapter features a target zone 25 times larger than a standard ball hitch. The coupler inserts into any 2-inch receiver. To use, the operator backs into position, swivels the hitch, connects and backs up to lock into place. The adapter is Class IV rated for up to 10,000 pounds gross trailer weight, 1,000-pound tongue weight and accepts any size ball. The BX model accepts a three-ball or pintel hitch, while the Pro adapter is rated at 14,000 pounds and comes with a 2 5/16- and 2-inch ball as well as pintel capability. It also features seven inches of drop for easier hookup. **919/794-5484; www.teleswivel.com.**



### HYDRAULIC TRAILER

The **LiftHaul** hydraulic trailer from **F.M. Manufacturing Inc.** takes the challenge out of loading and unloading restrooms, supplies and equipment. A touch of the switch lowers the rear of the trailer to serve as a drive-on ramp. If needed, the front can also be lowered for drive-on loading. The aluminum trailer has a towing capacity of 2,500 pounds. The steel model can haul 3,500 pounds. Currently available in single axle, a larger tandem axle model will soon be available. **877/889-2246; www.fmmfg.com.**



### NATURAL RESTROOM DEODORIZER

**EverGreen** portable restroom deodorizer from **J & J Chemical Co.** is non-toxic and 100 percent biodegradable. It uses no biocides, bacteria or enzymes while eliminating waste and foul odor when disposing at a dumpsite. Available in concentrate and super



concentrate formulas, the deodorizer is offered in quantities of one to 275 gallons, comes in 18 scents and can control odor for up to 14 days. **800/345-3303; www.jjchem.com.**



## JOBSITE TRAILER

Made for restroom attendants at remote special events and jobsite locations, the aerodynamic **Galileo Site Manager's Suite** RS21 towable RV from **JMS** (JAG Mobile Solutions) sleeps four, seats eight at two sofas and five at the expandable dining table with flip-down jump seat. The 21-foot model has an exterior width of 91 inches with an additional four inches for the entry door assist handle and an exterior height of 114 inches. The interior is 80



inches high in the main living area, bathroom and walk-in shower. The unit weighs between 4,500 and 4,980 pounds, depending on options. Features include 27-gallon waste and 35-gallon freshwater tank, six-gallon LP water heater, 13,500-Btu propane furnace with thermostat, 30-amp RV connection, 7.5-cubic-foot refrigerator with freezer, counter range, convection/microwave oven, day/night designer blinds, custom cabinetry and cork flooring. **888/709-1999; www.discoverthememories.com.**

## SOLAR RESTROOM LIGHT

A tiny solar panel in the top of the light recharges the battery that powers the **Firefly** restroom light from **Aglow Systems**. The motion-activated light lasts up to seven days on one charge. Multiple LED bulbs provide up to 80,000 hours of life. Waterproof for outdoor exposure, the light mounts to the ceiling of the restroom with 3M 4004 Permabond for maintenance-free operation.

**865/686-8811; www.aglowsystems.com.**



## RESTROOM AND SHOWER TRAILER

**Comforts of Home Services Inc.** displayed its 53-foot **combination shower and restroom trailer**. The unit features an ADA restroom with hydraulic lift that lowers



for easy access, men's restroom with toilet and seven urinals and 12 single restrooms, including two with showers. The trailer has a 1,400-gallon waste and 1,400-gallon freshwater tank, 20 kW generator, heating and air conditioning units, two LCD

TVs, hardwood flooring, hands-free faucets and low-volume, water-saving toilets. **877/382-2935; www.cohsi.com.**

## WET-WIPE DISPENSER

**Handago** introduced a self-contained **wet-wipe dispenser**. The free-standing station features two wipes dispensers, enclosed trash receptacle and storage. Made of weather-resistant polyethylene, the unit has a key lock to secure the door and lid. Two wheels at the front provide easy transport. The station has a 21-inch square base and stands 41 inches tall. It offers advertising panels at the back of the unit. The alcohol-free wet-wipe formula is safe for children's hands and faces. Made with aloe, Vitamin E and organic compounds, the formula is designed to replenish skin while killing 99.9 percent of germs. **888/408-4188; www.handagoinfo.com.**



