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PORTABLE RESTROOM OPERATOR

November 2010
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Yours, Mine and Ours

Fire prompts merger
for Maine PROs

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Hometown Service

Wisconsin PRO serves
Single Best Town party

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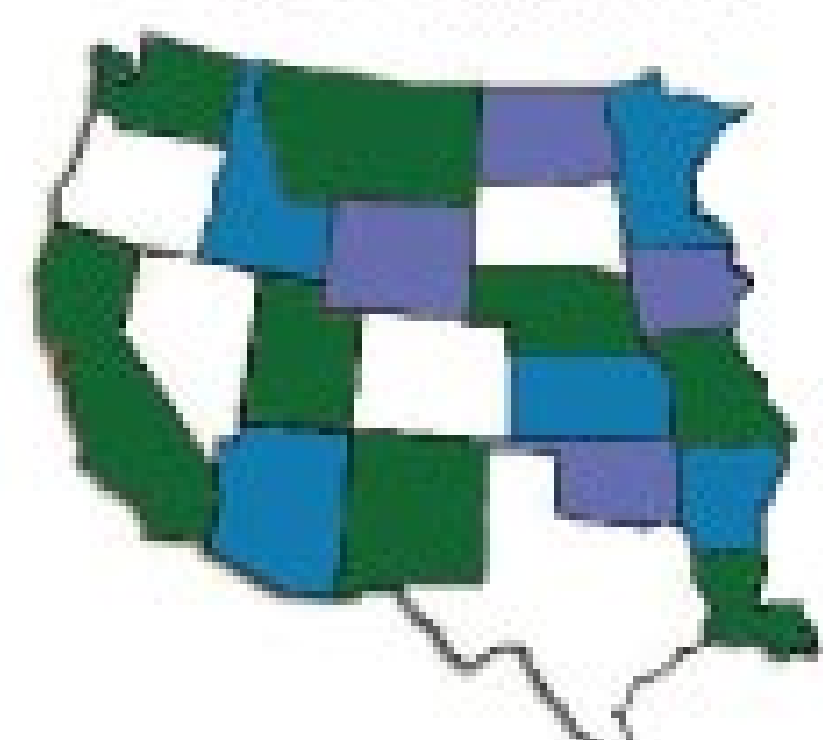
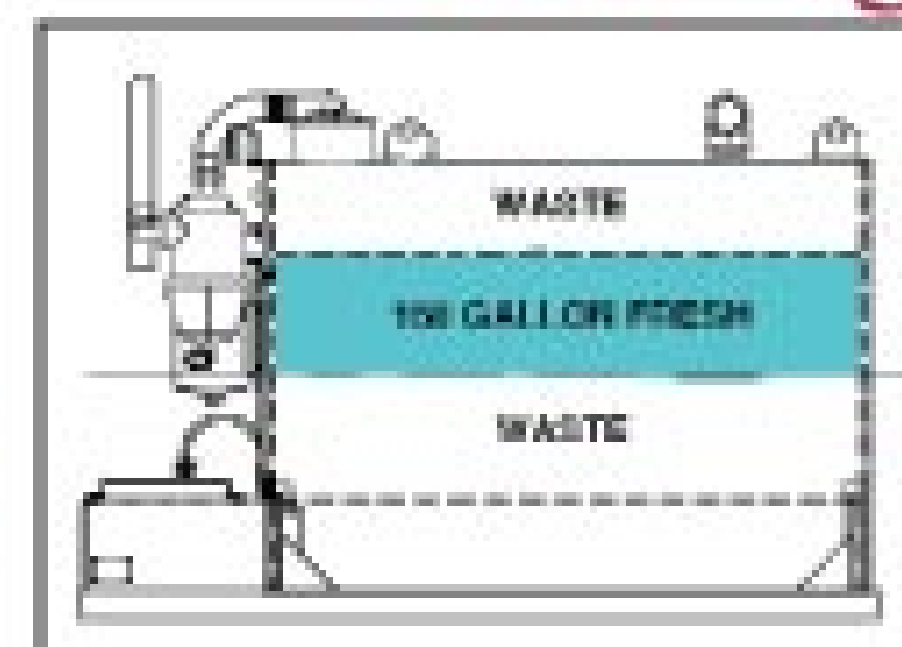


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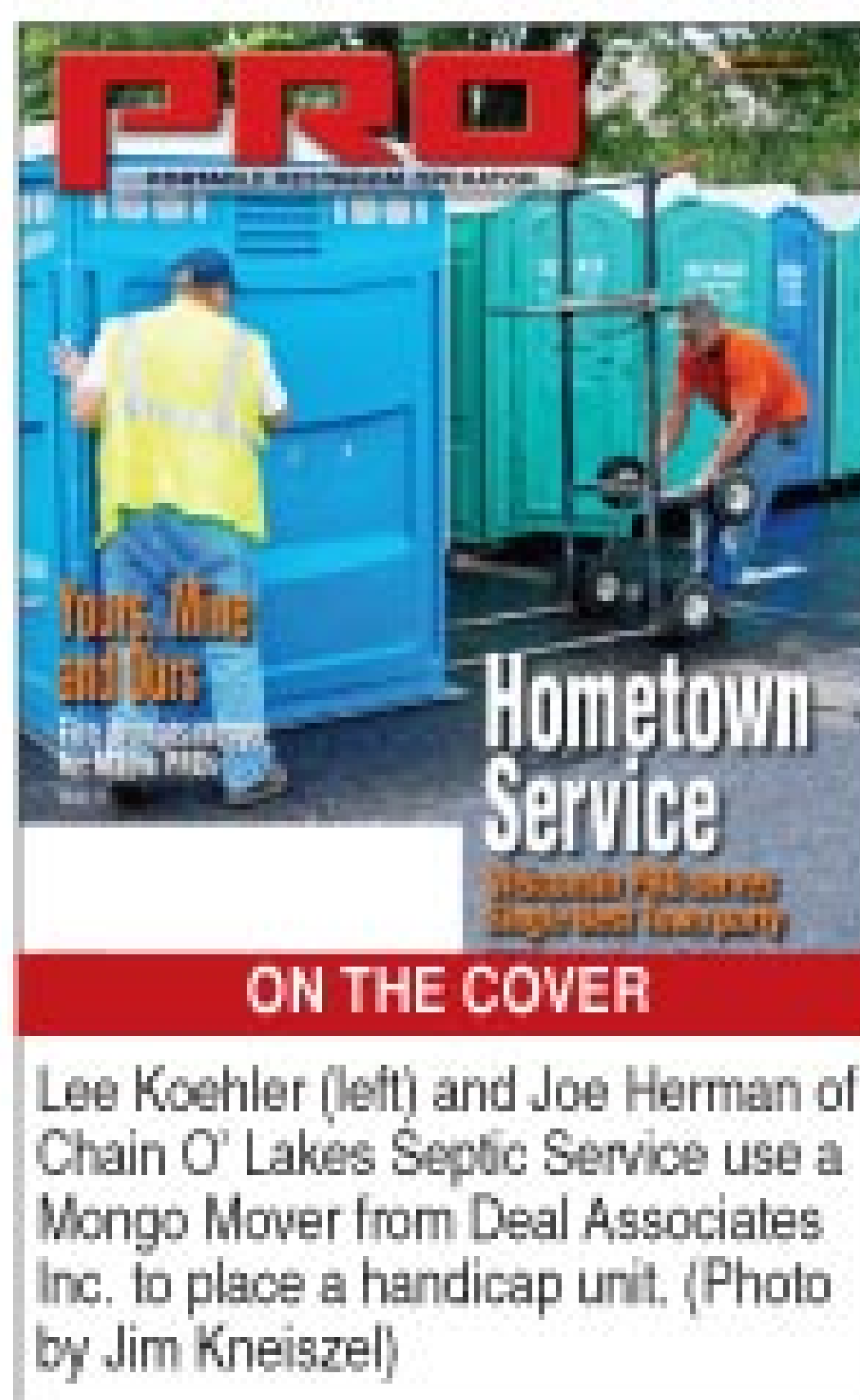
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PRO

PORTABLE RESTROOM OPERATOR

www.promonthly.com

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Hometown Service

WISCONSIN'S CHAIN O' LAKES SEPTIC SERVICE ANSWERS THE CALL FOR A LOCAL CELEBRATION

By Jim Kneiszel

What happens when an event demanding a bunch of portable restrooms lands in your back yard? You go out and shoot photos, of course.

