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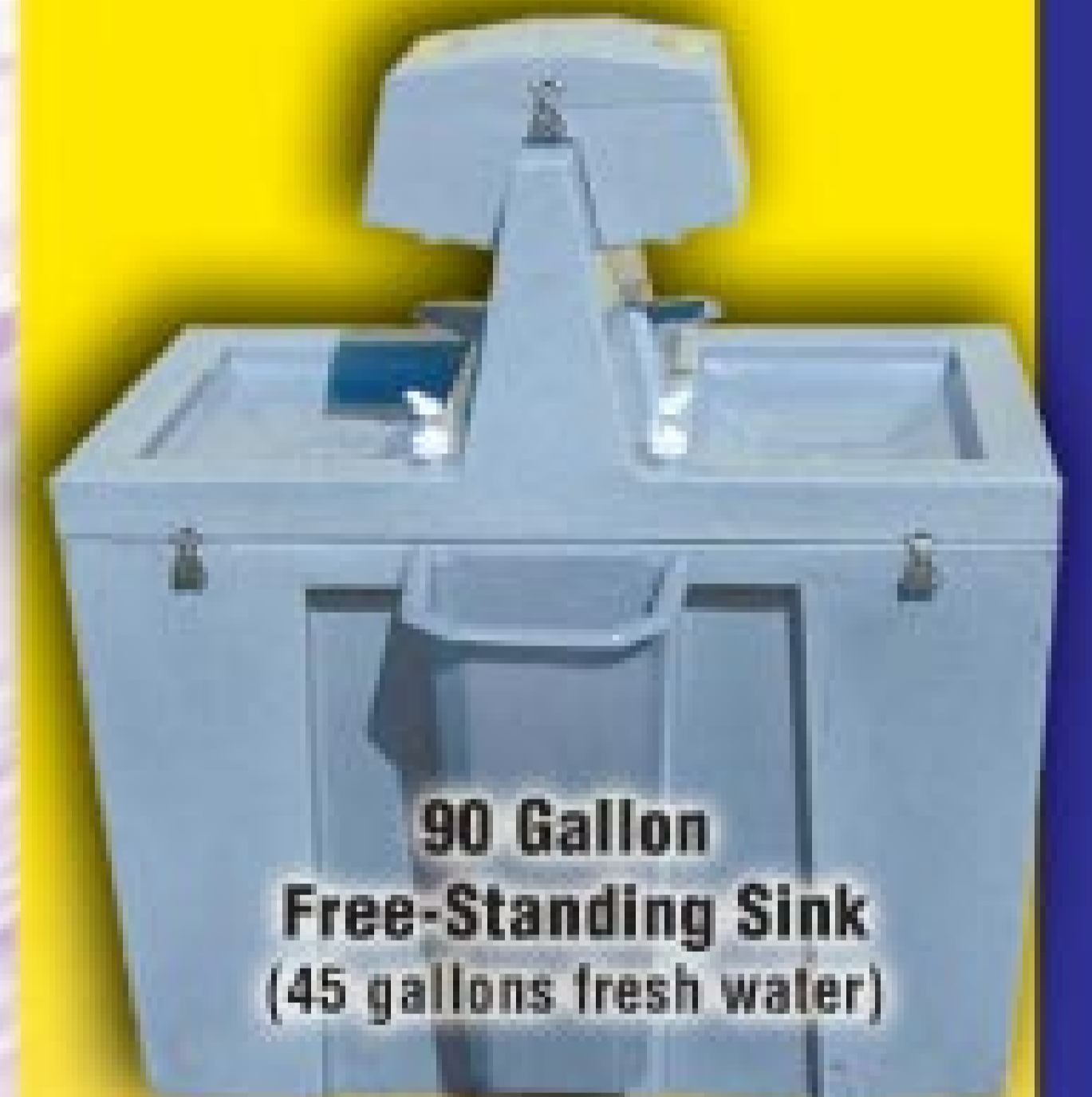
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On the cover: Diana Trzebiatowski fills soap dispensers at the Midwest Renewable Energy Association Energy Fair. (Photo by Jim Kneiszel)

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Expect Restroom Upgrades

JUST LIKE THE AUTO INDUSTRY ADVANCED BEYOND OPTIONAL SEAT BELTS AND AM RADIOS, STANDARD PORTABLE RESTROOMS ARE GETTING MORE SOPHISTICATED ALL THE TIME

By Jim Kneiszel

What's the definition of a standard restroom? As the portable sanitation industry matures and customer expectations change, this isn't quite the simple question it was in the past. You might say a basic unit is a single-wall, no-frills restroom with a wooden skid, the type you expect to find on a home construction site.

But starting with a plastic or fiberglass cube and holding tank, your customers might be adding some refinements and options to the units they want you to drop in a construction zone or summer special event like a county fair.

In this issue we explore manufacturers' offerings in the entry-level category with our annual Standard Restroom Roundup, "Locked & Loaded." We include restroom choices from seven manufacturers — most of them shown on the exhibit floor of the Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo International earlier this year. While these units are the economical choice, they can be ordered with a host of comfort and convenience features to elevate them to special event status.

Answering a demand for better hygienic choices, each restroom maker has added optional sinks to the basic models. Holding tanks are bigger, ergonomics and cleanability are improved, and hooks for coats and shelf space to safely hold personal items are more abundant. Perhaps your customers — even the construction clientele — are more interested in providing facilities that are as close to the home experience as possible.

I compare the quality changes in standard restrooms with growing sophistication of the auto industry. I go back far enough to remember when seat belts and AM radios were optional equipment at the local Chevy dealership. Back then we couldn't have envisioned a time when air conditioning, airbags and voice-activated controls would be standard issues on many vehicles.

That makes me wonder what's on the horizon for basic portable restrooms. Will they all have flush mechanisms? How about solar lighting, electronic tracking devices, climate control? Though they've improved dramatically over the past few decades, I'm sure there's great

innovation in store to take restrooms further away from their genesis as plywood boxes and metal drum drop tanks.

And what's most exciting is that PROs and their customers will drive these improvements. In a big way, it's up to you to convey your customers' needs to the manufacturers, so, in turn, the industry offers products that are perceived as more critical to the general public.

VISIT THE ENERGY FAIR

In our *On Location* feature this month, "The Power to Please," I introduce you to PROs Ed and Diana Trzebiatowski of Trebco Services in Amherst, Wis. I caught up with this can-do couple as they provided portable sanitation services for the 20th Annual Midwest Renewable Energy Association Fair, billed as the biggest alternative energy event in the U.S.

The Trzebiatowskis place and maintain about 80 restrooms and 14 hand-wash and sanitizing stations on the large rural grounds in Custer, Wis., every June. For the small company with a shade over 200 restrooms, this is their biggest event of the season and they scramble a small workforce to keep the restrooms clean and fresh.

They're happy to serve the event that puts this rural central Wisconsin community on the national stage. And if you're interested in new technologies of green building, energy efficiency or ending U.S. reliance on foreign sources of energy, you might want to make the trip to this year's fair, set for June 18-20.