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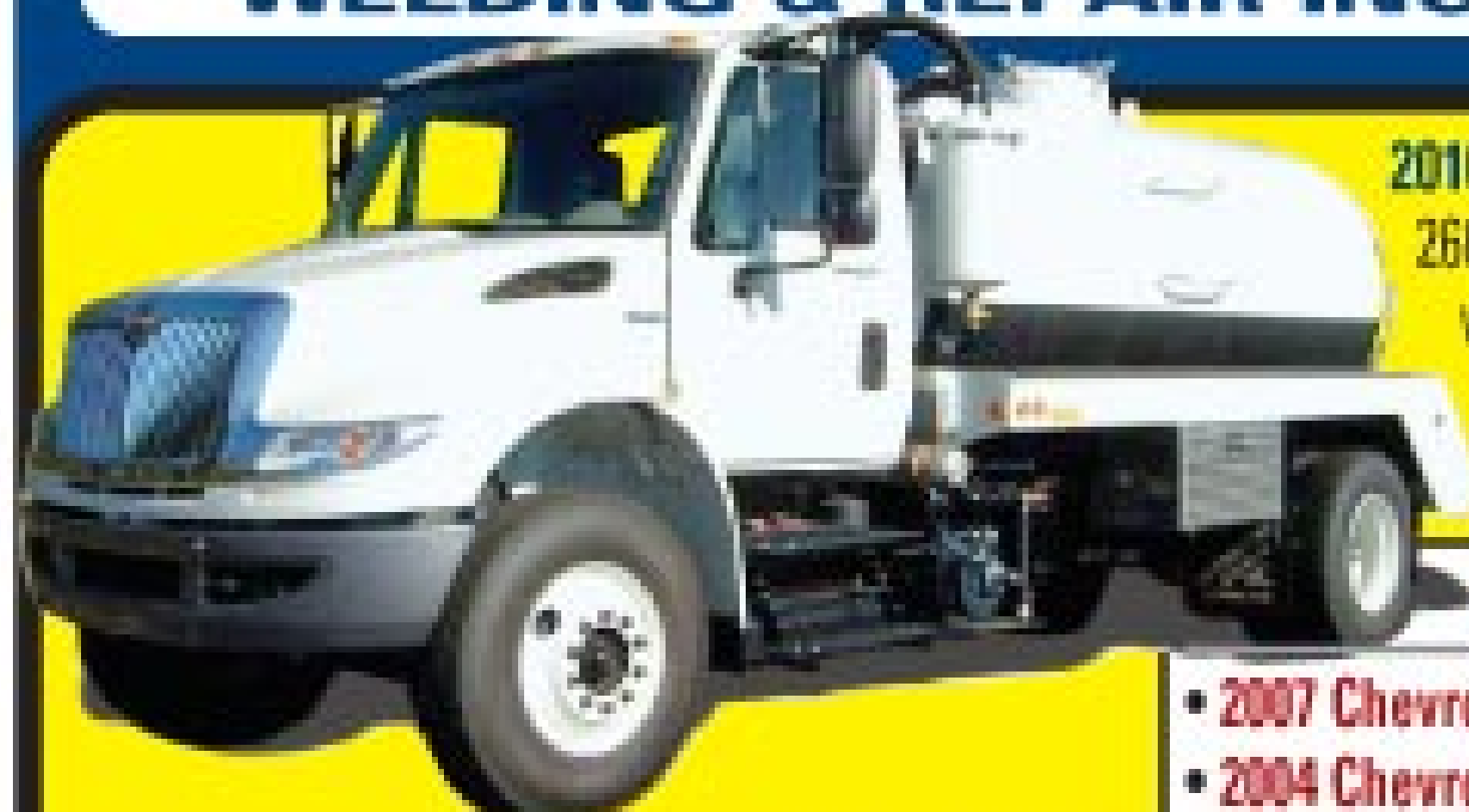


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Darian Cranford carries a hose as he and Jason Gibson refresh a row of TSF Inc. restrooms on location at a project for the television series *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*. (Photos by Mike Lane)

## It Came Out of NOWHERE

North Carolina's 64 Portables grew one complimentary restroom unit into an inventory of 400 and a thriving portable sanitation business

By Sharon Verbeten

### 64 Portables Lexington, N.C.

**Owner:** Jason Gibson

**Founded:** 2004 as 64 Septic Service; renamed 64 Portables in 2005

**Employees:** 2

**Service area:** 40-mile radius of Lexington

**Service:** Portable sanitation

**Web site:** [www.64portables.com](http://www.64portables.com)

NORTH CAROLINA

**F**ate struck Jason Gibson in the form of a portable restroom landing on his front lawn.

The lone restroom unit and a guardian angel in the liquid waste industry helped transform Gibson from a factory worker stuck in a rut into a budding entrepreneur with a growing portable sanitation business.

Today, Gibson, 30, operates a small company, 64 Portables, just outside Lexington, N.C., where he grew that one unit to 400, and is setting his sights on emerging grease trap waste processing technology and a "green industry" future.

#### AN UNEXPECTED DELIVERY

Seven years ago, Gibson was unfulfilled in his career working in a school bus factory. It was a good job, but he yearned to work for himself. Inspired by a friend who ran a septic service business, he bought a 1996 Ford F-800 vacuum rig and began moonlighting cleaning septic tanks. "If he can do it, I can do it," Gibson recalls thinking when he saw his friend's success. "I've always had a no-quit attitude."

After running 64 Septic Service (so named due to its location off Highway 64) part time for about a year, Gibson attended an industry licensing meeting where he met Earl Birchfield, a long-time septic service and portable sanitation company owner who became Gibson's biggest supporter.

Birchfield, who lives in Waynesville, N.C. — about 170 miles from Gibson — had been in the septic industry for 40 years and in the portable sanitation business for about nine. After only a brief introduction, Birchfield encouraged Gibson to consider the portable sanitation business. Under-capitalized and already quite busy with the septic service and his full-time job, Gibson was hesitant, but Birchfield believed in his potential.

"Just by talking to him, I could see he needed a little boost," says Birchfield, 70, now retired from both businesses. He says he just wanted to do whatever he could to help the fledgling entrepreneur enter the industry that had been so good to him. "He had a good personality, and he seemed like he could talk to people."

That boost came rather literally, however, when





Above, Darian Cranford prepares to service restrooms on location on the set of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*. At right, Jason Gibson powerwashes a service rig.

*"Dollar for dollar, I think grease is the way to go right now, versus septic. I think grease recycling will be the thing to be into in five years."*

Jason Gibson



not long after Gibson met Birchfield, a T.S.F. Company Inc. truck drove up to Gibson's home and a driver dropped a unit onto his front lawn.

"He said it was free to see if I would like to get into the portable sanitation business," Gibson says. Apparently Birchfield had convinced the restroom manufacturer that all Gibson needed was a bit more incentive.

Neither Gibson nor his wife, Amy, was pleased, however, with the unexpected delivery.