Last summer, Three Lakes, Wis., the home of COLE Publishing — which publishes this magazine — was named the Single Best Town in America in a contest conducted by Kraft Singles and Disney ABC Television Group. Runners-up were Bell Buckle, Tenn., and Gastonia, N.C.

As a prize, the sponsors picked up the tab for a block party in the northern Wisconsin town. On Aug. 3, downtown's Superior Street was closed and stages were erected for visiting performers, country music bands and stars of ABC daytime soaps. According to estimates, 8,000 to 10,000 people showed up in a town with a population that amounts to a small fraction of that number.

I arrived as the festivities were under way and was fortunate to hang out with Pat Volk and his crew from Chain O' Lakes Septic Service, which goes by the name Outback

Portables when it places restrooms. The PROs had operations well in hand at the Tuesday afternoon/evening event.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Volk, a member of the park commission in Three Lakes, and a seasoned veteran of the portable sanitation business, took a some-

"I think we could have spotted some around town, but I think, honestly, people feel embarrassed using portable restrooms in front of a crowd. I've been to golf tournaments, and they usually isolate (the restrooms), putting them in a traffic pattern where people are only going to use the portable restrooms."

Pat Volk

what unorthodox approach to handling the restrooms for the block party. Rather than scatter units throughout downtown, he suggested placing three banks of 10 restrooms along the same side street, well away from the bulk of the crowd.

"I think we could have spotted some around town, but I think, honestly, people feel embarrassed using portable restrooms in front of a crowd," Volk explained. "I've been to golf tournaments, and they usually isolate (the restrooms), putting them in a traffic pattern where people are only going to use the portable restrooms."

Having the restrooms set up off the beaten path served a couple of purposes, Volk said. First, they were located at least a few hundred yards away from food and drink vendors, which created a helpful sanitary buffer. Second, it took the units away from heavy foot traffic so they could more easily be monitored and serviced if necessary.

And restroom servicing — even though this was a single-day event — was a potential issue for Volk. The local PRO had only 30 units available for the event, so he made his proposal for service based on 28 standard and two handicap units. Based on crowd estimates, he could have recommended placing 50 units, Volk said, but he decided that he could place fewer units and clean them mid-day if it became necessary.

Volk and his crew — Joe Herman, Jeremy Kerins and Lee Koehler — stood by throughout the day with a service rig, a Chevy 3500



Chain O' Lakes Septic Service crew (from left) Pat Volk, Joe Herman, Jeremy Kerins and Lee Koehler. (Photos by Jim Kneiszel)



Crowds packed the main drag in Three Lakes, Wis., in August for the block party to celebrate the Single Best Town in America honor. Below, stars from ABC-TV soaps talk to fans at the party in Three Lakes. Pictured (from left) are Bradford Anderson (Damien Spinelli/ General Hospital), Bobbie Eakes (Krystal Carey/All My Children) and Brandon Barash (Johnny Zacchara/General Hospital).



with a 250-gallon waste/100-gallon freshwater tank from Imperial Industries Inc. They also brought a second truck, an International 4300 with a 4,000-gallon aluminum tank from Wee Engineer Inc. The crew checked the units every 20 minutes and serviced one occasionally. The banks of restrooms were placed a few hundred feet apart, so they could close off 10 at a time for service and leave the other 20 operational.

Though the weather was beautiful and the crowds grew, there was never a need to service an entire group of restrooms. They stayed clean, and the sponsors weren't shy about checking them. During the course of the event, a representative of Disney occasionally performed a spot check of the restrooms.

FRIENDLY COMPETITION

The 30 units proved more than enough to handle the mid-week crowds; Volk may have proposed using more if it were a weekend event, which would have encouraged heavier

partying. Volk did have a backup plan for obtaining more units if he needed them: Go to the competition.

It turns out portable sanitation competitors are neighborly in this northwoods resort area. Volk said he has good relationships with direct competitors and he could have called on them for additional restrooms. He is happy to have a "gentlemen's or ladies' agreement" with a number of companies in the region, and they trade restrooms and/or pumping equipment in a pinch.

"It's a decent competition where we don't cut each other's throats," Volk said of his closest competitors. "Most of the guys in this business are good people and we get along really well, and that's the way it should be."

Volk said his hometown may consider making the block party an annual event. He's already thinking about ways he could improve on his own service should that happen.

"One thing we could have done is put a sign up in the middle of (the crowded areas) with an arrow pointing to the portable restrooms," Volk said.

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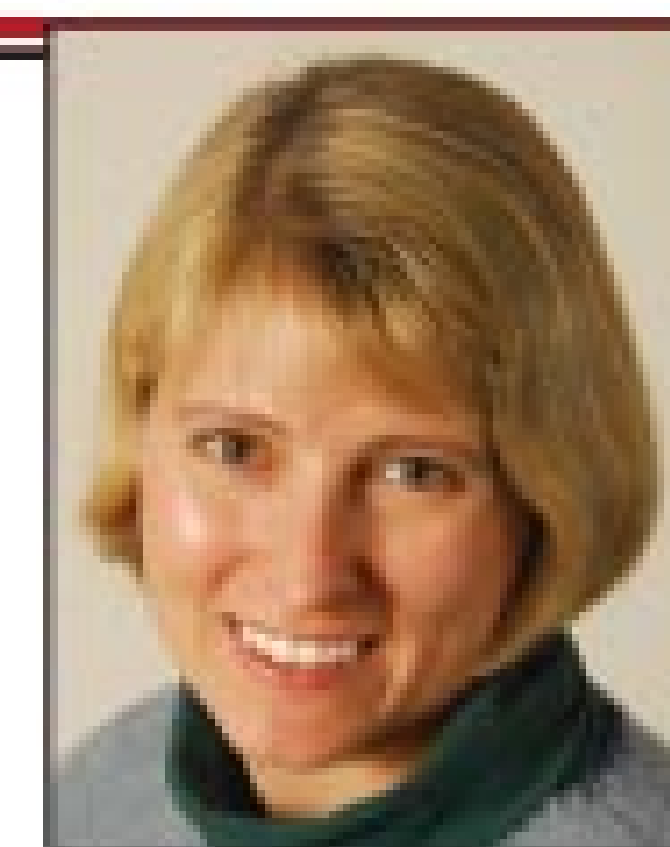
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Below, Pat Volk sprays down a row of restrooms in the 90-degree heat at the block party in Three Lakes, Wis. Lee Koehler (right) pumps and washes a restroom during the block party.