For those of you looking to reduce your energy consumption — whether at home or in your portable sanitation business — the Energy Fair has a lot of good information to offer. Some 275 exhibitors and 200 workshops teach attendees everything from how to provide better insulation for homes to how to build a wind generator to ways to convert vehicles to be powered by electricity or fryer oil. Presenters explain how to construct sustainable buildings made of everything from straw bales to old tires.

While some of the topics explored at the Energy Fair were once the domain of a more fringe alternative energy crowd, green construction techniques are now frequently employed by traditional builders. And that's where concepts like super insulation, geothermal heating and cooling and solar power could potentially help PROs lower their operating costs, if not now, then at some point in the future.

If you live in a northern climate, imagine being able to cut your warehouse utility costs by half through a newfound energy efficiency program. That would allow you to raise your bottom line without rais-

Though they've improved dramatically over the past few decades, I'm sure there's great innovation in store to take restrooms further away from their genesis as plywood boxes enclosing metal drum drop tanks.

ing prices or renting more units.

To learn more about the Energy Fair, call 715/592-6595 or go to www.the-mrea.org.

CARDBOARD RESTROOMS

In my March column, I included a photo of an obscure prototype restroom going back to the 1980s and asked readers to identify the material used to make the unit. Contractor Craig Mendenhall of American Sani-Can in Portland, Ore., was quick to provide the correct answer and some background on this peculiar product.

The prototype, from early fiberglass restroom manufacturer and portable sanitation contractor Harvey Heather, was constructed of cardboard.

As I wrote in my column, Heather's fiberglass USANCO restrooms were a major advance for a fledgling industry more than 30 years ago, and some of them are still



Restroom maker Harvey Heather's failed cardboard restroom.

found on construction sites today. But his cardboard units didn't share the same success story.

"These units could knock down flat and in theory you could stack or nest hundreds or thousands of units on a flatbed trailer. In a short time, at a festival event, pop them up together and be ready for service," Mendenhall, who at one time worked for Heather, explained in an e-mail.

The restrooms were made of corrugated material, for added strength, and had a waxy outer coating to resist stains and promote longevity for an admittedly temporary restroom solution. Thanks go out to Mendenhall for his response. If you have any interesting historical photos to share with the rest of the portable sanitation industry, please send them to me at editor@promonthly.com. ■

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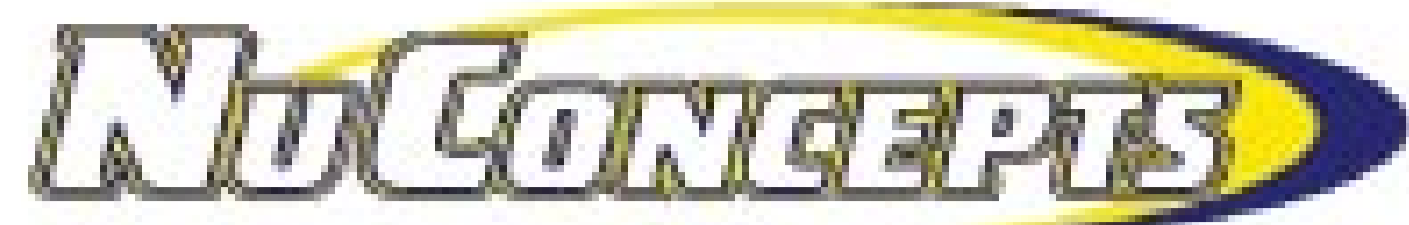
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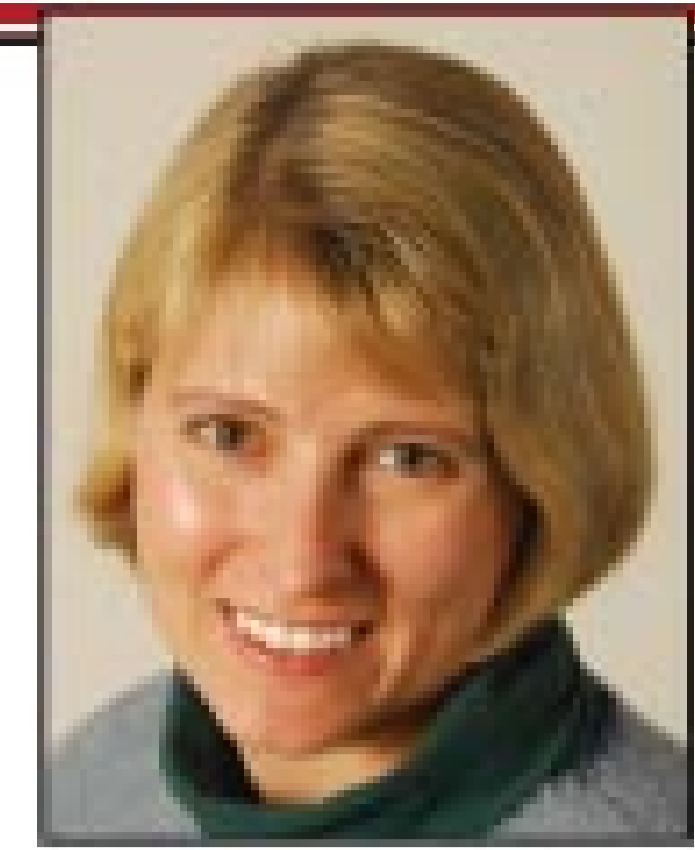
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Writer Judy Kneiszel has operated her own small business for a decade and is familiar with the many rewards and challenges of business ownership. Write to her with questions, comments or topic suggestions at thewordhouse@ameritech.net.



Join the Club?

IF YOU ARE NOT ALREADY A MEMBER OF THE LOCAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, YOU HAVE PROBABLY BEEN APPROACHED BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE GROUP — OR WILL BE SOON. IS JOINING WORTH IT FOR YOUR COMPANY?

By Judy Kneiszel

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce reports that it is the world's largest business federation, representing more than 3 million businesses. Maybe your portable restroom company is one of them, or maybe you are thinking of joining your local chamber organization. Joining shouldn't be a given for a small business, however. It is not a requirement for doing business anywhere and a smart businessperson looks at it the same as any other marketing expense and weighs its value.

WHAT IS A CHAMBER?

A local chamber of commerce will have members from a wide variety of businesses all from a specific geographic area — sometimes a city, sometimes an entire county or multi-county area depending on population density. Typically, most local chambers are affiliated with state and national organizations.

Chambers organize social and business events throughout the year where members can develop relationships with each other. Many host educational events for members and an annual business expo.

WHAT DO YOU GET?

When you join, you become both the chamber's customer and its representative. You pay an annual membership fee, which varies by chamber and can depend on the size of your business. For that fee you will generally receive a nice plaque to hang in the office stating that you are a member, and a standing invitation to all chamber events for a year. Some of these events will be free to members and some will cost extra.

The most important benefit to many businesses is that they are both listed in, and receive access to, a directory of chamber members.

Membership will also cause your e-mail inbox and postal mailbox to be a bit fuller. You'll start receiving whatever publications the chamber produces — a chapter newsletter, local business magazine and/or promotional materials for chapter events.

Some chambers offer other benefits as well, including discounts on

products and services from specific providers through group purchasing agreements they have with the chamber. All chamber members might get a 10 percent discount at a local office supply store, for example. And some organizations offer group insurance opportunities to members.