"I was just kind of pondering in my mind what I was going to do with this thing," Gibson recalls. "I was thinking this would be a good yard decoration. I didn't have any money (to start a business). We were doing some (septic) work, but it wasn't enough for me to quit my full-time job."

#### TOOLS FOR THE JOB

Gibson didn't have many business contacts to call about renting the first, or any subsequent portable restrooms. But fate works in mysterious ways, as Gibson soon learned. About two weeks after the free restroom arrived, a local builder knocked on his door inquiring about renting some units.

Bewildered, Gibson had no idea how much to charge the builder for restroom service. He finally settled on a rate similar to what the builder had been paying. But being com-

pletely green, Gibson had to call Birchfield — by now a trusted colleague — for advice on what deodorants to use. Armed with complimentary chemical supplies Birchfield had delivered — and an armload of Charmin from the grocery store — Gibson set about on what would soon become his new career.

"The day that I rented that, I got to thinking, 'There's something to this,'" Gibson says. Taking what he called "a leap of faith," Gibson ordered and paid cash for two additional units from T.S.F.

By 2005, Gibson jumped headfirst into the business — renaming the company 64 Portables Inc. and selling his septic service truck to help finance new T.S.F. units and a 2006 Ford F-550 portable sanitation rig with a

Best Enterprises stainless steel tank (a vehicle he has since replaced).

Just weeks after his initial capital outlay, Gibson says, "My phone was ringing off the hook. It was non-stop growth." Gibson steadily purchased units to meet growing demand, and by 2006 left his factory job to pursue the business full time. While his wife was a bit nervous with his decision at first, Gibson said he was poised to succeed in the business — a business he likely would never have considered if not for Birchfield. "I think the world of that man," Gibson admits.

Gibson now has 350 T.S.F. Company units, 50 PolyJohn Enterprises Corp. units and three ADA units from Synergy World (a division of Satellite Industries). His inventory also includes seven sinks, including five from PolyJohn Enterprises Corp. and two from T.S.F. Company; and eight holding tanks.

His fleet includes a 2004 GMC 7500 with a 1,500-gallon (1,100-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater) steel tank and Masport pump built by Abernethy Welding & Repair; a 1998 Dodge 3500 with 500-gallon (350-gallon waste/150-gallon freshwater) Imperial Industries aluminum tank and Jurop pump (Chandler Equipment Inc.); and a 2002 Dodge 2500 used for deliveries.



Cranford, (from left) Amy and Jason Gibson take a break from cleaning equipment in the 64 Portables yard.



# ABC's *Extreme Makeover* Offers Exposure

Jason Gibson knows a thing or two about the phrase "It's who you know." His connections not only got him started in the portable sanitation business, they also helped him land a highly visible role for his company, 64 Portables.

At his son's school about four years ago, Gibson met a woman whose husband was a local builder in need of a restroom supplier. At the time, Gibson — then very new to the business — only owned three units and they were all rented.

Seizing the chance to grow his business, Gibson purchased 10 additional units to supply the builder's demands. Flash forward to 2009, that same builder — Jason Hedrick of Hedrick Creative Builders in Lexington, N.C. — was selected as the contractor for an episode of ABC's reality show, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*.

Hedrick recalled the service Gibson provided and asked if he'd donate his services for the taping in November 2009. Gibson supplied 22 restrooms for the crew. The crew built a new house for a family whose mother had been diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer.

Gibson says employee Darian Cranford was a huge help in setting up, pumping and cleaning the units, as well as servicing several RVs on site, everyday during the one-week build.

64 Portables is mentioned on ABC's Web site and gained a bit more visibility in February when the episode aired, but Gibson says, "I didn't do that job to gain business. I've always tried to help the community. When I started out, people had to help me out. This community has put me where I'm at."



*Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* designer Paul DeMeo takes a minute out of a hectic construction project to visit with Jason Gibson.

## GROWTH THROUGH ACQUISITION

Gibson credits his incremental growth to several factors, including qualifying potential customers and pursuing acquisitions.

"I cherry-picked when I started the company," he says. "If I saw somebody building a house, I'd ask around. 'Who is this guy? How does he pay?' If they'd been around and paid well, I'd go after them."

He also acquired units and clients by buying out two of his competitors. Gibson first approached the competitors amicably, noting that he would be interested in their businesses if they ever considered selling down the road. The approach paid off.

While Gibson says 2009 was his most successful year financially, he believes that growth has stagnated in recent months. "I

haven't put on any new trucks, any new drivers. I feel at a standstill, even though the money's good."

Despite what might seem like a fortuitous beginning, 64 Portables hasn't been immune to a shifting economic climate. About 85 percent of the business is construction, which provided steady revenue until late 2007. Gibson usually has about 300 units rented, but, at that time, "I had two units sitting on the lot, and I was getting ready to order a lot; next thing you know, there are 100 (unrented) units."

The downturn in construction starts could have proved fatal for the small operator. Rather, Gibson credits the recession with saving his business.

"If the economy had not turned when it did, I would have filed bankruptcy," he says. "I was growing too fast. My cash flow was non-existent. I was going in the hole fast."

Gibson (left) and Cranford clean and replenish supplies at a bank of hand-wash stations.



**"I don't feel comfortable at all unless I'm growing. That's my comfort zone."**

Jason Gibson

The building bust allowed him to catch up on cash flow issues; it also enabled him to diversify his business plan.

"I just had to switch gears and look for other ways to make money," he says.

While he does service some special events — the biggest is a threshers' reunion that draws 25,000 attendees — Gibson is hopeful for an opportunity in a new, but related field — creating biofuel from recycled trap grease.

## GREASE: THE NEXT BEST THING?

For this next venture, Gibson is doing a bit more research to establish a solid groundwork — mainly because he believes the niche is wide open. Right now, he says, none of his competitors are pursuing this avenue.