A Benefit to Smile About

UNLIKE COSTLY DENTAL INSURANCE PLANS, DENTAL DISCOUNT CARD PROGRAMS MAY BE AN AFFORDABLE WAY FOR YOU TO BUILD UP EMPLOYEE BENEFIT OFFERINGS

By Judy Kneiszel

If you've been grinding your teeth in frustration trying to come up with some sort of plan that will take the bite out of soaring dental costs for yourself, your family or your employees, a card may be the solution.

No, not a "my sympathies on your painfully expensive root canal," card. Not even Hallmark has come up with that one yet. I mean a wallet-sized card you'll get when you sign on to a dental discount plan that can save you 10 to 60 percent on the going rate of dental services.

NOT INSURANCE

Providing a dental discount card to your employees is a thoughtful benefit. It can make employees feel valued, and it can pay off in the long run for the business if it encourages people to get regular dental care instead of avoiding it because of the cost. Ignoring oral health can cause bigger health problems down the road, so an hour away for a cleaning today beats days of work missed down the road due to serious illness. Plus, like any other benefit a company provides, the cost of the discount cards is usually tax deductible, depending on how your business is set up.

As insurance costs skyrocket, more and more companies are cutting back on employee benefits or eliminating them entirely. And of course, self-employed people must provide their own coverage. A discount card is a way for the self-employed to save money on out-of-pocket costs or for a small company that can't afford to offer health insurance to do something to help employees out when it comes to health care.

To be clear, a discount plan is not insurance. It's more like a warehouse club membership. You pay Sam's Club or Costco an annual membership fee, and in return you get the privilege of saving money there on food and supplies throughout the year. Dental

discount plans work the same way. In both cases, the goal is to save more than you spend.

The annual membership fee for a dental discount plan is usually between \$50 and \$150 a year for singles, \$100 to \$200 for families. Often, the plans provide discounts on services not typically covered by insurance, such as cosmetic procedures. There is usually no waiting period and no denying anyone for a preexisting condition, so if you know you need thousands of dollars in dental work soon, you can sign up and save hundreds immediately. There are also no deductibles to meet and no cap on how much the plan can be used.

CHECK IT OUT

An easy way to shop for a dental discount plan is to go online to comparison sites like www.dentalinsurance.com and www.dentalplans.com. Don't sign on to a plan until you know there are dentists in your area who participate. It varies throughout the country. Some regions have scores of dentists who are part of discount programs, but in other areas it can be rare.

The comparison sites allow you to see more than one plan at a time and search for providers by typing in your ZIP code. You can find dentists in your area who accept the plans and see what their discounted rates are for services like exams, cleanings, X-rays, fillings, crowns, root canals and dentures. This will help you gauge the potential savings and decide if a card is worth the cost.

Many people will have to switch providers to take advantage of a discount plan. Consult with employees and see how willing they are to switch before purchasing cards for them. It would be a waste to spend \$100 on a card that goes unused because the employee is unwilling to switch dentists.

There have been cases of fraudulent companies selling discount cards. To know you are dealing with a legitimate business, look for a 30-day, money-back guarantee. Also, call some of the providers listed to make sure they still participate, are taking new patients, and specifically how much of a discount a card entitles the holder to on specific services.

Be aware that orthodontia, cosmetic procedures, oral surgery and some other procedures may require a specialist outside of the general dentistry field. A card may not entitle you to a discount with these providers. If you foresee braces or whitening in the future, you may have to shop around more for plans and providers.

A discount card is a way for the self-employed to save money on out-of-pocket costs or for a small company that can't afford to offer health insurance to do something to help employees out when it comes to health care.

Also, before you sign on the dotted line, it may be a good idea to check with your state insurance commissioner to make sure the company is registered in your state. You can find your state's department of insurance on the *National Association of Insurance Commissioners* Web site, www.naic.org.

WHY WOULD THEY DO THAT?

When considering a discount plan, you may wonder why a reputable dentist would participate in such a program. If a filling is typically \$173, but discount plan members pay \$112, that's \$61 less in the dentist's pocket, right? Why would anyone agree to accept less than his or her standard fees? Because it brings in customers they might not ordinarily see. In a way, it's a form of advertising for the dentist, like a coupon. It helps them grow their practice.

It also helps the dental clinic with cash flow. To get the discounted price, patients must pay at the time of service. It's less hassle for the provider than sending in a claim to an insurance company and waiting for payment. Dentists have accounting issues and expenses to meet like any other business.

In a perfect world, of course, dentists, portable restroom operators and every other business would always be busy with customers paying full freight. We'd all have luxury health and dental insurance plans, too, which would cover every office visit and procedure 100 percent. But in today's economy, where costs are exorbitant and the future uncertain, accepting or using a discount card may be a valuable compromise. ■



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Yours, Mine and Ours



IN THE WAKE OF A DISASTROUS FIRE, TWO MAINE PORTABLE RESTROOM OPERATORS FORGED A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL BUSINESS MERGER AFTER YEARS AS COMPETITORS

By Ken Wysocky

Portable restroom operators Jeff Bellino (left) and T.J. Troiano pose with one of the rigs from their merged businesses, Associated Septic Services Inc., which does business under the Royal Flush Portable Restrooms name. (Photos by Jill Brady)

For years, tough but friendly competitors Jeff Bellino and T.J. Troiano would bump into each other and joke around about buying each other's portable sanitation companies.

"We directly competed against each other, and a couple times we've even upset each other," Bellino says. "But we never cut each other's throats. We'd just kid around and tell each other that if one of us bought the other

guy out, we wouldn't be in this situation."

But it was no laughing matter when Bellino's company, Royal Flush Portable Restrooms in Scarborough, Maine, literally went up in flames. And the kidding took a decidedly serious turn after Troiano, co-owner of Troiano Waste Services Inc. in South Portland, and other local portable restroom operators came to Bellino's aid after the disaster.

In the aftermath of the fire, a business merger made more and more sense to Bellino and the Troiano family (the company operates a portable sanitation and septic division called Associated Septic Services Inc.). And after months

of negotiating, the two companies merged. Under terms of the agreement, Bellino became a part owner of Associated Septic and assumed responsibility for day-to-day operations of the division, which now does business under the Royal Flush name. The merger capped a most unlikely chain of events — and offers an interesting glimpse into how head-to-head competitors worked to forge a mutually beneficial partnership.

SURVIVAL MODE

Selling Royal Flush wasn't exactly on Bellino's mind in the wake of the October 2008 electrical fire, in which a wooden

**Associated Septic Services Inc./
Royal Flush Portable Restrooms
a division of Troiano Waste Services Inc.
South Portland, Maine**

Owners: Troiano family and Jeff Bellino

Years in business: 34

Employees: 7

Service area: Southern New Hampshire to south-central Maine

Services: Portable sanitation

Web site: www.associatedseptic.com



Maine



The Troiano Waste Services building in South Portland, Maine, is now the home of Associated Septic Services/Royal Flush.



Above, service technician Phil Stisi moves a Royal Flush restroom. At right, technician James Snow unloads restrooms from a flatbed truck at the yard.

storage building burned to the ground. Instead, he was in survival mode, trying to figure out how to keep servicing customers after losing \$250,000 worth of supplies, tools and equipment, not to mention all business records. The only good thing was that most of Bellino's restrooms were out in the field and his four service vehicles weren't parked in the building.

"It was devastating," Bellino recalls. "It was a whirlwind — a wide range of emotions. I knew I'd survive, but didn't know in what form. All I had was the truck and the toilets. I lost all my day-to-day operating stuff."