Free publicity for awards your business receives or other developments you alert the chamber to can be another benefit. For example, some chambers will send their "ambassadors" to do a ribbon cutting if a member opens a new location and will then publish photos from the event in chamber publications and send them to local media outlets.

In addition to the opportunities to learn and network, you also will be invited to give back to the community through chamber involvement. Serving in a leadership role in the chamber can be a benefit to your company because it can raise visibility and credibility in the community.

HOW TO DECIDE

To check out your local chamber of commerce, pay a visit to its headquarters and ask for membership information. You will probably get a heavy sales pitch, a heap of reading materials and a tour of the offices. You can usually attend a few events as a non-member to get a feel for what it's like. Also, ask for the names of members you can talk to about their experiences. Remember, in some respects they view you as a potential "sale," so take your time and don't feel pressured.

If your business covers a wide geographic territory, you might have a couple of local chambers to consider. Some businesses see a benefit to joining more than one; others join the one located where they most want to build their business or the one that simply seems to be more active or a better fit for them.

POSSIBLE DOWNSIDES

There are some other things to consider when joining a chamber. First, don't just pay your membership fee and then expect to have the entire membership lining up to do business with you. You've got to put in some time attending events and networking. Joining just gets your foot in the door. Chambers exist to stimulate and support the entire business community in the area, not to supply members with leads or business. You've got to do the actual networking yourself, and that can eat up a lot of time.

Also, be aware that a chamber is a lobbying organization with the goal of persuading lawmakers on a local, state and national level to do what's best for business. Their philosophy is not strictly Republican or Democrat, but "pro business." So, what the chamber believes is good for

While it can be advantageous to be listed in the membership directory, it also opens you up to a flood of solicitations, both by phone and e-mail. Not only do you see the entire chamber membership as potential customers; that's how they see you as well.

business might not jive with your political philosophy. You may not always agree with a stand they take or a candidate they endorse. So if you're the type of person who can't tolerate being a card-carrying member of an organization that takes an official stand opposite of yours, membership may not be for you.

Another consideration is that while it can be advantageous to be listed in the membership directory, it also opens you up to a flood of solicitations, both by phone and e-mail. Not only do you see the entire chamber membership as potential customers; that's how they see you as well.

MORE OPTIONS

If you think your business could benefit from more local networking, joining a chamber of commerce is one of many options. Next month I'll explore the pros and cons of other small business networking group opportunities. In the meantime, let me know how membership in local groups has benefited your business, and what organizations weren't worth your time and money. ■

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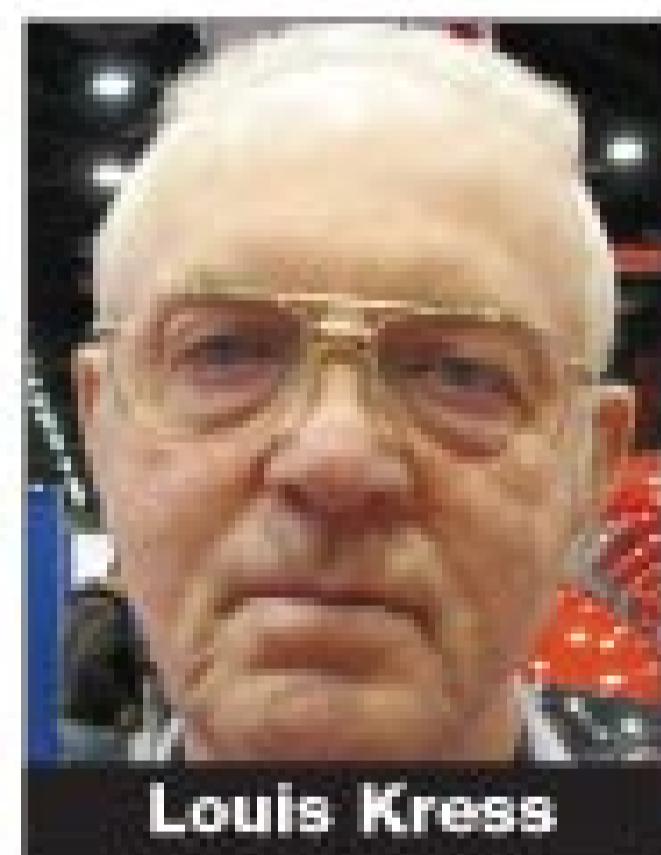
Riding the Rate Roller Coaster

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

By Mary Shafer

Volatile fuel costs and uncertain economic times over the past few years have translated into a roller coaster of price changes for many companies. Nowhere has this been felt more strongly than in businesses that depend heavily on transportation.

Adjustments are made as fuel prices abruptly spike, then — more slowly, of course — settle back down. Job losses and layoffs force would-be customers to severely tighten their belts. And unwelcome low-ball competitors arrive in a market. These PROs tell us how their rental rates have reflected what they're going through.



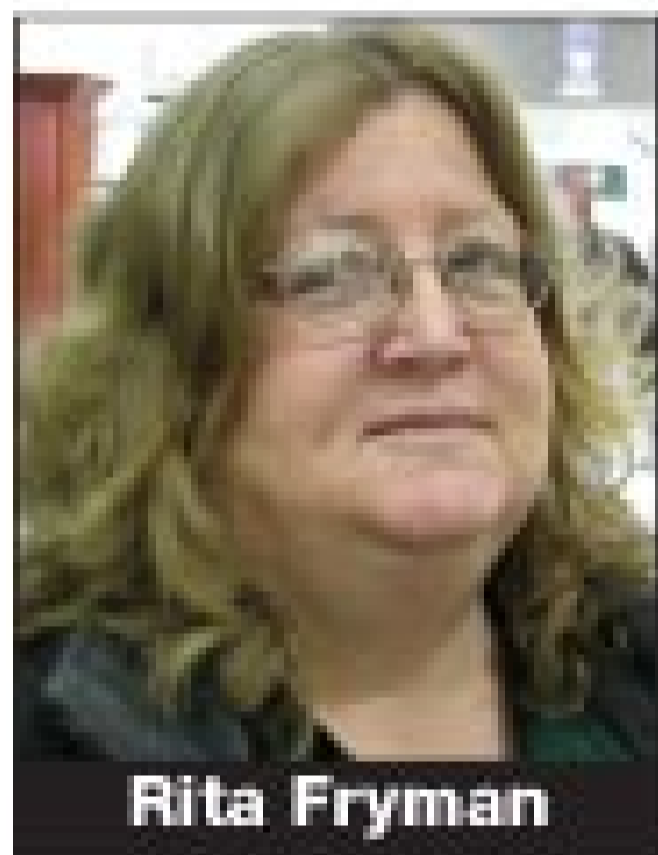
Name: Louis Kress
Company: Sweet Pea Potties Inc.
Location: Grampian, Pa.
Employees: 4
Years in Business: 10

Two years ago, Sweet Pea Potties Inc. raised its prices \$10 for a single unit rental fee, says manager Louis Kress. The increase was directly related to covering fuel costs. Fuel is the major concern for the company, which fields 250 units and three vacuum service trucks. Located in the heart of the Allegheny Mountains, Sweet Pea's trucks rarely see optimum mileage per gallon, since they often drive on steep mountain roads that eat up fuel. Drivers also put on at least 50 miles for a disposal trip to a public treatment plant.

