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**ON THE COVER:** Three years ago, Ryan Pierce started Lone Star Latrine on a shoestring budget and with help from family members. The Austin, Texas, company grew considerably, and Pierce sold it to a bigger company. He continues to run the portable sanitation operation. He is shown on a job site with a delivery of PolyPortables restrooms. (Photo by Jimmy Alford)

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# The Portland Loo

**A NEW ANSWER TO PROVIDING OUTDOOR URBAN BATHROOM FACILITIES MAY OFFER PROs CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE MARKETPLACE**

**By Jim Kneiszel**

**H**ave you heard of the Portland Loo? If not and you work in and around a major metropolitan area, there is a chance you'll see this slick urban stand-alone bathroom concept at some point, maybe in the not-too-distant future. The permanent sidewalk bathroom is the brainchild of a Portland, Ore., city commissioner who saw a similar solution to the need for public bathrooms in busy city centers while traveling in Europe.

A series of stainless steel panels shield the view of users from passers-by, while large vented areas allow air to pass through the spacious, single-head unit with a U-shaped floor plan. A roof protects users from rain. The metal walls are designed for easy cleaning and the concrete sidewalk is the floor of the unit.

The City of Portland worked with a fabricator to build and place several of the so-called Portland Loos in downtown areas over several years and then began marketing the concept to other cities. Units have been sold in waterfront districts from Alaska to San Diego, and the company that manufactures them is continuing to market them to municipal buyers. They've recently had interest from Hawaii for what the Portland Environmental Services folks are jokingly calling a Honolulu Loo.

Portland Loos are not cheap. With a price tag of \$90,000 to \$110,000, the units require a significant municipal investment, putting them out of reach for many smaller communities that see, for example, significant tourist trade and have a need for facilities during the busy season.

## YOU AND THE LOO

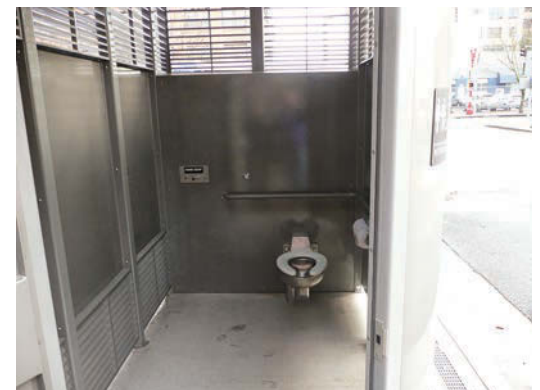
So why am I writing about the Portland Loo concept in a magazine dedicated to "portable" sanitation providers? These are restroom facilities placed in a public place, but there is decidedly nothing portable about them. They are bolted into the cement and tied into the sewer system so they really don't have a lot to do with you or your businesses. Or do they?

I argue that the Portland Loo and similar incarnations that may become a trend offer both challenges and opportunities to portable restroom operators who work in and around urban areas. Understanding the product and its potential long-term implications can help PROs better market their services.



**Left:** The Portland Loo has a sleek design. On the front door, there is a framed area to allow for advertising. (Photos courtesy of the City of Portland and Madden Fabrication)

**Below:** The stainless steel interior allows for easy, frequent cleanings.



**Right:** The Portland Loo has a footprint of about 10 feet long and 6 feet wide with a rounded door on the front and an enclosed utility area in the back.

So here are a few questions to ask yourself about the emergence of the Portland Loo and a few strategies to consider if one pops up in your hometown:

### Is this a warm-climate phenomenon?

This seems like a logical conclusion, but it remains to be seen where interest will trend for facilities that are not climate controlled. With units already sold to communities in Alaska, maybe they'll be popular in locations with short but busy summer seasons. Taking bang for the buck into consideration, you'd think the California coast and places like Miami would be naturals for a permanent Loo that can be utilized all year.



**Could this have a negative impact on your business?**

Probably not. While many more cities are ordering a few additional portable restrooms these days to serve high-traffic downtown areas and growing homeless populations, the vast majority of urban placements are for large numbers of units to serve special events. PROs in Portland may be losing a handful of restroom contracts due to the Loo, but it's not significant enough to cause a concern. It appears the Portland Loo has a small, specialized market to serve.