But the Troiano family, A-1 Environmental Services in nearby Wells and other local operators rallied around Bellino (a story on

the fire response appeared in the February 2009 issue of *PRO*, which can be viewed at www.promonthly.com). They provided supplies, trucks and manpower so Royal Flush could keep servicing its routes. The Troiano family also offered Bellino rental space in a storage building they owned — and inadvertently started the wheels of a business partnership rolling.

"I started borrowing some toilets, and they started storing unused toilets in the facility I was renting from them," Bellino explains. "I needed toilets, and they didn't need as many. But I didn't want to put out toilets with Troiano decals on them, so they let me put my decal over theirs. Then one day, T.J. told me, 'This is ridiculous.' And that set up our talks."

"Jeff and I have the same business philosophy: It's not about the bottom line, it's about keeping customers happy. Even if you end up losing money on a call, the customer will probably refer you or use you again because you went the extra mile. So you do whatever it takes to satisfy and retain customers."

T.J. Troiano

business. So it seemed logical to bring Bellino on board to run the division, which would be strengthened by the addition of Royal Flush's restrooms and trucks.

Another factor involved simple mathematics: Out of the 1,000 or so Royal Flush accounts and some 4,000 to 5,000 Troiano accounts, only 80 overlapped. "That made a merger seem even more sensible," Bellino says.

But that didn't mean things would go like clockwork by any means. Both men had strong emotional ties to their businesses. "They're our babies," as Bellino puts it. Moreover, Troiano candidly admits that mergers aren't on a list of his favorite things.

"I'm not a huge fan of mergers, because business philosophies usually differ," he says. "But Jeff and I have the same business philosophy: It's not about the bottom line; it's about keeping customers happy. Even if you end up losing money on a call, the customer will probably refer you or use you again because you went the extra mile. So you do whatever it takes to satisfy and retain customers."



Mechanic Kyle Casey repairs the pressure washer on this flat-tank service truck from Crescent Tank Mfg.

FORGING AN AGREEMENT

The more Troiano and Bellino examined the possibility of merging, the more sense it made. For starters, Troiano had recently assumed new responsibilities that increasingly were pulling him away from the portable restroom side of the



Wand in hand, Stisi prepares to service a restroom in the field.



Technician Ryan Breton washes a service truck that now operates under the Royal Flush name.

“Everything is blending together really well. It’s been easy because even though it’s difficult, T.J. has relinquished his duties and given me the freedom to make decisions. He always says, ‘It’s your baby — run it like it’s your own.’ ”

Jeff Bellino

advice. At one point, when the parties were trying to determine who would be liable for any Royal Flush bills that would emerge after closing on the purchase, Troiano said Bellino’s word that he’d pay them was good enough.

“I wasn’t worried because Jeff said he would pay them,” Troiano says.

In another instance, when the parties were going over the final draft of the purchase agreement with the attorneys and accountants, Troiano stopped and said a handshake on some items would be good enough. “I didn’t think we needed to get every single thing down in writing ... there has to be a certain amount of trust,” he says.

DETAILS, DETAILS

After about nine months of negotiating, the two parties closed the deal at the beginning of this year and began the real work of merging companies. This involved a host of issues, including:

Notifying customers with a letter that explains the merger. “We had to assure them they were going to get the same service, if not better,” Bellino says. In addition, invoices initially included the names of both companies to minimize confusion, and for a while, office staff used the names of both companies when answering the phone.

Re-lettering trucks with the Royal Flush name. The fleet now includes 2002 and 2003 Isuzu NQRs equipped with Tugger units from Keith Huber Inc., featuring steel 800-gallon tanks (550 gallons waste/250 gallons freshwater); a 2004 GMC C5500 rigged with a Keith Huber Princess system and a steel 900-gallon tank (600 waste/300 freshwater); 2005, 2006 and 2007 GMC C5500s, each with steel 1,050-gallon tanks (750 waste/300 freshwater), built by Crescent Tank Mfg.; a 2006 Chevrolet C5500 with a steel 910-gallon tank (660 waste/250 freshwater), built by Dyna-Vac Equipment Inc.; a 2008 Kenworth T-300 with a steel 1,050-gallon tank (750 waste/300 freshwater), built by Crescent Tank; 10 slide-in units with 400-gallon tanks (300 waste-

Troiano and Bellino agree that a successful merger depends on one thing: unflinching candor.

“We had to be brutally honest with each other,” Bellino says. “That meant if I had a concern, I had to tell T.J. up front that I wasn’t comfortable with it ... that this is my fear or concern.”

“Absolutely,” Troiano agrees. “We had to sit down at the table and agree that there’d be no hard feelings if things didn’t work out.”

IRONING OUT ISSUES

Both contractors relied on attorneys and accountants, who were invaluable in working out details and pointing each in the right direction. But sometimes, the competitors found it more useful to sidestep legal advice and instead find common ground on their own.

For example, a major hot button in the negotiations centered on an employment contract for Bellino. His attorney said it should be a long-term contract, while Troiano and his attorney didn’t feel one was even necessary.

“I was afraid I’d get bought out, then get let go,” Bellino says. “I wanted some security that I’d remain on board, even though I knew they wanted me and were asking me to come and work with them.”

“I don’t believe in employment contracts,” Troiano says. “I didn’t feel we had to guarantee employment when we obviously wanted and needed him.”

Defying their attorneys’ advice, Troiano and Bellino sat down in a tavern and, over a few beers, hammered out an agreement they both could live with.

At times, sheer trust won out over legal



Phil Stisi applies new Royal Flush decals on the units from the merged companies.

water/100 freshwater), made by Pik Rite Inc.; and 11 Explorer trailers made by McKee Technologies Inc. A 2007 Chevrolet C7500 septic pumping truck, equipped with an aluminum 2,500-gallon tank built by KeeVac Industries Inc., rounds out the fleet.

Putting new decals on the restrooms. After the merger, the company owns about 1,200 restrooms, mostly made by PolyPortables Inc. and Five Peaks Technology. Until all the new decals were in place, the company did its best to deliver Royal Flush-labeled restrooms to old Royal Flush customers to minimize confusion.

Combining routes for maximum efficiency. The company uses Summit ERIT Route Management software made by Ritam Technologies LP. "It's been a key tool in making the merger successful," Bellino says. "At first, routes overlapped to the point that our drivers were waving at each other on the same roads."

Determining the best supplies to use, such as bathroom tissue. Royal Flush used one-ply paper and Troiano uses two-ply. "We both liked each brand for particular reasons," Bellino says. One-ply paper from Reliable Brand bathroom tissue eventually won because it offers 2,000 sheets per roll compared to 300 per roll for two-ply, Bellino says.

A HAPPY ENDING

So far, Bellino says the merger has been a success, and he's grateful to Troiano for helping to make it happen.

"It's been awesome," Bellino says. "Everything is blending together really well. It's been easy because even though it's difficult, T.J. has relinquished his duties and given me the freedom to make decisions. He always says, 'It's your baby — run it like it's your own.'"

It's not often that something good comes from a disaster. But in this case, something greater than the sum of its parts emerged from that fire: a stronger company, more customer service capability and a larger fleet of equipment. Not to mention one less competitor to butt heads with. ■

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Employee Communication is Key During a Merger

When businesses merge, success often depends on whether employees can work together and get along. So when Maine companies Troiano Waste Services Inc. of South Portland and Royal Flush Portable Restrooms in Scarborough merged, owners T.J. Troiano and Jeff Bellino worked hard to create an atmosphere that avoided an "us" and "them" mentality, including holding team-building events like an employee outing to a hockey game.