About a year ago, the company dropped its rental fee by \$5, as fuel itself showed a sustained drop in price. Kress says that even in the current recession, customers haven't asked for any further drop, which is a good thing, because even if they did, none would be forthcoming. "There's so many other things going up on us anyway — chemicals and everything — that right now we can't afford to go back down."



Names: Eugene and Rita Fryman
Company: A-1 S & E Septic Service
Location: Burlington, Ky.
Employees: 2
Years in Business: 37



"The reason our prices go up and down is that we have so much competition," says Eugene Fryman, co-owner of A-1 S & E Septic Service. "The slower (competitors) get, the cheaper their price gets." Burlington is located in Boone County, Ky., the small lobe that extends between Indiana and Ohio. With a population of about 14,000, it supports many portable restroom operators.

"My prices haven't dropped," he says, "but the competitions' have. For instance, their septic pumping prices went down (30 percent). It's lowering the value of the market, but the worst thing is the feedback we get from the sewage treatment plant. Our costs to dump keep going up, but these competitors continue to pump for cheap."

Adds Rita Fryman, Eugene Fryman's wife and business partner: "And how long can you stay in business if you're not making any money?"

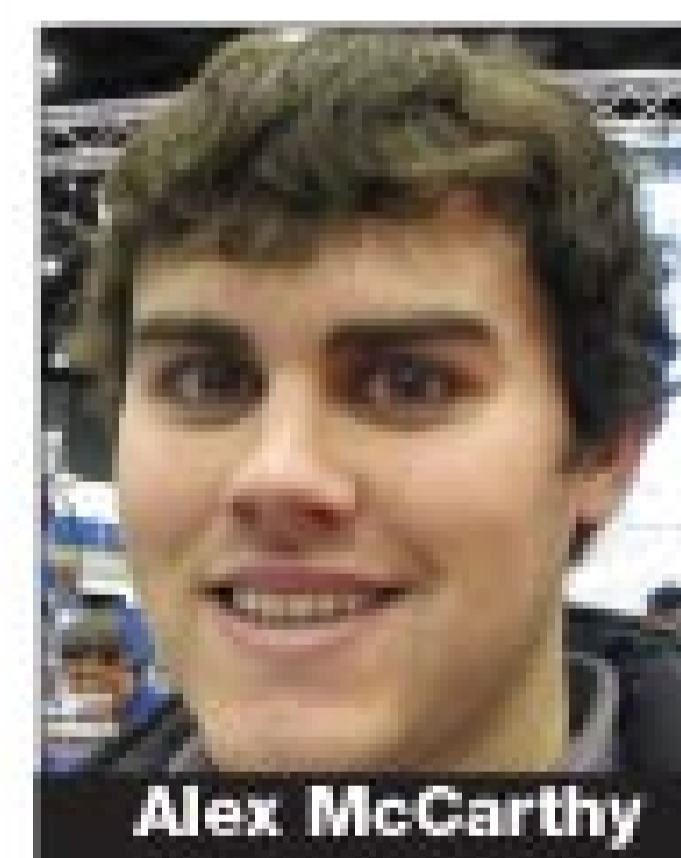
The Frymans believe low-ball contractors will eventually work themselves completely out of profits and, one way or another, go out of business. Meanwhile, A-1 isn't waiting around.

"Our construction unit price remains steady overall, and when we have dropped, it's only been by about (5 percent). Not enough to make a huge difference in our bottom line."

Alex McCarthy

"We're expanding our service territory to take on five new counties, so we don't just depend on the area we're in now," Eugene Fryman explains. The new territory is south of their original service area. "We just had to go out into the country. I'm going to continue to try to expand where I know I won't have much competition."

The Frymans offer ancillary septic pumping services, which helps shore up their bottom line when price competition becomes too great in their portable restroom division. "We'll dig up and repair systems that aren't working right," says Rita Fryman. "Most of our pumping competitors don't offer that." The couple figures that for every 10 pumping calls, they get one repair service job. In the intense competitive atmosphere they work in, this diversified service has been what enables them to continue offering portable restrooms.



Name: Alex McCarthy
Company: Mr. John
Location: McKees Rocks, Pa.
Employees: 50
Years in Business: 46

In the past five years or so, rental prices have trended up for Mr. John in this northwestern Pittsburgh suburb. "As of recently, they've gone down," says manager Alex McCarthy. "They've gone down with our competitors' prices going down, but only on a special request basis from some of our oldest and most loyal customers. Our main price is still where it was. Our construction unit price remains steady overall, and when we have dropped, it's only been by about (5 percent). Not enough to make a huge difference in our bottom line." ■

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ON LOCATION

THE JOB: 20th Annual Energy Fair

LOCATION: Custer, Wis.

THE PRO: Trebco Services LLC

The Power

TO PLEASE

WISCONSIN'S TREBCO SERVICES ENJOYS A GREAT GIVE-AND-TAKE RELATIONSHIP WITH ORGANIZERS OF ANNUAL MIDWEST RENEWABLE ENERGY FAIR

By Jim Kneiszel

THE TEAM

Ed and Diana Trzebiatowski run a portable sanitation and pumping business located in

Amherst in central Wisconsin. Ed works in the field and Diana manages the office. Miles Murphy is a full-time driver for

the septic service and Jeff Gallagher is a portable restroom technician. All hands are on deck for big events like the Midwest Renewable Energy Association's annual Energy Fair, including Ed's brother-in-law, Rick Seefeldt, who helps out as needed on this and another big summer job, the annual North Central Wisconsin Antique Steam and Gas Engine Show in Edgar.

They continue to expand portable sanitation services, now offering 220 restrooms, about 75 percent T.S.F. Company Inc. Tuff Jon units and 25 percent Satellite Industries Maxim 3000 models and a variety of older units. They have a small number of ADA units from Satellite Industries.

The fleet includes a portable sanitation service rig from Imperial Industries, built on a 2003 GMC 5500 with an 18-foot flatbed and fiberglass 400-gallon waste and 200-gallon freshwater tanks, a Masport pump and a lift gate on the back; two septic trucks, a 1994 Ford LTS 8000 with a 3,500-gallon tank and Wittig pump, and a 2000 GMC with a 2,500-gallon steel tank and Battioni pump from Imperial. For car wash pits and municipal work, they have a 2003 Peterbilt 378 vacuum

COMPANY HISTORY

Trebco Services was started in 1985 by Ed's father and brother, Clarence and Russ Trzebiatowski. The couple bought the business in 1990, then eventually moved from nearby Stevens Point to their own 7-acre commercial property in Amherst.

They built an 1,800-square-foot office and a later a 60- by 80-foot shop to house a growing fleet of equipment.



Ed and Diana Trzebiatowski have been operating Trebco Services for 20 years.



Ed Trzebiatowski and the crew are on location by 5 a.m. to service restrooms.



PolyJohn Enterprises SaniStands have become a popular choice over sinks to conserve water on the sprawling Energy Fair grounds.