*A contractor washes the exterior of a Portland Loo. Portable restroom operators could offer this service to communities that use these permanent bathrooms.*



**Is there a way you can work with, not against this trend?**

One of the downsides communities are finding with the Portland Loo is rising maintenance costs accrued for janitorial service. One news account in Portland stated the city was spending more than \$14,000 per toilet per year for contracted cleaning services and a smaller amount for mechanical repairs. Is this a reasonable amount? Would your restroom service technician be able to clean these units more cost-effectively?

Granted, you wouldn't need to flip the switch on your vacuum pump, but perhaps you offer to power wash and sanitize these units one stop on a commercial construction route. Your technicians certainly have the skills and equipment necessary to provide a quality cleaning service. And maybe servicing a handful of permanent sidewalk restrooms would open you up to other municipal contract opportunities for your own portable sanitation inventory.

**If a Portland Loo suffers serious vandalism, the city could be stuck with significant repair costs and potential downtime. If a portable restroom is damaged, the PRO takes it away and brings in another the same day.**

**Is this an opportunity to promote portable restrooms as a value proposition?**

Most definitely. Let's compare the costs between the Portland Loo and a standard portable restroom in a downtown location. Let's say a city pays \$100,000 for a Portland Loo, \$14,000 in annual cleaning costs and \$1,000 a year for repairs and upkeep. Depreciating the Loo over 10 years, the annual operating cost is \$25,200 and the monthly cost is \$2,100.

What do you charge for a portable restroom placement for a month? What would the bill be if you provide daily service to make sure the unit remains close to spotless? Could you offer multiple restrooms on the same site to prevent overuse and still stay under the budget? If the city frowns on a standard drop tank restroom, you can offer them service upgrade choices. How about a high-end flushing unit or a compact restroom trailer?

There are other benefits for cities choosing a portable sanitation product over a permanent unit: The Portland Loo is locked into one location. But a portable restroom can be moved as often as necessary to be where it's needed most or it can be taken away at times when demand is low. If a Port-

land Loo suffers serious vandalism, the city could be stuck with significant repair costs and potential downtime. If a portable restroom is damaged, the PRO takes it away and brings in another the same day.

**COMPLEMENTARY, NOT COMPETITION**

The Portland Loo is an impressive product. It's durable and good-looking and would blend in well in many modern cities. The concept of an industrial-grade permanent sidewalk bathroom may become popular and certainly has the potential to serve a good purpose. I would say the same for the portable sanitation products you provide. They are part of the answer to improved restroom facilities in urban areas of need.

Where products like the Portland Loo take off, I see ways for PROs to promote and integrate services and products that complement the permanent facilities. And by contrast, I would argue that selling the value and flexibility of portable restrooms over permanent bathrooms is easy. ■

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# The WWETT Show Afterglow

**NOW THAT YOU'RE 'BACK AT THE OFFICE' AFTER ATTENDING THE WWETT SHOW, IT'S TIME TO REFLECT ON WHAT YOU LEARNED AND PUT IT INTO ACTION**

**By Judy Kneiszel**

**S**pending a few days away from home at the Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport (WWETT) Show can make a big difference in the day-to-day operation of your company all year. While you're busy catching up on what you missed while in Indy, take time to consider all the ways you benefited from the experience. Ask yourself these questions and you'll no doubt find the answers point to doing it all again next year.

## **DID YOU LEARN ANYTHING?**

If you attended any Education Day seminars, then the time away from your business was most certainly worth it. The goal of these seminars is to help improve your technical performance, customer service, employee development, and overall quality of life for you and your company. Many states approve specified sessions within the educational program for your required continuing education units or professional development hours. If that applies to you, not only did you learn something, you fulfilled a requirement while being uninterrupted by the daily grind of running a business.

Even if you didn't attend Education Day, you probably still learned plenty at the event. With 500,000 square feet of exhibit space filled by more than 500 exhibitors, odds are good you saw new and potentially helpful products for your business. Or maybe you got a firsthand understanding of a product or technology you didn't understand previously. Some people are visual learners and seeing the exhibits is an education in itself. Others are verbal learners and take advantage of having the product experts on hand in the booths.

## **DID YOU BUY ANYTHING?**

Maybe you learned so much about a product or technology that you bought it right at the show. That's the case for 81 percent of attendees who report making a purchase or firming up a purchase decision because of what they saw at WWETT. Or maybe the information you gained prompted you to plan for a new equipment purchase later in the year. Meeting in-person with expert representatives from companies is a valuable benefit of attending a trade show. And, yes, sometimes vendors offer special "show prices" or discounts.