"Dollar for dollar, I think grease is the way to go right now, versus septic. I think grease recycling will be the thing to be into in five years." With such a huge volume created on a daily basis, grease from restaurants and other businesses can either be a costly pollutant or a potential energy source. Gibson thinks "energy source" is the right and optimistic way to look at the disposal challenge.

"Now is the perfect time," Gibson believes, to recycle what is a nuisance into a valuable biofuel. "This nation is becoming a 'green'





Darian Cranford handles the hose while offloading portable restroom waste at a wastewater treatment plant.

Gibson found a company in another area of North Carolina already recycling trap grease and he's studying ways he can become involved in the processing end of the business. "I'm going to approach pumpers," he says. "I have no interest in pumping grease. I just want to recycle it."

Septic companies must pay to dispose of the grease, and local city ordinances require grease traps to be pumped monthly. In addition, "Most of the cities are requiring any convenience stores to have a grease trap." Gibson believes he'll be offering pumpers an attractive disposal option.

And while he doesn't feel he'll have trouble finding enough sources of grease, Gibson realizes finding end-users of the recycled biofuel may be more challenging — and that, along with the recycling process, is something Gibson is still researching.

nation. If I can figure out a way to use this grease, I'll be a step ahead. I believe that I have the contacts to make this a viable fuel. Grease does have a Btu value; it will throw off heat."

At the same time, he is seeking to purchase a local facility — ideally about 10,000 square feet — to run the operation. "I want to make it very accessible for the drivers," he says.

Gibson remains optimistic about finding that ideal location — he's planning on bidding on some available locations soon — and pursuing his goals of expansion. But whether it's through restroom company acquisitions or a new grease operation, Gibson believes growing his business is the key to his future success.

"I don't feel comfortable at all unless I'm growing," he says. "That's my comfort zone."

#### MORE INFO:

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## We're Here for the PROs!

Have you ever wondered how we generate story ideas for the pages of *PRO*<sup>TM</sup>? Portable sanitation contractors are our most important sources for the news and feature stories you see here every month.

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*.

### PRO FORUM CHATTER

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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# Can I Have an Upgrade?

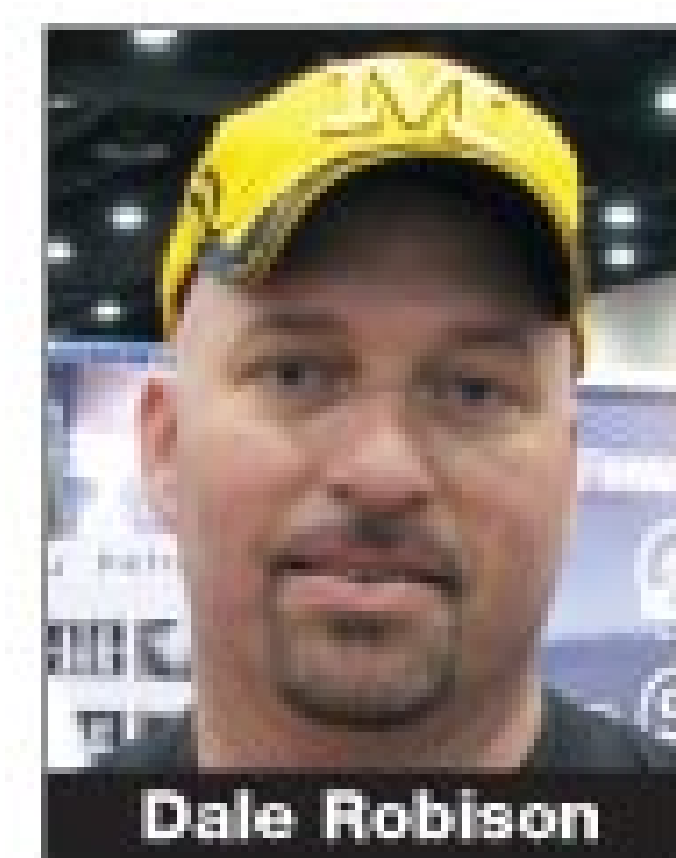
## PROS EXPLAIN THE MOST POPULAR PORTABLE RESTROOM AMENITIES SOUGHT BY THEIR CUSTOMERS

By Mary Shafer

As with all other facets of the portable restroom industry, the restrooms themselves have experienced technological innovations and upgrades in the past several years. Everything from tougher grades of plastic for the shell to the move from wooden skids to plastic has affected how PROs plan their equipment orders and perform their jobs. But from the customer's point of view, it's the evolution in outward appearance and amenities that has taken away much of the traditional stigma about using portable restrooms. And it's this evolution that has opened the floodgates to new business.

Standard units are now being dressed up with mirrors, shelves and flushable stools. ADA units are finding new uses with the installation of baby-changing stations that need a bit of extra room. Single portables are being enhanced with external companion units like hand-wash sinks and sanitizing stations. High-end units and the ultimate executive restroom trailers are building in popularity.