The two businessmen had several factors working in their favor as three Royal Flush employees — two route drivers and an office staffer — transitioned over to Troiano. First of all, the drivers knew each other because they often met at the same waste treatment facilities, Bellino says.

"Plus, they knew that T.J. and I already knew and respected each other," he says. "They picked up on that."

Moreover, in December 2009, Troiano employees moved into a new, 14,000-square-foot building that houses offices and a large maintenance facility. Royal Flush employees moved in a month later, so all employees essentially were on equal footing in terms of acclimating to new surroundings, Bellino notes.

Troiano is a much bigger company than Royal Flush and subsequently is more structured in terms of procedures and protocols than Royal Flush, which Bellino says he ran "very loosely." As such, Royal Flush employees had to acclimate to things like time clocks and time cards.

But they had good reasons to be pleased about the merger, too. Troiano offers employees benefits that Bellino couldn't provide, such as health insurance, sick days and vacation days. Troiano also maintains and repairs its own trucks, which dramatically reduces downtime for repairs.

"Troiano also operates with better maintenance standards," Bellino says.

Moreover, because Troiano is a much larger company that operates several different divisions, Royal Flush employees now have more job security than before. "If things get slow, they might be able to work for another division, rather than get laid off," Bellino says.

CONFUSION OVER COMPANY IDENTITY IS BOUND TO HAPPEN

The merger of Troiano Waste Services and Royal Flush Portable Restrooms initially produced some humorous situations, says Jeff Bellino, former owner of Royal Flush and now part owner of Associated Septic Services Inc., a portable sanitation and septic division of Troiano.

In one instance, a Royal Flush customer upset with pricing canceled an order for a restroom — then ordered a restroom from Associated Septic Services Inc., a division of Troiano Waste. "So we pulled the Royal Flush toilet and dropped off an Associated toilet," Bellino says.

In another instance, a driver delivered a restroom with an Associated decal to a regular Royal Flush customer. Later, the customer called to complain that he didn't get his restroom. Bellino checked with the driver, who said he delivered the restroom that morning. "So I called the customer, who told me he had an Associated restroom," Bellino says. "I told him, 'That's it!'" Overall, however, instances of customer confusion over the merger were rare, Bellino says.

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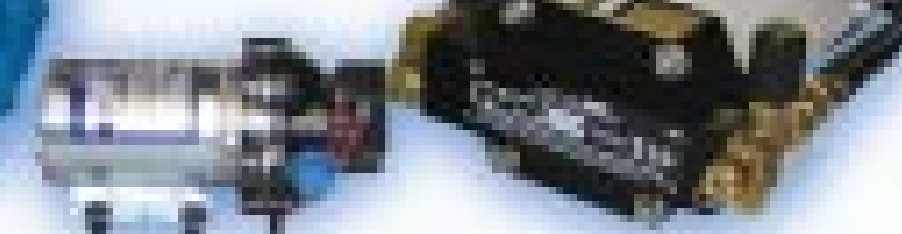
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ON LOCATION

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LOCATION: Grundy Center, Iowa

THE PRO: Cooley Pumping

OUTSTANDING In the Field

**Iowa's Cooley Pumping
provides 350 restrooms to keep pace with
farm workers on corn detasseling detail**

By Betty Dageforde

THE TEAM

Paul Cooley's company, Cooley Pumping, in Grundy Center, Iowa (population 2,500), provides septic, drain cleaning, and roll-off services, in addition to renting portable restrooms, which accounts for 50 percent of its work. The portable sanitation staff includes Bruce Keller, Cody Heasley, Justin Miller, as well as seasonal workers Ben Dinsdale and Brett Bengen. The septic crew of Brian Hall, Ryan Rekers, Marc Mahood and Gary Poppen get involved with shuffling portable restrooms around in the heat of the season. Cooley's wife, Deb, has been

temporarily helping out with billing in addition to her full-time job as an accountant.

COMPANY HISTORY

The septic business was started by Cooley's grandfather, Leo Hopkins, in 1953. In 1993, while still in college, Cooley bought it from him. In 2000, Cooley added portable restrooms. "People were calling wanting to rent restrooms, so I finally decided to get into it," he says, thinking it would be a small sideline. "I told my wife I'm just going to buy 16 for weekend parties and celebrations." But that operation

Paul Cooley uses a custom-built lift to increase the indoor storage capacity of his restroom inventory. (Photos by Carol Hansen)

Paul and Deb Cooley are shown with their restrooms in the background.



A trailer loaded with Cooley units (above) is ready to go out to area farms. At right, Paul Cooley delivers a unit. Note the poster of worker sanitation rules on the side of the unit.

took on a life of its own, and today his inventory stands at 850 units.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Shortly after purchasing his first restrooms, Cooley contacted Monsanto Co. to discuss providing restrooms for the farm workers working in the company's farm fields. Because he was new to the industry, they agreed to try him out by giving him half their business. But in a bold move, Cooley said no. "I told them if I can't have it all, I don't want any," he says. Fortunately the gamble paid off and he got the contract, which required him to quickly purchase and assemble another 135 units. Monsanto Co. has been



a customer ever since, along with six other large agricultural companies.

THE MAIN EVENT

Many of the fields around Grundy Center are planted in April with seed corn; that is, corn destined for future planting rather than processing for the table. This corn is grown as a hybrid between two varieties. To promote cross-breeding, the tassels of one variety are removed so they can be pollinated by the other. Detasseling machines get only 60 to 90 percent of the tassels, so human labor is required to finish the job. Thus, in June and July, the fields are full of students, migrant workers, and anyone needing a temporary job. Cooley Pumping provides restrooms for the workers.

Cooley workers Ben Dinsdale and Brett Bengen repair a portable restroom.



BY THE NUMBERS

Cooley Pumping provides 350 units to numerous fields in a 50-mile radius of Grundy Center. In addition, the company delivers, sets up and services another 150 units owned by one of the customers. Some fields require two, three or four units, but most only one. Small banks are also provided at customer plants.

Cooley's units are blue PolyJohn Enterprises PJN3s, all with built-in sinks. It is a legal requirement that farm workers wash their hands with soap and water both before and after using the restroom. This is for their own health, to remove crop protection products from their hands, as well as the safety of the crops.

LET'S ROLL

This year, delivery and setup of units started in mid-June, taking three technicians nearly 10 days. Drivers found locations using GPS technology and field maps provided by customers showing where units were to be placed. The company maintained strict records for tracking units. "Once we set it there, we'll document which restroom is in that field, the date it was set, and exactly where," Cooley says.

Units were delivered using Ford F-350s

and F-150s with hauling trailers. They were removed in early August.

KEEPIN' IT CLEAN

All units were cleaned once a week. And since they are in hundreds of locations over a wide area, it took about a week to get to them all.

The company has two 2009 Dodge 5500s built out by Imperial Industries Inc., both equipped with 700-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater aluminum tanks and Masport Inc. pumps. The vehicles are four-wheel-drive so they can maneuver in muddy terrain.

Servicing these units requires a lot of water, not only to refresh sinks and holding tanks, but because units get dusty and muddy and have to be hosed down. "It takes us an extra five or ten minutes," Cooley says. On occasion, the crew will have to return to the yard to pick up more water. This heavy water usage is the main reason Cooley chose lighter aluminum tanks.

Pumping is sometimes difficult because paper towels get thrown into the tanks as the units do not have wastebaskets. Waste is hauled to area sewage treatment plants.