## **DID YOU MEET ANYONE?**

Maybe you met the editor of *PRO*. Maybe you met the person you've been talking to on the phone for years when you called a supplier. It's nice to put a face with a name and a business card in your pocket. Maybe six months from now you'll remember that Clem from Columbus was dealing with the same issue you're dealing with. You'll dig up his card or search your phone for the contact info you scanned in at the show and dial. Sure, he remembers you and he would be glad to share how things turned out for

him in this situation in order to help you deal with your problem. You never know when "who you know" is going to come in handy.

## **DID YOU GAIN ANYTHING INTANGIBLE?**

When you work in an industry viewed by some as a "dirty job," attending a trade show can be a huge ego boost. Did you take any employees or family members to the show for the first time, and were they amazed? It can be fun to see a person suddenly "get" how big and important your industry is. That newfound industry pride translates into pride in a job well done upon returning home. Instead of having to endure potty jokes from some folks back home, the businesses around the Indiana Convention Center treated you with immense respect. And there's just something about networking with fellow contractors that refreshes one's enthusiasm for the industry.

## **DID YOU BOOST YOUR STREET CRED?**

Another intangible gained from attending a trade show is an air of professionalism. Customers who called when you were gone and were informed that you were at the show probably came away thinking, "Wow, he really takes his business seriously. He's a real professional." Some PROs get even more mileage out of the trip to Indy by sending a brief press release about it to the local paper's business section sharing the news that a local company owner attended a major national trade show. Posting to social media about the show can also get the word out.

## **DID YOU SOLVE A PROBLEM?**

Being in a room full of people who do what you do means there's a great wealth of knowledge to tap into. Sure, Education Day seminars and exhibitors are great sources of information, but so are the PROs you met at breakfast, in the hotel lobby or on the exhibit floor. Part of that "we're all in this together" mentality is a willingness to share experiences and help fellow PROs solve problems. With 13,000 people from 45 countries in attendance at WWETT, countless problems are solved each year. Maybe even yours.

## **DID YOU HAVE ANY FUN?**

Attending a trade show isn't all about work. It's about relaxing at the end of the day with peers and toasting the industry that brought you together. It's about sharing stories and having a laugh with people who understand you and what you do. That's why the WWETT Show agenda always includes the Industry Appreciation Party with beverages and live music. If you go to the show every year, you'll find you really look forward to seeing some of the same people every year. It's always fun to reconnect with friends you've made in the industry, and make some new friends each year too. So mark your calendar for the 2016 show ... because your friends will be there! ■

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# BUILT FROM SCRATCH

Ryan Pierce supervises the setup of a load of PolyPortables restrooms at a running event in Austin, Texas. Several of the delivery trailers were built in-house with a rail system designed to eliminate the need to strap down units. (Photos by Jimmy Alford)

**Below:** Pierce, far right, is shown at an event location with crew members, from left, Raul Palomino, Ross Obenhaus and Josh Williams.

**Determination pays off for Texas contractor Ryan Pierce, who goes from startup to spinoff in three years and stays on to manage the company he built** **BY BETTY DAGEFORDE**

**W**hen the portable sanitation company Ryan Pierce worked for was sold to a new owner, he was faced with the decision of staying put and signing a noncompete contract or moving on. He walked away and later decided to strike out on his own by forming a new company, Lone Star Latrine.

Pierce started the Austin, Texas-based company on a shoestring budget but quickly built it to the enviable position where a larger company took notice. After three years and growing to employ a staff of 17, Pierce sold Lone Star last September to regional trash-hauler Texas Disposal Systems. Today, Pierce remains at the helm of the portable sanitation arm of the larger company as green events manager.

Pierce's story is a study in personal sacrifice and risk-taking; he cashed in a 401k retirement account and moved out of his home and into a work trailer to save money. Then he marketed his skills, built a corporate image campaign and started building equipment and running routes.

(continued)



### Lone Star Latrine Austin, Texas

**Owner:** Texas Disposal Systems

**Founded:** 2011

**Employees:** 17

**Service Area:** 50-mile radius of Austin

**Services:** Portable sanitation, septic and grease pumping, fencing, roll-off containers, RV and trash management services

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**Right:** Ryan Pierce is shown at an event location with one of Lone Star Latrine's newest vacuum trucks from Satellite Industries.