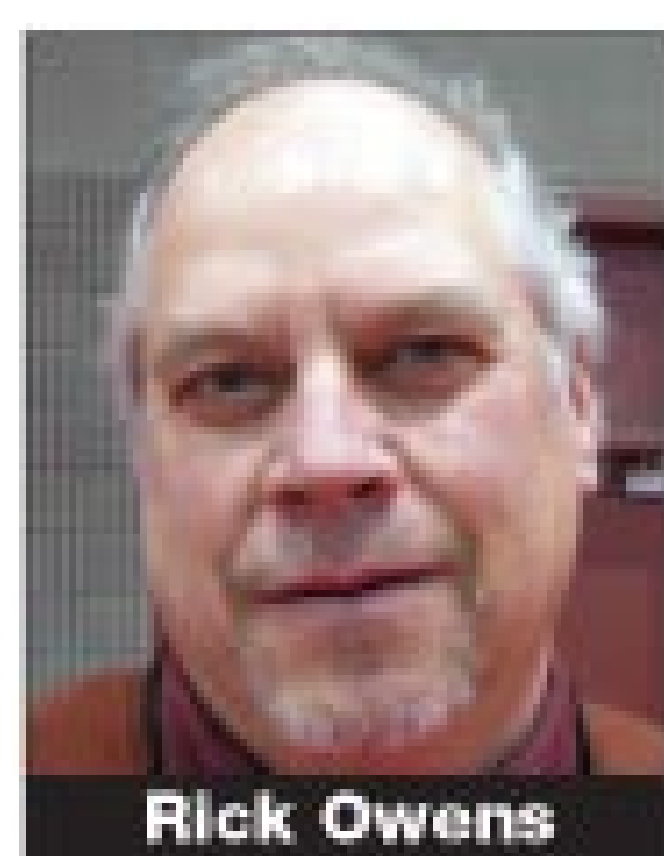
It's all good, because it's all driving greater usage. These PROs tell us which upgrade their customers are asking for most:



**Name: Dale Robison**  
**Company: R & R Sanitation**  
**Location: O'Fallon, Ill.**  
**Employees: 18**  
**Years in Business: 23**

Running water is the most common requested upgrade from standard portable restroom service noticed by Dale Robison in his St. Louis area rental business. "Sinks," he says, "or some way to wash your hands after you use the restroom" is the specific request he most often gets. He says event customers don't necessarily demand in-unit sinks, but are usually happy with hand-wash stations.

Asked where he thinks this demand originated, Robison says, "In the beginning, it was driven by health and safety departments. But I think they're educating the customers a lot more, so it's coming from the customers now. I'd say for at least the past 8-10 years I've noticed an increase" in this demand.



**Name: Rick Owens**  
**Company: A-1 Porto John Rentals Inc.**  
**Location: Cumberland Gap, Tenn.**  
**Employees: 4**  
**Years in Business: 9**

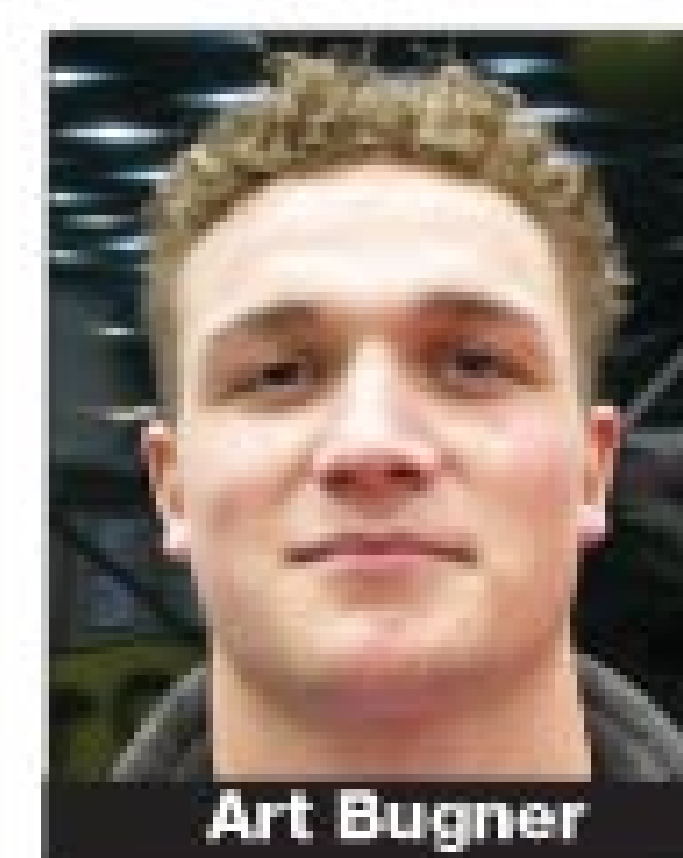
Hand sanitizers are what Rick Owens' customers ask for most as an upgrade, he says. But the demand didn't start with them. "Where we are, people hadn't necessarily known about them at all, but we introduced sanitizers and now they love them."

There's a big issue that comes with this add-on for A-1, though. "Where we live, there's a problem with theft. People take the bags of sanitizer out of the dispensers, and that gets expensive."

Where he lives is at the foot of the Cumberland Mountains inside Cumberland Gap National Historical Park. This "Gateway to the West," as it was known during the early days of this continent's exploration and settlement, attracts campers, bikers and others who decide it's easier and cheaper just to appropriate his sanitizer bags for the rest of their journeys, rather than go into town to buy their own.

He says that his construction customers are more concerned with frequent pump-outs and a clean unit, while the park expects more in the way of amenities.

*From the customer's point of view, it's the evolution in outward appearance and amenities that has taken away much of the traditional stigma about using portable restrooms. And it's this evolution that has opened the floodgates to new business.*



**Name: Art Bugner**  
**Company: Bugner's Sewer, Septic & Portable Restrooms**  
**Location: Fostoria, Ohio**  
**Employees: 6**  
**Years in Business: 32**

Service technician Art Bugner finds his event customers ask for both in-unit hand-wash sinks and sanitizer units, depending on the site. "Five years ago, we didn't have hand sanitizers, but now just about every unit has one."