BY THE NUMBERS

Trebco set up 73 standard portable restrooms, five ADA units, 14 wash stations — T.S.F. units and PolyJohn Applause sinks — and six PolyJohn SaniStands throughout the grounds. “We put SaniStands anywhere we didn’t have sinks, and also where some of the units were more heavily used,” Trzebiatowski says. “Some years in the past, we would run out of water. One time we placed the SaniStands in a few areas and the water lasted longer.” The stand-mounted foam sanitizer stations are a good alternative for areas that experience heavy water usage, he

loader from Keith Huber Inc. They also have a 2000 Chevy van used for sewer rodding and a Spartan trailer jetter.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

When Trebco moved to its Amherst location several years ago, they were located across the street from the then-grounds of the fast-growing Energy Fair. A smaller PRO was handling the summer event, and Trebco was asked to furnish an additional 10 units. “They just kept calling us back and I don’t know why we ended up with the job,” Ed Trzebiatowski recalls. “We ended up with the whole thing, and we just get along so well with them,” he said of the fair organizers. When the non-profit group later moved the fair to its own 40-acre property, they continued

to contract with Trebco for portable sanitation, and the restroom order has grown along with the fair.

THE MAIN EVENT

The Midwest Renewable Energy Association (www.themrea.org) promotes the use of renewable energy, and as part of its mission, started the Energy Fair in 1989. Its 20th annual event last June 19-21 drew a record 23,000 attendees who came to see 275 exhibitors selling wind and solar energy products, sit in on 200 seminars, see an experi-

mental energy efficient home and a green energy car show. The fair is billed as the largest event of its kind in the U.S. Many attendees came for all three days, pitching tents in the MREA’s “Back 40” campground and at local parks.

observes.

The placements include four units at a bus stop near the event entrance, 10 units inside the main gate, about a dozen units near several seminar tents, about a dozen units and a few wash stations near one building and a dozen units and wash stations near several buildings used for indoor



An Energy Fair visitor uses a restroom at the bike parking area (left). Below, a visitor checks out an MG roadster converted to battery power at the green car show.

One highlight at the Energy Fair was this component energy independent home that was assembled in a few days.





Ed Trzebiatowski replenishes a sink at an area reserved for visitors who arrive on two wheels.

exhibits. Another bank of units, including ADA units and hand-wash stations — along with a 300-gallon T.S.F. Co. holding tank for food service greywater — are set up near a dining area. The campground received 20 units, in groupings of about four restrooms and a wash station. They put an ADA unit next to a solar-powered shower trailer that wasn't placed by Trebco.

The setup was completed Monday through Wednesday leading up to the weekend event, so everything was in place before vendors arrived. Trebco used two trailers to deliver the inventory, a 20-restroom unit made in-house and a 10-unit Chilton trailer.

KEEPIN' IT CLEAN

After setup and once the crowds built toward the weekend, Trebco would swing into its morning cleaning routine. The service routine begins at 4:30 or 5 a.m. at the fairgrounds, then winds up at the campground about 8:30 a.m. The goal is to finish before crowds start arriving at 9 a.m.

The servicing goes smoother with the addition of the smaller septic truck with the 2,500-gallon tank. Trzebiatowski starts by pumping the units dry. The rest of the crew follows, washing, drying, restocking paper supplies and recharging the units. Each

servicing generates 1,500 to 2,000 gallons of wastewater — including the food service greywater — which is transported seven miles to the Amherst treatment plant for offloading.

"Everybody has their routine. One guy is spraying the units, one guy is washing with soap and water, and the other is squeegeeing and drying. They're through with a bank of toilets in 15 minutes and on to the next one," Trzebiatowski says. They primarily use deodorizers from J & J Chemicals, including Ever Pro tablets during tank recharge and J-Disks fragrance enhancers (They use mulberry scent for both).

On Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Ed and Diana Trzebiatowski do regular walk-throughs, replenishing paper products, topping off soap dispensers and replacing scent disks.

THE END GAME

Breakdown is mostly casual. The MREA wants units in one area removed the Monday following the event, but Trebco can remove the remaining units at its own pace. They're usually out in a day or two. "We're there Monday morning along with the tent people, pumping out the units and cleaning them on site," Trzebiatowski says. "We spray

"They're not trying to scrimp. They know their customers are happy and have adequate facilities to use. Some (customers) want the bare minimum, but they don't look at it that way. If we make a recommendation, they're usually going with it. They're a good group of people to work with."

Ed Trzebiatowski



This bank of T.S.F. Co. Inc. restrooms was placed near an indoor exhibit area.

them down, then bring them back and clean them again at the shop before they go out again."

GREAT PARTNERS

The MREA's concern about the comfort of visitors makes this job a pleasure to work, according to Trzebiatowski. The group orders plenty of units to avoid overuse issues. By service time, the units are typically 50-60 percent full, with a few reaching 80 percent of capacity. "They're not trying to scrimp. They know their customers are happy and have adequate facilities to use," he says. "Some (customers) want the bare minimum, but they don't look at it that way. If we make a recommendation, they're usually going with it. They're a good group of people to work with." ■

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By Jim Kneiszel

With keen competition for every construction site placement in a tight economy, it's more important now than ever to provide clean and well-functioning standard restrooms.

And to maintain an inventory that meets your prospective customers' high standards, you can't just sit tight with old and deteriorated units in the yard. Keeping pace with the competition requires upgrading units once in a while, even if it means culling your oldest stock and updating with fresh copies of the same reliable models.

You're only as good as your poorest restroom in the field. You might think there's no harm in dropping a unit with wobbly walls, slack door springs and unsightly cigarette burns on a remote work site. But the less-than-stellar unit might cause your customer to conclude your service is on a downward slide.

And what if another potential customer happens to see the unit you were trying to hide on an inconspicuous job? He or she might figure the rest of your inventory is in the same condition. These days, you just can't afford to take chances with units you know aren't up to the quality you want to portray.

When your reputation depends on providing consistently good products and services, you need to pay attention to the quality of your inventory. And if you notice it's time to stock up, check out these latest standard restroom offerings from manufacturers:

POLYJOHN LEGACY AND PJN3

PolyJohn Enterprises Corp. offers the long-standing **PJN3** model and the **Legacy** as its go-to standard restrooms. Introduced in 2009, the Legacy offers greater strength and rigidity in a unit that can be assembled easily with a few tools and the fewest possible fasteners. Most of the components can be snapped together, while the unit has only two rivets, used to attach the toilet paper dispenser. The unit replaces a traditional one-piece skid with four feet that are anchored on 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 PJN3 utilizes a structurally stiff modular design to hold up to severe conditions. Features include a standard door-mounted mirror and handle and an advanced waste tank design with rounded slope top and convenient central sump. **Visit www.polyjohn.com or call 800/292-1305.**