Besides wearing company shirts with logos, service technicians are required to wear

Paul Cooley secures a load of portable restrooms to a transport trailer adjacent to a farm field in rural Iowa.



full safety gear at customer plants — steel-toed shoes, long pants, glasses, hard hats, and safety vests. Drivers are encouraged to wear this gear in the fields as well.

NO VACATION

The company goes into over-drive during mid-summer as they try to keep up with regular work and service these field units. In addition, they work a number of special events, including RAGBRAI, an annual seven-day

bicycle trip across the state that attracts 30,000 riders, for which Cooley provided 350 units in four communities along the route. "It gets pretty crazy," he says. "We really put in some long hours." ■

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Make it ECO-FRIENDLY

Odor Control Product Round-Up

By Ed Wodalski

When portable sanitation customers seek out a new service provider, they often ask about eco-friendly solutions to cleaning and deodorizing

products. This is particularly true of special events organizers, who are always looking for a "green" spin to promote their fairs and festivals.

It's easier than ever for PROs to oblige requests for chemical solutions that are easy on the environment. Take a look at the variety of deodorizers available today:

Armal Releases Scented Super Concentrate

Scented super concentrate from **Armal** is a non-formaldehyde formula made to match the fragrances of its Scentbox scented-wall portable restrooms. The concentrate — available in Apple Blossom, Pinewood Trail, Rose Sensation, Strawberry Field and Vanilla Balm — can be used in any portable restroom. Available in 5- and 55-gallon containers, it's made to work in extreme heat. One to two ounces of concentrate mix with 6 to 7 gallons of water.

866/873-7796; www.armal.biz.



APEX Offers Non-Staining Elimin-X 1000 Concentrate

Elimin-X 1000 super concentrate from **APEX Chemical** is a non-formaldehyde restroom deodorizer. Available in a variety of fragrances, the non-staining blue concentrate is designed to control odors in extreme heat and in over-use conditions. Tested effective in multiple weather conditions, 1/2-ounce of concentrate mixes with 5 gallons of water. 208/704-1239; www.apexchem.com.



Chempace Introduces Larger Extreme PowrPak

Extreme PowrPak time-released, pre-measured dry deodorant from **Chempace Corp.** is available in a new, larger packet. The non-formaldehyde restroom deodorant is designed for moderate temperatures. It's biodegradable and features a non-staining dye. The deodorant is packaged in a water-soluble film that quickly dissolves.

One packet mixes with 5 gallons of water. Fragrances include Raspberry-Vanilla and Fresh-n-Clean. Chempace also offers Ultra PowrPak for high temperatures and severe conditions and Super PowrPak for cool temperatures and special events use. 800/423-5350; www.chempace.com.



When it comes to providing the best odor control products for customers, more and more PROs are asking for environmentally sensitive solutions

Del Vel Offers Odor Eliminator

Eliminator deodorizers from **Del Vel Co.** neutralizes waste and other foul odors. Available in concentrate and ready-to-use formula, the neutralizer contains no formaldehyde, phosphates, oxidizing agents or phenols. Featuring non-staining dye, the biodegradable and non-toxic formula is made to work in any temperature. Fragrances include Bubble Gum, Cherry, Spice, Mulberry and Mint. 800/699-9903; www.delvel.com.



PolyPortables Offers Pre-Mixed Packets

DriPax water-soluble deodorizer from **Green Way Products**, a division of PolyPortables Inc., is biodegradable and environmentally safe. The portion-controlled packets are available in three strengths: cool weather and special events, moderate to higher temperatures and hot temperature and heavy traffic. The packets dissolve in 5 gallons of water. Fragrances include Mulberry, Fresher n' Cleaner and a featured Fragrance of the Month. 800/241-7951; www.greenwayproducts.net.



Johnny's Choice Offers Biosorb Liquid Concentrate

Biosorb liquid concentrate from **Johnny's Choice** features bacterial deodorant agents designed to break down waste. Non-staining, the environmentally friendly enzyme formula is available in 6-gallon pails and 55-gallon drums. Other deodorants include Relentless liquid concentrate, designed for heavy-duty summer use, and all-season Masking Concentrate liquid. Both can be diluted to meet specific job needs. 888/729-6478; www.johnnyschoice.com.



Nilodor Introduces Deep Blue Wash-Down Concentrate

Deep Blue Wash-Down concentrate with fragrance enhancer from **Nilodor Inc.** is designed to eliminate severe odors. The concentrate can be mixed with water and sprayed inside the restroom or added to the cleaner/disinfectant when prepping or staging units for service. The odor control is available in Cherry, Natural, Tango Mango, Tutti Frutti, Citrus and Spring Mint. **800/443-4321; www.getdeepblue.com.**



Porta Pro Offers Odor Neutralizer

Premium deodorizer from **Porta Pro Chemical Co.** is available in non-toxic, non-allergenic liquid or packets, free of phosphates, formaldehyde, dichlorobenzene, enzymes and heavy metals. The biodegradable deodorizer is designed to neutralize odors by bonding the odor in the solution rather than chemically modifying it. Other natural formulations include a deodorizer/emulsifier, graffiti remover and Never Freeze restroom anti-freeze. **888/673-5846.**



Prime Paper and Chemicals Offers Pre-Measured Packets

Pre-measured dry, water-soluble packets from **Prime Paper and Chemicals** are designed for weekly service in moderate temperatures or special events. The non-formaldehyde formula features a non-staining dye and is available in Raspberry-Vanilla and Fresh-n-Clean. One packet mixes with 5 gallons of water. **888/296-9928; www.primepaperandchemicals.com.**



Safe-T-Fresh Available in Custom Blends

Safe-T-Fresh deodorizers from **Satellite Industries Inc.** are available in custom blends, featuring a combination of active ingredients, perfumes or dyes. Blends are available in formaldehyde or non-formaldehyde syrup, concentrate or ready-to-use formulas. Fragrances include Mountain Breeze, Cherry, Lemon, Bubble Gum, Mulberry Twist, Paradise, Sunshine and Tropical Fruit. **800/328-3332; www.satelliteindustries.com.**



PolyJohn Introduces FreshCare Deodorizing Packets

Environmentally friendly **FreshCare** deodorizing packets from **RID It** by **PolyJohn Enterprises Corp.** feature bacterial agents designed to liquefy waste. PolyJohn also offers the Fresh Start Supplies Package. **800/292-1305; www.rid-it.com.**



TOICO Features Pre-Measured Enviro-Tabs

Pre-measured **Enviro-Tabs** from **TOICO Industries** combine natural enzyme deodorizers and waste digesters in an individually wrapped and self-dissolving tablet. The environmentally friendly deodorant features a powerful fragrance and long-term odor control. Non-staining, non-formaldehyde deodorizers in varied strengths are available. **888/935-1133; www.toico.com.**



Walex Offers Fortified Enzyme Formula

Bio-Pak natural enzyme holding tank deodorizer and waste digester packets from **Walex Products Company Inc.** are designed to control odor and liquefy waste. The fortified formula has a non-staining color and a new fresh scent. The biodegradable packets meet stringent California wastewater requirements. **800/338-3155; www.walex.com.**



J & J Chemicals Offers Individually Wrapped Tablets

Individually wrapped **Everpro QuadraMaxx** tablets from **J & J Chemical Co.** are made to eliminate odor in extreme conditions. The non-staining, fast-dissolving tablets are biodegradable, environmentally friendly and available in Gold for summer heat and high traffic, Silver for moderate heat and Bronze for special events and mild-climate use. **800/345-3303; www.jjchem.com.**



SURCO Aqua Strength 150

Aqua Strength 150 restroom deodorizer from **SURCO Products** is a non-formaldehyde, syrup concentrate available in 1-, 5-, 7- or 55-gallon containers. Available in Cherry, and other scents, the odor neutralizer mixes 1/2- to 1-ounce of concentrate per five gallons of water or two ounces of concentrate for severe usage. **800/556-0111; www.surcopt.com.**



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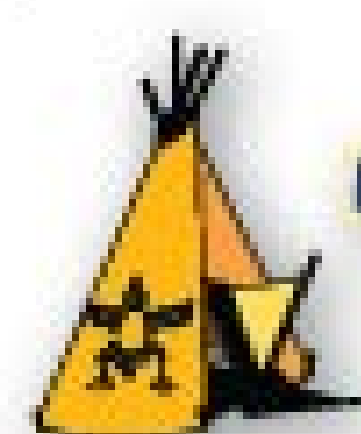
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Moving Toward Sustainability

DO ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS AND WORKER SAFETY DRIVE YOUR CHOICE OF CLEANING SOLUTIONS AND TANK ADDITIVES?