His construction customers are partial to having heaters in their units in his northern location. Sitting on Lake Erie's south shore, Fostoria can often be vulnerable to cold north winds.

"The Tuff Jon 'Sky Heaters' ([tuff-jon.com](http://tuff-jon.com)) are what most of them ask for," he says, "but we also use the little ceramic box heaters that you just plug in. A lot of construction companies like those." ■

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# SUPER TROOPERS

**THE U.S. MILITARY CALLED ON OHIO'S SUPERIOR-SPEEDIE PORTABLE SERVICES FOR AN EMERGENCY MISSION AT THE G-20 SUMMIT**

*By Betty Dageforde*

## ON LOCATION

**THE JOB:** G-20 Summit

**LOCATION:** Pittsburgh, Pa.

**THE PRO:** Superior-Speedie Portable Services Inc.

Mat Wykoff loads a stake truck with restrooms bound for the site of the G-20 Summit in Pittsburgh. (Photos courtesy of Superior-Speedie Portable Services Inc.)



A semitrailer delivers JAG Mobile Solutions Inc. shower trailers to a location housing workers supporting the gathering of world leaders.

### THE TEAM

Partners Pat Flynn and Jeff Grubbs own Superior-Speedie Portable Services Inc. in Akron, Ohio. Grubbs' wife, Shelly, is the secretary-treasurer of the business. While Grubbs oversees an associated plumbing business, Flynn manages Superior's five route drivers, three pickup and delivery people, and one yard worker. Teresa Hammitt handles billing, routing and phones. The staff was spread thin during the week of the G-20 Summit, as they also provided services for the Yankee Peddler Festival arts and crafts fair, the Road Runner Akron Marathon and a local festival. But six members of the team worked on the G-20, including Flynn and Grubbs.

### COMPANY HISTORY

Six years ago, Grubbs decided to add a portable restroom division to his plumbing business. "There was not a portable sanitation company in Akron of any size, and he thought it would be a good fit," says Flynn. Grubbs called his company Superior Portables and added "Speedie" to the name when he purchased a business of that name four years ago. Flynn was in advertising at the time, and Grubbs brought him in to help with marketing. When the business grew to the point that Grubbs could no longer manage both entities, the two men formed a partnership, and Flynn took over management of the portable restroom business. The company currently has 1,400 units.





Superior-Speedie partner Pat Flynn hooks up some of the many propane tanks needed for the trailers set up to serve support staff for the G-20 Summit.

Their business took on a whole new dimension when the Ohio National Guard contacted them in 2008 asking if they had shower trailers. They didn't, but subleased some from JAG Mobile Solutions and eventually bought two.

#### MAKING CONNECTIONS

When the company started providing shower trailers and restrooms to the military, they became a certified government contractor. This opened the door for a number of military projects including the G-20 Summit, despite being located two hours

from the event. They were contacted by the Pennsylvania Air National Guard on behalf of the Army, which found them on the government registered site as a preferred contractor.

#### THE MAIN EVENT

On Sept. 24 and 25, 2009, hosted by President Obama, leaders from 20 countries representing 85 percent of the world's economy, attended the G-20 Summit in Pittsburgh, primarily to discuss global economic conditions. Pittsburgh was chosen as the host site to highlight successful efforts at pulling itself out of

an economic slump after it lost the steel industry. It also gave the city a chance to showcase environmental efforts, including the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, one of the largest LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environment Design) certified buildings in the world.

Security was provided by local police, the National Guard and the Coast Guard, all under the command of the Secret Service.

#### BY THE NUMBERS

National Guard troops who arrived for the Summit were housed in tents at five local armories. Superior-Speedie provided 54 gray Satellite Tufway portable restrooms for them, all with hand sanitizers. The PRO also brought in 10 shower trailers, including eight subleased from JAG, all 32 feet long with four showers and two sinks on each side.

#### LET'S ROLL

The company wasn't given much notice for the project. "The National Guard called us probably a week before the shower trailers were needed, saying they might be needing some shower trailers," says Flynn. They also said they didn't have funding, and no specifics were given as to how many were needed or when. On Thursday, Sept. 17, they got a call saying 10 trailers were needed by the next day. Thus began a quick scramble to supplement their inventory. They contacted JAG Mobile Solutions, which immediately sent eight trailers from its headquarters in Howe, Ind.



Jeff Grubbs (above) repairs a waste valve on a shower trailer that was broken during delivery. Below, Grubbs routes a water line to the plumbing in several trailers.



On Friday morning a Superior-Speedie team arrived in Pittsburgh with two shower trailers, as well as 34 portable restrooms, which were hauled by a 2008 Chevy 1-ton stake truck with a 16-unit trailer in tow, and a 2005 Chevy 1-ton stake with a 10-unit trailer in tow. Both of the trailers were from McKee Technologies Inc.

#### PUTTING OUT FIRES

Most of the shower trailers were hooked up to water and sewer lines, but in one location

***"They knew it was all last-minute, and they thanked us a thousand times for getting everything done. (The troops) were coming up to Mat telling him what a good job he was doing, and they appreciated it. You'd think they'd have bigger things on their mind."***

Pat Flynn



The David L. Lawrence Convention Center, one of the largest LEED-certified buildings in the world, hosted world leaders at the G-20 Summit. (Photo courtesy of VisitPittsburgh)



Superior learned they'd be hooking up to a fire hydrant, which required locating a plumbing supply house for the proper fittings. In addition, they had to make minor repairs to one of the trailers, get eight 40-pound propane tanks filled, and find a local treatment facility that would take the wastewater. The crew worked late into the night, got a hotel room, and finished up the next day.