SATELLITE TUFWAY, MAXIM 3000, TAURUS AND GLOBAL

Satellite Industries Inc. offers the **Tufway**, **Taurus**, **Maxim 3000** and **Global** models for standard restroom service. The Tufway utilizes a rotational molding process for easy cleaning and has a 70-gallon holding tank. For 2010, new features include a redesign of the door and molded-in vent screens, eliminating the need for screen replacement. The Maxim 3000 features recessed heavy-duty door springs, smooth interior and exterior surfaces to cut down on cleaning time and cross ribbing between panels for strength. It also uses fewer parts, reduces repairs and replacement parts inventory. The Global features molded-in vent screens and a vented base to keep the unit fresh even with heavy use and in hot climates. The rotomolded base features smooth runners for easy loading, 10 washout ports and a crowned, slip-resistant surface. Other features include an 80-gallon holding tank, corner shelf and a four-roll tissue dispenser. **Visit www.satelliteindustries.com or call 800/328-3332.**



ARMAL TOP LINE

Armal Inc. offers the **Top Line** standard restroom with Scent Box technology that can be upgraded in several ways. First, Scent Box restrooms are embedded during the manufacturing process with one of five new scents and colors: Strawberry Fields, Apple Blossom, Pinewood Trail, Rose Sensations and Vanilla Balm. The Top Line's latch and handle offer improved ergonomics for the user and the sturdy door reduces wobbling. The unit has curved corners for easy gripping, a three-roll paper holder with integrated shelf, and a urinal with drain cover. The Top Line can be upgraded with a recirculating flush unit, soap dispenser, 7.5-gallon sink and skyscraper kit. **Visit www.armal.biz or call 866/873-7796.**



POLYPORTABLES VANTAGE, INTEGRA AND STANDARD

PolyPortables Inc. continues to offer three models in its lineup of standard restrooms. The **Vantage** is popular for its double-walled strength and a smooth, easy-to-clean interior. The **Integra** offers a convenient, large door opening. The **Standard** unit, produced for more than 30 years, features an aluminum-framed door, riveted-in door edges and a precision-engineered door spring. All units feature easily replaced wear components for convenient repairs. PolyPortables offers many standard color choices and custom colors. Visit www.polyportables.com or call 800/241-7951.



FIVE PEAKS TECHNOLOGY

Five Peaks Technology offers the standard **Aspen** unit with 65-gallon drop tank, three-roll tissue holder, hover handles, mirror and coat hooks. The Aspen line of standard restrooms is available in several colors with thermoformed or rotomolded skid and tank. The rotomolded tank version holds 70 gallons and uses thicker plastic and extra thick runners to stand up to abuse from gravel and asphalt. Features in the Aspen include standard gender signage to allow a restroom to be earmarked for women only, cup holder, custom-formed door handle, and offset seat location to distance it from the urinal. Visit www.fivepeaks.net or call 231/830-8099.



IMPERIAL INDUSTRIES IMPERIAL TRADITION

Imperial Industries Inc. offers the new **Imperial Traditions** restroom unit as a basic model for construction sites and special events. Components and panels are constructed with a rotational molding process for durability in a single wall restroom unit. The unit features a one-piece continuous doorframe, a five-point integral polyethylene door hinge, EZ grip inside latch, a 60-gallon holding tank and a standard three-roll toilet paper



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holder. For structural stability and durability, the unit comes with a Tri-Poly Skid that adds a third skid under the center of the floor. The unit weighs 173 pounds and is available in a variety of standard colors and can be produced in custom colors. Visit www.imperialind.com or call 800/558-2945.

T.S.F. TUFF-JON

T.S.F. Company Inc. Tuff Jon portable restrooms offer durability and a unique appearance through a rotational molding manufacturing process that produces a one-piece polyethylene restroom unit with consistent 3/16-inch thick walls. The process creates restrooms with easy-to-clean smooth surfaces. The rotational molding construction also results in easy-to-handle restroom units that remain on stable footing at the jobsite. The lightweight standard units feature rust-free hardware, poly skids and come in a large variety of colors. The tank is mounted toward the back right corner for additional shoulder and foot room. A 15-gallon sink is also offered. Visit www.tuff-jon.com or call 800/843-9286. ■



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PRODUCT NEWS



Gateway Offers Two Styles of Eye Protection

Scorpion MAG and StarLite MAG bifocal eye protection from Gateway Safety are available in four diopter strengths: 1.0, 1.5, 2.0 and 2.5. Designed for aging workers, the Scorpion features an adjustable length, ratcheting temples and come in either clear or gray lenses, while the StarLite comes in clear, anti-fog or gray. 800/822-5347; www.gateway-safety.com. ■



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North Carolina Septic Business. Grossing in excess of \$125,000 annually. Includes 2,000 gallon service truck, backhoe, jetters and more. **\$110,000.**

Houston, Texas Area Septic & Drain Business. Grossing nearly \$300,000 annually and showing growth. Established commercial clients and customer list. Includes all equipment to operate, a turn-key business. Huge potential, owner is motivated and moving on. **Asking \$140,000.**

Northern California/Reno, Nevada Area Portable Restroom Service Business For Sale. Averaging \$115,000 in revenue over past 4 years. Includes two service trucks, 100 restrooms, trailers and more. **\$75,000 REDUCED \$55,000** - motivated seller.

Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas Area Sewer/Rehab Business For Sale. Drain Cleaning, TV inspection, Pipeline & Manhole Rehab/Relining, Municipal Cleaning and Maintenance business for sale. Excellent opportunity to expand or start your own business. Good revenue history and priced to sell. Includes all equipment to get started. **Asking \$150,000.**

Green Bay, Wisconsin Area Septic & Drain Business For Sale. Solid and steady revenue history and

nearly 20 years established. Includes very well-maintained 3,800 gallon septic service truck, fully outfitted 2002 Chevy drain service van, drain & sewer equipment, all office equipment and computers, 2,700+ customer list and more - a true turn-key or easy expansion opportunity. Very meticulously maintained equipment all kept inside a heated shop. Owner is retiring. Large shop and real estate is also available if desired at additional cost. **\$249,000.**

Massachusetts Sewer & Drain Franchise For Sale.

Confidential listing, Non Disclosure Agreement required. Turn-key business, good revenue. **\$165,000.**

Allentown, Pennsylvania Area Sewer Business. Specializing in collection systems, video inspection, jetting, municipal work. Includes CUES TV & grout truck, Sewer Equipment Corporation jetter truck, Vactor 2100, RIDGID camera, confined space equipment and more! Good revenue history. Owner wants to retire. **\$330,000.**

PARTY

All the Time

Facing keen competition for construction-related accounts, Ohio PRO Cody Mastin turns his attention to serving special events and backyard celebrations

By Marian Bond

Technician Gene Palmer prepares to service a restroom for Co-Man Portables in Whitehouse, Ohio. (Photos by Jetta Fraser)

Not only does Cody Mastin, co-owner of Co-Man Portables, have to be concerned with a struggling economy and maintaining the construction company clients that use his restroom services. But the Whitehouse, Ohio, PRO also has to contend with a group of reputable competitors in and around nearby Toledo and stretching into Michigan and Indiana.

Co-Man Portables

Whitehouse, Ohio

Owners: Randy, Mandi and Cody Mastin

Years in business: 7

Employees: 6 (including owners)

Service area: Toledo, Ohio, and parts of Michigan and Indiana

Service: Portable sanitation

Web site:
www.comanportables.com



Given the crowded marketplace for portable sanitation, starting a new service business proved to be more of a challenge than Mastin expected.