By Mary Shafer

As the portable sanitation industry matures, contractors are taking a look at their businesses with an eye toward profitability and sustainability. And part of sustainability has to do with the choices PROs make in purchasing and using cleaning solutions and tank additives, including disinfectants and deodorizers.

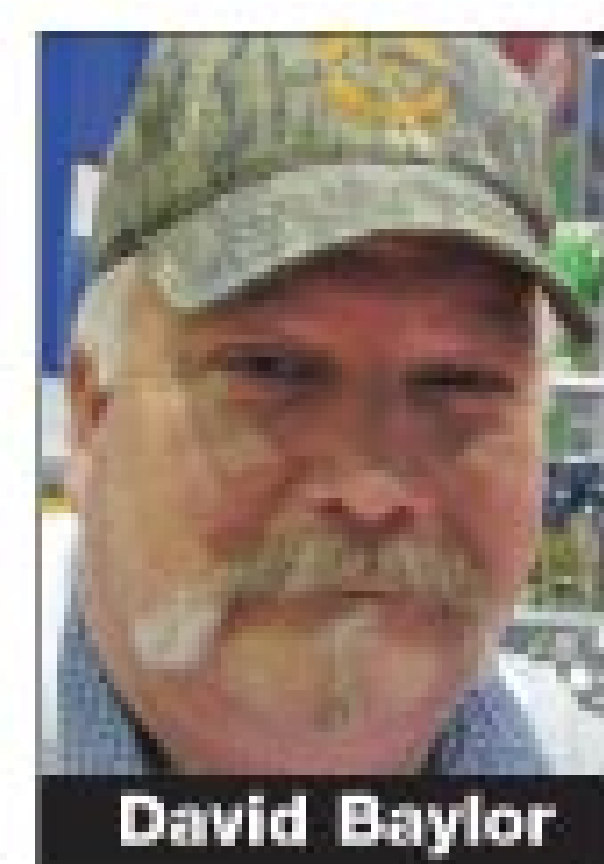
All of these organic and chemical compounds, by the nature of their function, are strong. Some may affect the health and safety of users as well as the environment around the restrooms, trailers and trucks they're used in. One of the most critical of these products is the deodorizer.

Hazardous Materials Resource Note No. 38 was published in August 2000 by the federal government's Bureau of Land Management. It discusses the issue of such additives as it relates to increasing treatment issues with recreational vehicle holding tank wastes from campsites. Though it's not exactly the same concerns PROs must deal with, the bureau's dilemma is similar, as shown by this excerpt:

"Formaldehyde is a relatively simple organic compound, and is biodegradable, breaking down into water and carbon dioxide in one step. It does not control odors by killing the microorganisms that generate them, as is popularly believed. Instead, it reacts chemically with odor-causing compounds to render them less odorous.

"However, the organic strength of most formaldehyde-based deodorizers is so high that the resulting mixture in a holding tank is 15 to 20 times stronger than typical domestic wastewater, even after several days in the tank. Biodegradability is desirable but is not necessarily an indication of ease of or acceptability for treatment. Formaldehyde is likely to be more closely regulated in the future, particularly when part of a wastewater disposal system."

Given that waste handled by all PROs eventually becomes part of a wastewater disposal system, how do these contractors feel about using formaldehyde-based deodorizers in their units?



Name: David Baylor
Company: Baylor Buddy Johns & Septic
Location: Grand Junction, Mich.
Employees: 2
Years in Business: 10

deodorizing product line. "We've been real happy with it. It seems to do the job in the extreme heat, and even when it's cold.

"My only problem now is that I need something in the wintertime to keep (the tanks) liquid. What the industry needs is someone to come

"I've been earth-friendly since the get-go," David Baylor says proudly of his portables and septic pumping business. "No harsh chemicals, no brines." He uses Poly-Portables Inc. Green Way

"I need something in the wintertime to keep (the tanks) liquid. What the industry needs is someone to come up with something that keeps tanks from freezing, but is still earth-friendly."

David Baylor

up with something that keeps tanks from freezing, but is still earth-friendly. No brines, because I land-apply and I have to raise a crop, to take care of the nitrates and the phosphates and all. And I can't do that with brine."



Name: Matt Copeland
Company: Diamond Environmental Services LLC
Location: San Marcos, Calif.
Employees: 75
Years in Business: 17

Diamond Environmental Services provides portable restrooms, septic and grease trap service and site services. They use a non-formaldehyde deodorizer formula to be in compliance with California's environmental standards, the most stringent in America.

Matt Copeland has never used a deodorizer with any other formula in 10 years with Diamond, but says, "From what I hear from the older guys, they prefer the newer stuff because of the strong fumes and just unpleasant working properties of the formaldehyde."



Names: Phil Maas
Company: Frankfort Sanitation Inc.
Location: Frankfort, Kan.
Employees: 5
Years in Business: 16

Phil Maas' company provides portable restrooms, trailers and accessories, along with trash removal in his largely rural territory. He uses non-formaldehyde base formula from Walex

Products Company Inc.

Though Maas believes the non-formaldehyde product is better for the environment, his primary concern is employee safety. He always wants to choose the less-toxic alternatives offered by the industry. "I figured (formaldehyde formulas) would eventually be outlawed anyway, so I never have used them." ■

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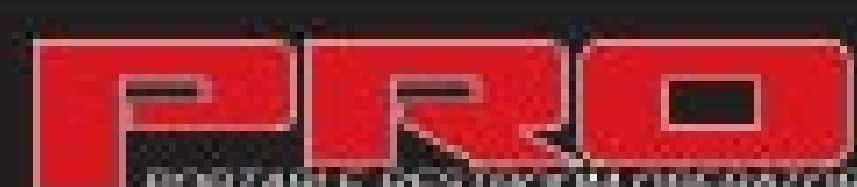
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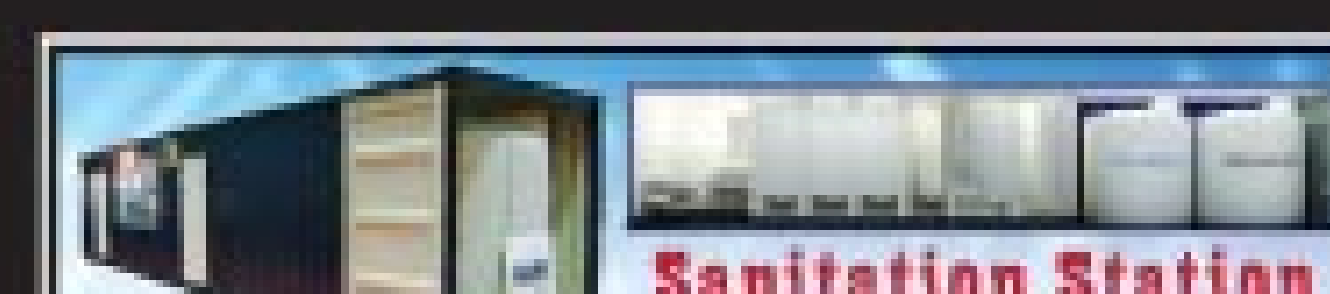
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Bob Carlson (left) and
Jerry Kirkpatrick answer your
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The Spring and the Ring