On Monday, the Army

requested one of the shower trailers be moved to a downtown armory, then called on Wednesday saying the armory plumbing went out and 16 portable restrooms were needed immediately. By that time, the Summit was in full swing. Roads were closed, demonstrators were out and security was everywhere. "Bill (Kellar, a Superior-Speedie driver) got lost in downtown Pittsburgh," says Flynn. "He ran into a road where protesters were



A stake truck and trailer (above) are loaded with restrooms going to the G-20 Summit. Numerous JAG Mobile Solutions trailers (below) are set up to serve soldiers stationed at an armory in Pittsburgh.



## ABOVE AND BEYOND

Superior-Speedie Portable Services Inc. in Akron, Ohio, received a lot of thanks from the Pennsylvania Air National Guard for its outstanding job on the G-20 Summit, meeting nearly impossible on-the-fly deadlines. But vendor appreciation was taken to new heights when the contracting officer called Superior co-owner Pat Flynn to see if they'd be interested in going on a ride with the 171st Refueling Wing, a unit of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard responsible for refueling military aircraft while in flight.

The Refueling Wing is located adjacent to Pittsburgh International Airport and conducts training missions in the area. The contracting officer is housed in the same location and knew they occasionally offered "Employer Flights" for deserving companies.

Flynn didn't hesitate in his response. "Are you kidding?" he said. "That's incredible. I can't wait."

coming down one side and police were coming up behind him on the other side. He said he literally felt like he was in the middle of a war."

### KEEPIN' IT CLEAN

Units and showers were serviced every day, Monday through Saturday. The company kept its service vehicle — a 2006 International built by Abernethy Welding & Repair Inc. with a 1,100-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater steel tank and a Masport Inc. pump — at one of the armories. Technician Mat Wykoff alternated between driving in everyday and staying over at a hotel.

The company was given an assist by the Army, which provided a cleaning detail for the showers.

### WITH FLYING COLORS

Superior-Speedie workers pulled everything out the Monday after the Summit and breathed a sigh of relief. "It was hectic and stressful, but once you

get it done, you say, 'I just cannot believe we did that,' " says Flynn.

The contracting officer sent an e-mail praising Superior's service and professionalism. "They knew it was all last-minute, and they thanked us a thousand times for getting everything done," Flynn says. Even the troops expressed their appreciation. "They were coming up to Mat telling him what a good job he was doing, and they appreciated it. You'd think they'd have bigger things on their mind." ■

### MORE INFO:

**Abernethy Welding & Repair Inc.**  
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**JAG Mobile Solutions Inc.**  
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## INDUSTRY NEWS

### Earth Friendly Adds Sales Managers

Andy Gosner and Rick Hayes have joined Earth Friendly Chemicals as regional sales managers. Gosner will manage the East Coast region and Hayes will manage the Midwest.



Andy Gosner



Rick Hayes

### Complete Group to Distribute Five Peaks Products

The Complete Group, Perth, Australia, has secured international distribution rights for Five Peaks Technology products. The new distribution company will be called Five Peaks International. A portable restroom rental and services company, Complete Group has been a primary distributor of Five Peaks products in Australia and New Zealand for six years. ■



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The informative Web site is just another example of how **PRO™** is aiming to better serve you, the portable sanitation professional. Here's a few features you'll find when you visit the online home for the PRO:

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- A free subscription form for **PRO**, as well as a link to sign up for **PRO Discussion**, an e-mail forum for portable sanitation professionals.
- Comprehensive classified advertising from the pages of **PRO**, as well as contact information for all advertisers.
- Links to Web sites for other COLE publications.

## 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 Kneiszel

**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.

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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. ■



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## ANSWERS:

It might make it easier on the driver, removing it from the route one week, adding it the next, wait a minute, I cleaned it last week, right? Cleaning the unit every week keeps it sanitary.



If the customer wants to reduce cleanings to save money, he is either a cheapskate, doesn't respect what you do or is in financial trouble (will saving \$20 a month keep them in business?). Cutting your service or your price is a slippery slope. Your customer is dictating what your service is and what it's worth, and you should expect damage to the unit or a call requesting additional service because it's dirty.



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*If the customer wants to reduce cleanings to save money, he is either a cheapskate, doesn't respect what you do or is in financial trouble ... Cutting your service or your price is a slippery slope.*

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## Any Advice for Cleaning a Stainless Steel Tank?

## QUESTION:

What do you do to clean the stainless tank? I just bought a used stainless slide-in unit and it needs cleaning. I've tried some of the "green" cleaners with no luck so far. I am setting up for marine pump-outs, so that's why I have the stainless. The other issue is I have no idea what I'm getting into. I am setting up a small tug-boat for the job, but I still don't know what to charge, how much time to invest in a week, all the things that seem to be important. So right now I'm focusing on cleaning up the equipment.

## ANSWERS:

I don't polish the tank, if that's what you are asking. I just wash it with regular car wash soap. Years ago, I found some stuff called Alumachrome at a truckstop that cleaned aluminum really well. It may work for stainless. Good luck in your pumping venture. Keep us posted how it goes.



Clean it with bulk tank acid — it's what dairy farmers use to clean bulk tank and pipe lines, or ask a semi-truck driver who hauls tankers.

## COME JOIN US ONLINE

The PRO Online Discussion Forum is found at [www.promonthly.com](http://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 Discussion Forum 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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PRO welcomes letters from readers responding to articles we publish or offering comments and opinions of interest to the industry. You can submit your letter by:

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**FAX: 715/546-3786 ■ E-MAIL: [editor@promonthly.com](mailto:editor@promonthly.com)**

All letters must be signed. Please limit your letter to 500 words or less. We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and clarity.