**Below:** Technicians Ross Obenhaus and Raul Palomino load restrooms at the Lone Star Latrine yard.



**Left:** Technician Ross Obenhaus looks over a restroom during placement at a special event.

Would-be PROs preparing to take the plunge with their own businesses - or contractors considering a major expansion push - can take away a few lessons from Pierce's business journey: Have confidence in your abilities and be prepared to work real hard.

**BEST FOOT FORWARD**

After leaving his former job, Pierce still had relationships in and a passion for the portable sanitation industry. He talked to family members about his feelings.

"Over a conversation at dinner one night with my sister and brother-in-law, I mentioned to them it would be really neat to get back into the toilet business, that I could hit the ground running," he says. "They absolutely 100 percent said, 'Let's go.'"

To fund the operation, family members made an investment in exchange for part ownership (25 percent each) of the company. Pierce tapped his retirement money and took out a small-business loan. He bought a 2006 International vacuum truck outfitted by Best Enterprises Inc. with a 1,100-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank, leased a 3.5-acre property and put an office trailer on it. Then he rented out his house

"We have fun with it. And we encourage people on our Facebook page, if you see us at an event, take a picture with our toilets."

**RYAN PIERCE**

and moved into the trailer for eight months to save money.

It was October 2011 and he immediately landed an event for the following February - the Austin Marathon - which required 360 units. He worked with PolyPortables LLC to spread out three deliveries of 120 unassembled Integra units. By the time the marathon came around, he already had 150 units out on routes and had to order another load.

Pierce was getting up at 4 a.m. to run routes, selling during the day and doing book work at night. Family and friends helped assemble units, and he hired a yard worker and someone to help with sales and marketing.

**EQUIPMENT CORNER**

Growth came quickly. "We grew so fast I was constantly having to go out and find more route drivers and more office help," Pierce says. Increased demand also meant buying more equipment.

The inventory now includes more than 2,000 portable restrooms, including 1,000 Satellite Industries Maxim 3000 units, 35 PolyPortables

*(continued)*

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wheelchair-accessible and ADA-compliant units, 25 PolyPortables hand-wash stations and 22 PolyJohn Enterprises high-rise units. To serve high-end customers, Lone Star purchased two Forest River restroom trailers (a three-stall and a 10-stall), and six Porta-Lisa model restroom trailers and an eight-stall shower trailer from JAG Mobile Solutions.

The company added a 2013 Hino outfitted with a Southwest Products 1,100-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater steel tank; two 2007 Internationals outfitted by Progress Tank with 1,500-gallon waste/500-gallon freshwater aluminum tanks; and two 2013 Peterbilt trucks from Satellite Industries with 1,400-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater steel tanks. All of these trucks have Masport pumps.

The company purchased a 2009 International from National Truck Center with a 2,500-gallon steel tank and a Masport pump and started pumping septic tanks and grease traps, and then a 2004 Mack when Lone Star added roll-off containers. Along the way Lone Star added two Dodge 3500 duallys, a Ford F-350 flatbed with a lift gate and a GMC Sierra 2500HD.

Lone Star uses RouteOptix Inc. management software. Every truck is equipped with a Samsung Galaxy Note tablet mounted on the dash, enabling drivers to see the route, communicate with the office and check off or add stops.

## PROMOTION, PUBLICITY AND IMAGE

During the period of growth, Pierce marketed the business through memberships in various organizations - Homebuilders Association, Association of General Contractors, and Austin Young Chamber. The company is also active on social media. He also got good exposure for the

company by managing to snap a few photos of celebrities visiting Austin and caught with his restrooms in the background - Jimmy Kimmel, Jesse James and Dierks Bentley - all of which he posted on Facebook. "We have fun with it," he says. "And we encourage people on our Facebook page, if you see us at an event, take a picture with our toilets."

"I use Dickies shirts [Williamson-Dickie Mfg. Co.]. On the left shoulder is a patch of the state of Texas, on the right shoulder is a patch of the United States and then I have our logo and employee name on the shirt."

**RYAN PIERCE**

Wanting to be environmentally conscious, the company uses formaldehyde-free products from PolyPortables and recycled bathroom tissue. This also gives them a marketing edge at certain construction sites.