"I thought it would be fairly easy, and we'd get up and rolling," Mastin says. "We had several other companies including one major competitor in the area. But about a month after we opened, another substantial business appeared on the scene, and this made it really tough."

Co-Man Portables, in business since 2003, came about when Mastin graduated from high school and was ready to go to work full time for the three-generation family business, Randy Mastin Septic Tank Corp., established in 1960 by his late grandfather Burt Mastin.

At the time he graduated, Mastin's sister, Mandi, and father worked in the septic business and there just wasn't enough work to justify another partner. Thus Co-Man Portables was born as a separate entity, and Mastin set out to develop a clientele that would be sustainable and loyal in both the good times and bad.

PARTY CENTRAL

Mastin says that even though the septic service had been in the area for many years, its history did not actually benefit the new venture, other than a few synergies, such as waste disposal.

Since inception, the clientele has developed to half construction accounts and half special events. But in the past two years, Mastin has set a course to more heavily promote the private party and special event business. While the construction side has become much more competitive and price driven, Mastin is finding the event and private party side of the business more accessible as people look for more local activities and less expensive ways to enjoy their spring and summer months and vacations.

A positive factor for special events and parties is customers seem willing to pay for good service and reliability. Not so on dwindling building jobsites. In construction Mastin finds it is all about corralling costs, even with customers he has dealt with from the beginning. While maintaining his valued

At right, Gene Palmer unloads restrooms for a football game at Bowling Green State University. Below, Randy Mastin (left) is shown with daughter Mandi and son Cody.



“I believe the way to win customers is to offer not just clean service, but prompt service. Because I have competitors who do an excellent job, my idea was to stress timeliness — that we can switch a unit, or take care of a problem within an hour. We switch it or fix it.”

Cody Mastin

construction customers, he wants to change the business mix to 75 percent special events and 25 percent construction.

“Our construction business pays the bills. The special events kind of shines as everything else,” he says.

HOWDY PARTNER

Over the years, Mastin had talked with Mike Baumgartner of Toledo Tent about partnering to handle some of the weekend activities. As the economy headed south two years ago, a deal was struck. Mastin would sell his restrooms and offer tents as well. The events planners would check off two major requirements on their to-do list and have to deal with just one company and write one check.

Toledo Tent would do the installations, Co-Man would provide the restrooms and take a small percentage on the tents.

“It made sense for us to do this,” Mastin says. “I told Mike we need to help each other out. And it has worked very well. I talk with the client, find out what they need, make the deal,

and we all win. We have a reputable name. He has a reputable name. We are both well known and this helps.”

Mastin enjoys the atmosphere working special events, but it’s more demanding than construction jobs in some ways.

“As a part owner, I have no problem working around-the-clock at these jobs,” he says. “We have to be up early to service, and be up late to service. We can do that. I just like it. We also run the trucks less with these affairs.”

Toledo Tent takes care of all the installation and knockdown, and assumes all liability for its products and service. A tent is included in almost every special event — and having this trend has benefited both companies.

Included in their customer list is the Whitehouse Cherry Fest combined with the 135th Northwest Ohio Fireman’s Convention held in Whitehouse, where Mastin typically provides 45 restrooms and attendance averages 20,000 over a weekend.

In Ann Arbor, Mich., where the Guild of Artists & Artisans holds an annual event, Co-Man Portables provides about 40 restrooms, and offers twice-daily service for the units. For events that run over a long weekend, they keep a service truck on site along with an extra

restroom in case of emergency. This is a large event with attendance as high as 500,000 over four days. Co-Man is one of two companies providing restrooms.

AT THE SHOP

Early on at Co-Man, Mastin settled on PolyPortables as his supplier of traditional restrooms, choosing to carry the Integra model for its wide door.

“A wide door makes the restrooms seem larger,” he says. “When a person walks into a unit with a small door they feel cramped. We offer a hand sanitizer dispenser on every unit.

“We also carry PolyPortables’ hand-wash stations, both the SuperTwin and the TagAlong. The TagAlong is smaller and for transportation purposes can fit inside a restroom.”

Mastin has 16 handicap units from Satellite Industries, including the Liberty and Freedom 2 models. In the office, they use Datasan Computer Software by GMF Associates to track restroom inventory and handle billing.

Keeping the company’s 500 units in tip-top shape is part of the agenda with Co-Man Portables.



Mike Cook tracks the inventory of 500 restrooms at Co-Man Portables. Here, Cook powerwashes restrooms at the company yard.

“People are sticking close to home. They are going to local art shows, fairs and other events such as graduation parties, reunions. We are busy almost every weekend beginning in April, all the way through to November.”

Cody Mastin

“Mike Cook is our inventory man, and he repairs and washes all the units as they come back to the yard,” Mastin says. “Every day, he prepares a list of required repairs and parts and this goes to my sister, Mandi, who then bills the customer for major damage as spelled out in our contract.”

Damage comes in a variety of forms, but is primarily caused by blade cutters or knives when people cut holes in the urinal or the sidewall. They also find burns from cigarette lighters. Their driver, when picking up a unit, makes note of the damage and notifies Cook. They experience less vandalism and graffiti with special events than construction placements.

Covering a radius of 50 miles from its base, Co-Man utilizes four service trucks: a 2000 Freightliner built by Satellite Industries with a 1,000-gallon steel tank, Masport pump and a pressure washer by PumpTec; a 2000 International built by Best Enterprises with a

400-gallon waste/200-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank and Udor hydraulic power washer; a 2002 International from Best Enterprises with 900-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank and Udor power washer; and a 2004 Ford E-450 flatbed used for delivery and pick up. They run two trailers that carry 14 and 10 restrooms.

STAFF & SERVICE

The staff consists of the three co-owners and three drivers. Mastin handles initial training by riding along for the first week or so to make sure the new employees understand the company’s service standards and policies, which he says are critical to maintain and grow the customer base. Technicians are provided clean uniforms from a uniform service.

The Mastins discovered that the party and special events market offered an opportu-

Mastin’s Master Plan

Through his Co-Man Portables, co-owner Cody Mastin set a goal of establishing a medium-sized company that would provide quality service to prompt repeat business.

The important thing was establishing a good name, and he believed he could accomplish that by keeping the company more manageable with smaller numbers.

With a smaller inventory and staff, if a unit had a problem, making a switch or providing a service could be handled quickly and efficiently. When the telephone book ad first hit, however, the calls started coming in and their inventory grew to its present 500 units.

“I believe the way to win customers is to offer not just clean service, but prompt service,” Mastin says. “Because I have competitors who do an excellent job, my idea was to stress timeliness — that we can switch a unit, or take care of a problem within an hour. We switch it or fix it.”

That’s the motto, and they are going to stick to it.

nity to develop a base of repeat customers, and they soon expect to hit the 75-percent target they set for special events work.

Mastin says they follow up each event with phone calls to ask if everything went smoothly, and how they can improve future service. They also keep in touch regularly dur-



Mike Cook pumps a restroom for Co-Man Portables.

MORE INFO:

ing the event, with Mastin available at all times by cell phone to resolve any problems as quickly as possible.