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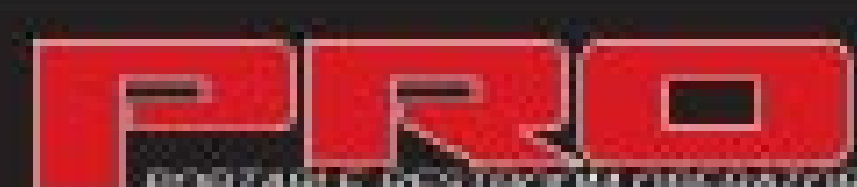
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## BUSINESSES

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**Looking to sell your business?** We can effectively market your business to more than 60,000 potential buyers in the liquid waste, portable sanitation, and sewer & drain industries, as well as your local markets, the Internet and other venues. No upfront fees — you don't pay unless your business sells. To learn more about brokering your business through B2 Business Brokers powered by PRO, call 800-257-7222. (TBM)



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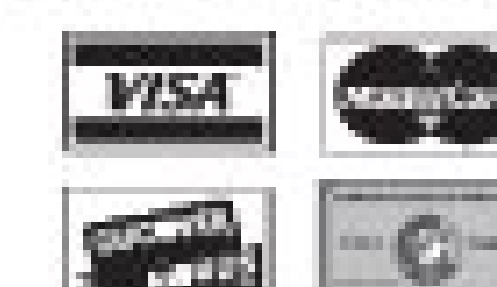
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## BUSINESSES

**Looking to buy a business** in the liquid waste, portable sanitation, or sewer & drain industries? Call B2 Business Brokers powered by PRO at 800-257-7222 and we can add you to our VIP buyer list. No obligation, no fees, no pressure. (TBM)

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



# Your Vac's a Switch Hitter

**WHEN YOU NEED TO EVACUATE A VACUUM TANK IN A HURRY,  
REMEMBER THE PRESSURE CREATED BY YOUR TRUCK'S PUMP WORKS BOTH WAYS**

## QUESTION:

I bought a truck recently and it has a good-sized pump with a four-way valve. I have always relied on gravity to off-load waste at the dump station. People tell me that if I use the four-way valve to unload my tank, I could get it done much quicker and be back on the road. Is this true? And if it is, what do I need to do to make it work?

Nick Scznik  
St. Louis, Mo.

## ANSWER:

Just as your pump builds vacuum, it can also build pressure. By cranking your four-way valve handle 180 degrees and starting the pump, the tank will begin to build pressure. The "in" port is now the "out" port, and the "out" port is now the "in" port. This is what creates the pressure. By pressurizing the tank while off-loading, dumping can be done much quicker.

But there is a catch. Care and safety must be taken when building pressure and opening the dump valve. Just as vacuum is a great force for filling the tank, pressure will push out the contents of the tank incredibly fast. Stand to the side and don't get in the way.

**CARE AND SAFETY MUST BE TAKEN WHEN BUILDING PRESSURE AND OPENING THE DUMP VALVE. JUST AS VACUUM IS A GREAT FORCE FOR FILLING THE TANK, PRESSURE WILL PUSH OUT THE CONTENTS OF THE TANK INCREDIBLY FAST. STAND TO THE SIDE AND DON'T GET IN THE WAY.**

And one other point of information: You can shift the pump from vacuum to pressure while the pump is running. But don't make the

shift all at once. First, shift the four-way valve lever to neutral (a 90-degree turn of the handle) and wait until the existing vacuum bleeds off. This might take a few minutes. Take a look at your vacuum/pressure gauge and make sure that the vacuum returns to 0. Then shift the lever to the pressure position (another 90 degrees). This pressure should immediately begin to register on the gauge.

This process, done correctly, will save you time and get you back to pumping more quickly than waiting for gravity to work its magic. And in this competitive environment and challenging economy, every little bit of time-saving helps raise your business's bottom line.

## QUESTION:

I know it's been discussed in your column before, but I still don't understand why it takes longer to evacuate my tank in the mountains than it does for people who are lower in elevation. It just baffles me that this thin air would take longer to evacuate a tank than normal air.

Ron Williams  
Denver, Colo.

## ANSWER:

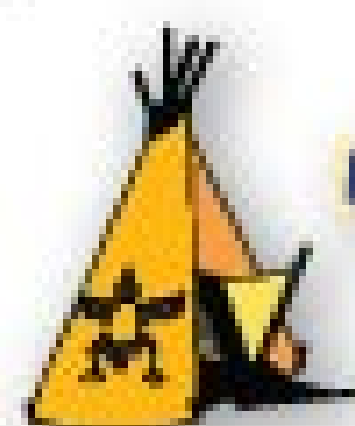
You're exactly right. It's about the "thin" air. Since there is less air, one has to wonder why it would take longer to vacuum it out of the tank. For lack of a better word, we'll call it "differential." At lower elevations, when a technician evacuates the tank, there is a large "differential" between the inner tank and the outer air because there are more molecules.

At higher elevations like yours, the air inside the tank and the air around you is "thin." In order to create that differential, the pump has to work longer to build the vacuum.

To give a couple of examples, at 5,000 feet elevation, the maximum vacuum you're going to generate is 23.06 inches Hg, or about 23 percent less than at sea level. Jump up to 10,000 feet in elevation and your maximum vacuum is 20.58 inches Hg, or about 31 percent less than at sea level.

The key to remembering how this works is how much differential is being created when the vacuum pump is on. The higher the elevation, the more difficult it is to create this differential. You still get a pretty strong vacuum and your pump works longer and harder, but it is not going to be the same as sea level.

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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