"It's allowed us to present to the customer if they have a LEED project [an energy and environmental design rating from the U.S. Green Building Council]," he explains. They have a similar program locally, Austin Energy Building, where contractors see

benefits for using subcontractors who mirror their green initiatives.

A professional appearance is important to Pierce. Working with a designer, he developed a logo for the company. He also had a specific look in mind for uniforms. "I use Dickies shirts [Williamson-Dickie Mfg. Co.]. On the left shoulder is a patch of the state of Texas, on the right shoulder is a patch of the United States and then I have our logo and employee name on the shirt."

## LOOKING FOR WORK

Today the company's portable restroom business mix is about 80 percent construction and 20 percent events. But Pierce has looked for different niches. He partnered with the film industry, for example, which is popular in Austin. "We do lots of work for Paramount Pictures and NBC," he says. "We provide air-conditioned restroom trailers, portable restrooms, cast trailer pumping." Another is food vendor trailers. Pierce says there are about 1,300 in the city and Lone Star hauls graywater for 600 vendors.

He has also started providing adjunct services at events, for example RV management. "We get everybody parked in their spot, make sure they're taken care of, they've got electricity," he says. They've handled as many as 1,500 campers at one venue.

At other events where he was bringing in portable restrooms, he also began using attendants to keep the grounds clean, remove bagged trash, and stock and clean restrooms and trailers. Team members are identified and work safely with high-visibility fluorescent shirts.

Another service Lone Star provides is disaster relief. "We are on the list to shoot down to the Gulf if a natural disaster hits," he says. Lone Star also has a service technician temporarily stationed in Brownsville, Texas, to provide units along a 100-mile stretch of border patrol areas, servicing them daily.

## PUZZLES, NOT PROBLEMS

Pierce enjoys a portable sanitation challenge. For example, when some of his customers needed freshwater systems, he created his own solution. "We took 350-gallon totes, mounted a pump system on the side and built a freshwater system for some construction trailers that may not have access to on-site water," he says.

## Repurposed equipment is a big hit

Ryan Pierce, of Lone Star Latrine in Austin, Texas, strives to come up with innovative ideas to build efficiency for the company's front-line crew or improve service for customers. Sometimes that means using his imagination and building something that attracts a lot of attention.

One idea was for a restroom trailer. "Austin is such a vintage town," he says. "I just saw a need for a very cool trailer." He took a 1973 31-foot Airstream camping trailer and turned it into a nine-stall air-conditioned restroom trailer. He calls the popular unit the "Stream Latrine."

On another occasion when a customer asked if he had anything bigger than a four-person hand-wash station, he immediately told the guy he could build one. He paid \$250 for a horse trailer, put graywater and freshwater tanks and a pump system inside the unit, and created a trough system around the perimeter which accommodates 25 people on a side.

"I'm always trying to think outside the box and be unique and different in this business," Pierce says.



*Ryan Pierce repurposed an old Airstream camper into a retro restroom trailer. It was such a big hit, he acquired this Airstream trailer for his second renovation project.*



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In addition to two restroom transport trailers from Bragg Trailers and three other flatbeds, Pierce and his father built four more. "We're doing so many events where we're on streets with road closures, I wanted to be able to load from the side as quickly as possible," he says. "So we built a rail system that locks the toilets in place when you close the rail and you don't have to strap them down." They also custom fabricated a trailer that accommodates five wheelchair-accessible/ADA-compliant units.

His solution to requests for gender-specific restrooms is to stock red women-only units that now account for 30 percent of Lone Star's inventory. "They've really taken off," he says. "I have hand sanitizers mounted inside all the units, shelves, purse hooks, optional lights and they do not have a urinal." They went with red instead of pink to be different and to match the blue and red colors of the company logo. Unisex units are blue.

Lone Star is addressing a need for diaper-changing stations at events. "I took three wheelchair units and opened up two ends, so you can walk in either way," he says. Inside a hand sanitizer, trash box, shelf and baby-changing bench with pad were added.

### HANDS-ON APPROACH

Lone Star has outgrown the small trailer Pierce lived in while getting the business off the ground. After selling the business and staying on as an employee, he plans to keep his hands in everything to some degree, whether it's posting to Facebook, assembling units or being the first to drive a new truck.