Despite a lagging economy, Co-Man sees special event and party work on the rise. They chalk it up to the concept of the "staycation," where cash-strapped families are seeking entertainment close to home and putting off lavish trips. That translates into more restroom placements.

"People are having block parties," Mastin says. "People are having friends over in a neighborhood and renting a restroom or several, and a tent. People are sticking close to home. They are going to local art shows, fairs and other events such as graduation parties, reunions. We are busy almost every weekend beginning in April, all the way through to November." ■

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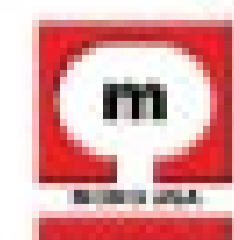
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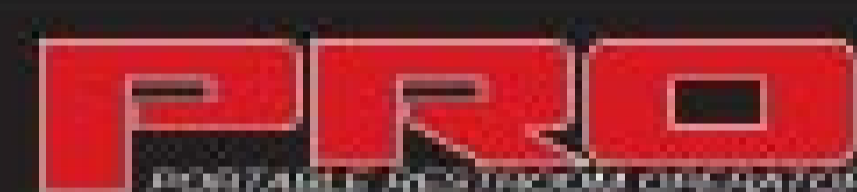
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Reality Check

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



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QUESTION:
I've got questions concerning vacuum pumps and pump operations. I have been told — and even read in some pump literature — that these pumps can run at 28 inches of mercury. Well, I tried that. I cranked up my pump that has a 342-cfm air-flow capacity, and it wasn't 15-20 minutes and the pump was smoking like a forest fire. I read the performance sheets on the pump and then I read the data on other sheets and they said the pumps can run continuously, even at 25 inches of mercury. Why when I try to be as responsible and educated as possible, do I still end up with problems? What should these pumps really be set at to get a long life and steady performance?

Randy Shenfield
Memphis, Tenn.

ANSWER:
On first reading of your letter, we wondered if it was worthy of a response. Our first thought was that if you run anything like a vacuum pump too long, the heat will build up, the smoke will come, and the unit will end up fried. But we thought about it more and dug out our performance data sheets from the various pump manufacturers. This is where it gets interesting.

We found common points made in several manufacturer data sheets. First, they mention a lot of numbers that aren't going to relate to real-life operation of a vacuum pump. Many, if not all of these pumps are purported to be able to run at a "continuous" vacuum of 25 to 28 inches. When a portable sanitation pumper sees this, he or she might conclude there's no problem running these things at 25 to 28 inches and all will be well. After all, as mentioned, they say during "continuous" operation. So let's turn it on and go to work.

TESTING FOR THESE PUMPS IS GENERALLY DONE AT A FACTORY AND THE DATA IS THEN RECORDED. SOUNDS GREAT. WHAT ISN'T CONSIDERED IN THESE TESTS, ACCORDING TO THE PUMP REPRESENTATIVES, IS THE ELEVATION OF WHERE THE PUMP IS USED, THE TEMPERATURES AND CLIMATE WHERE IT OPERATES, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS.

We saw this information in pretty much all the performance data sheets we studied (and we pretty much have them all). There are no further instructions or disclaimers to warn you about running at these settings. They do mention that this is "maximum" vacuum but there is nothing saying that you shouldn't run at maximum vacuum. So if these settings cause a pump to overheat and smoke, what are these numbers for?

Many pumpers and suppliers like to look at data — the hard numbers — in their selling of pumps, or in their use of pumps on their trucks. We're not saying these numbers are wrong, but it does require a second look. So we called some of the pump manufacturers to see what they had to say about this information.

Here's what we learned: Testing for these pumps is generally done at a factory and the data is then recorded. Sounds great. What isn't considered in these tests, according to the pump representatives, is the elevation of where the pump is used, the temperatures and climate where it operates, and other considerations.

The plain truth is, we don't know of anybody who runs a pump at "maximum continuous" output. And frankly, we don't believe they run the pumps very long when conducting these tests. So it is wise to get as educated as possible and understand the strengths and powers of your pumps. But remember that most of these numbers are laboratory numbers in a controlled environment.

The basic rules of running a vacuum pump still apply. First, match the power of the pump to your tank capacity to be efficient. As we have said in the past, it doesn't help to have a more powerful pump on a smaller tank. Second, in most places around the country, operating a vacuum pump on the job at 18 to 20 inches of mercury is plenty. This should allow you to complete a pumping job, not overheat your pump or the system, and to get the longest possible life out of your pump.

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

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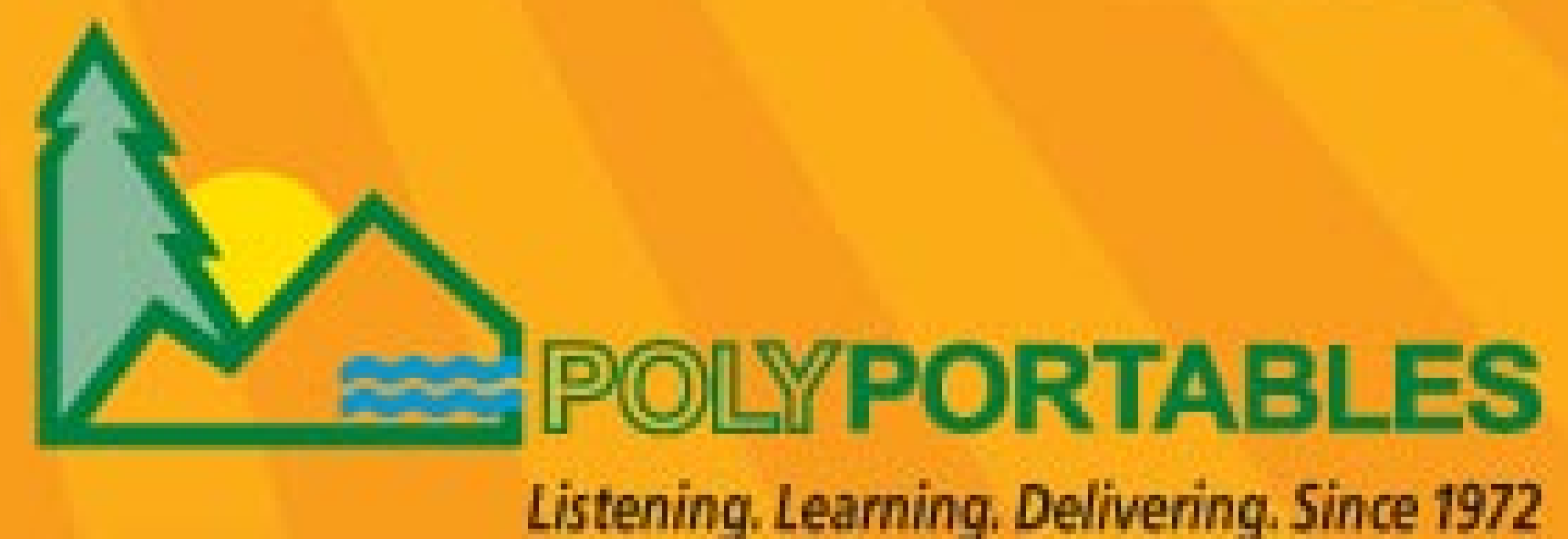
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