ACQUAINT YOURSELF WITH THE VACUUM AND PRESSURE RELIEF VALVES ON YOUR TRUCK TO ENSURE SAFE DAILY PUMPING OPERATIONS

QUESTION:

I've only been in the pumping business a little over a year and I've read these articles. Most likely you've covered the difference between the vacuum relief valve and the pressure relief valve. Maybe you could refresh the veterans and inform the rookies about what those valves do and what we need to know about them.

Mike Henderson
Atlanta, Ga.

ANSWER:

We have discussed pressure relief and vacuum relief valves in the past, but you make a good point about a refresher course. *PRO* is picking up new readers all the time; the veterans need a friendly reminder, and the newbies like you need to know how important these valves are in the operation of all vacuum trucks.

Over the years, we've run into a lot of pumpers who didn't know the difference between a pressure relief valve and a vacuum relief valve. The simplest way to tell them apart is the *spring and the ring*.

The vacuum relief valve has a spring, while the pressure relief valve has a ring on top. So the next time you're checking out your truck, locate each of these valves. A plastic cover on the neck of the valve may hide the spring on the vacuum relief valve, but the pressure relief valve does not have a cylindrical neck. It has a flat top with a red ring.

WE'VE SEEN TANKS THAT HAVE IMPOLODED AND TANKS THAT HAVE EXPLODED (THE REMNANTS ARE HARD TO FIND). IT'S AN UNBELIEVABLE SIGHT AND A FINANCIAL DISASTER FOR THE OWNER OF THE UNIT.

PULLING IT IN

Obviously, the vacuum relief valve relieves vacuum. The valve is calibrated and set to open and relieve the pressure at a safe level, thus saving your tank from damage caused by too much pressure. If there is no vacuum relief valve or the valve happens to get stuck and fails to work, the possibility increases dramatically that the tank will implode. That means the top part of the tank could be crushed until it is nearly touching the bottom of the tank.

As a general rule, vacuum relief valves are set at 20 inches of mercury. That level of pressure is more than enough to handle all portable sanitation or septic service tasks.

The best way to avoid having trouble with your vacuum relief valve is to test it often. Here's how to do that: Build up the vacuum in your tank and then push the spring on the neck of the valve. If it is working properly, air should rush in, reducing the vacuum. If the spring won't budge, you've got a problem. Most likely the spring is broken or plugged and the valve should be replaced. Because of the need for frequent tests, it's critical that your pressure relief valve is easy to reach.

PUSHING IT OUT

If your pump has a four-way valve, you are able to pressurize your tank. If you don't have a four-way valve, you don't have to worry about a pressure relief valve. To check your pressure relief valve, pressurize the tank with all the tank openings closed. Pull the red ring on the valve and you should hear air rushing out. If you do, then the valve is working properly. If you don't hear air rushing out, the valve is stuck and not working properly. If, after a few tries, the valve still fails, replace it. Excessive pressure not allowed to escape from your tank can cause it to explode.

The valve can be set to open at any pressure level; find out where the tank manufacturer or the truck builder initially set it to open. To verify the calibration, watch your pressure/vacuum gauge to see if the valve opens at the designated pressure.

These valves are critical to the safe operation of your vacuum system. Get to know them and test them at least once a week. We've seen tanks that have imploded and tanks that have exploded (the remnants are hard to find). It's an unbelievable sight and a financial disaster for the owner of the unit. Know your vacuum and pressure relief valves, test them regularly, and your system will last a long time.

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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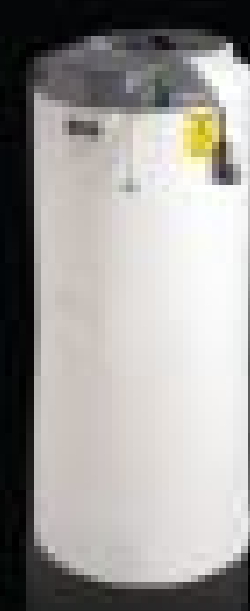
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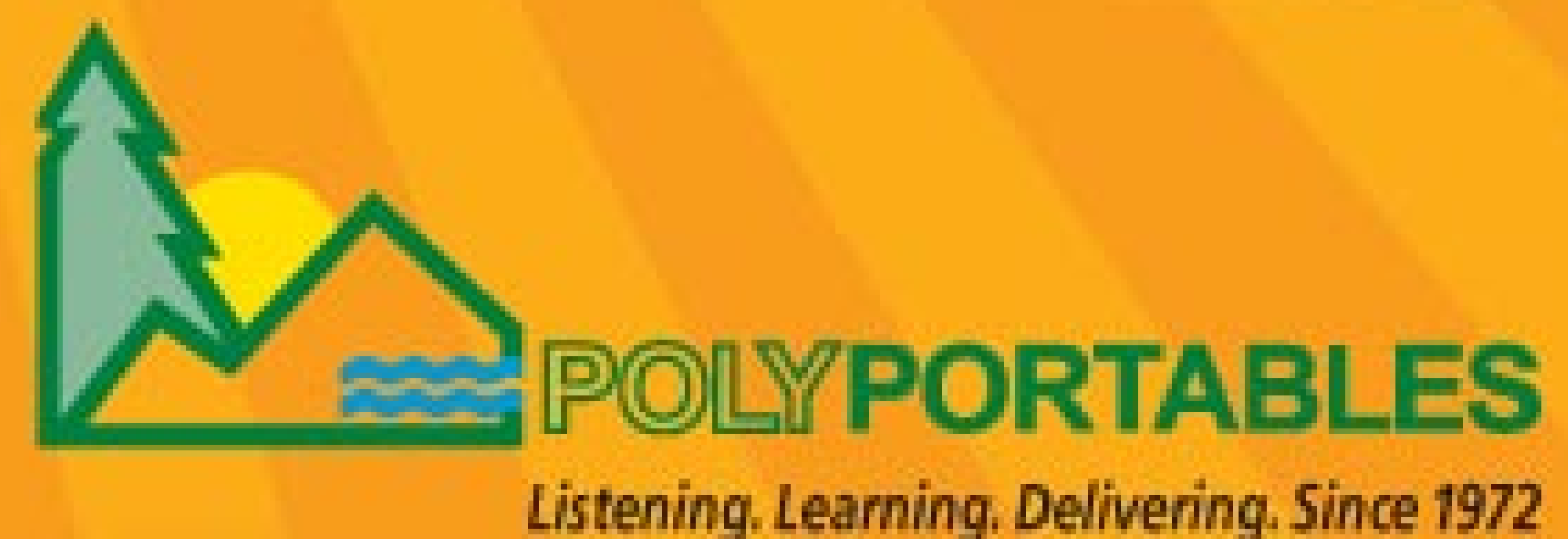
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