He doesn't often clean units anymore but won't hesitate if needed. "We got ourselves in a bind and I was short a driver," he says. "I got on what I call my 'git dirty' clothes, went out and started servicing equipment. And I've got to tell you, it was a lot of fun." ■

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# Rising Standards for Belt Wear

**WITH MORE RESILIENT MATERIALS AND GRIPPIER DESIGNS, YOUR TRUCK'S DRIVE BELTS ARE LASTING LONGER AND PERFORMING BETTER. BUT THEY STILL REQUIRE ROUTINE INSPECTION AND REPLACEMENT.**

By Ed Wodalski

**W**hen is the last time you checked the drive belt in your trucks for signs of wear? And what should you look for?

If your vehicle is less than 20 years old, it likely is equipped with an EPDM (ethylene propylene diene monomer) synthetic rubber belt. Mark Lein, project development engineer at Goodyear Engineered Products, says EPDM belts were installed by original equipment manufacturers in the late 1990s and introduced to the replacement market in 2002.

Prior to that, most vehicles had neoprene belts. Neoprene had a life expectancy of approximately 50,000 to 60,000 miles. They also cracked and lost chunks of rubber as they wore.

## CRACKS ARE RARE

Old-timers might recall the “three cracks in 3 inches” rule-of-thumb for replacing such belts. If you have a neoprene belt on your equipment, be sure to check it regularly for signs of wear, as well as for grease and oil that can reduce service life.

The advantage EPDM belts have over neoprene is they rarely crack, even after 100,000 miles. As EPDM belts age, they gradually lose rubber – like tires on your truck. “With neoprene, you typically had cracks before that happened,” Lein says. “Now the belt actually is wearing away.”

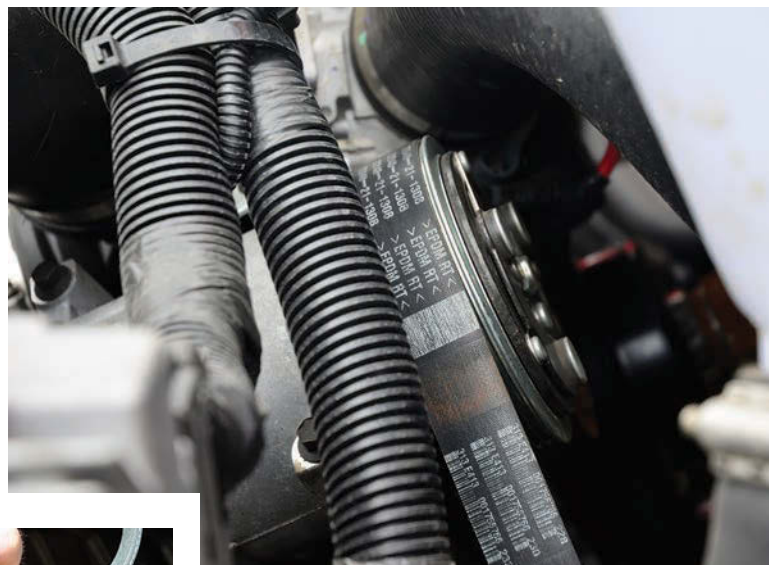
Loss of belt rubber can cause noise and vibration, often signs of a more serious problem.

“If the belt’s worn, if it’s making noise, there’s something wrong with the drive,” Lein says. “Typically a worn belt is slipping.

That either means the belt has run its course or you’ve got misalignment issues; you’ve got an idler bearing going out or a tensioner bearing going out or some other bearing going out on the drive.”

Lein says the main cause of belt failure is improper tension. “If anything needs to be taught to the individual installer and even the shops, it’s that proper manufacturer tension is recommended,” he says. “And when you ignore that, you have issues. Proper installation is critical on any belt application.”

James McGarity, ABDS product manager at Gates Corp., recommends checking belts for wear whenever you do repairs, especially after 60,000



**Above:** Properly performing belts should be free of abrasion. (Photo by Ed Wodalski)



**Left:** Today’s serpentine drive belts are made of EPDM synthetic rubber that wears much like a truck tire. (Photo by Ed Wodalski)

miles for on-road vehicles. “The actual O.E. manuals state to start checking at 30,000 miles,” he says. “But if you’re working and have it off, it’s best to check to make sure you have the correct amount of material so you’re getting traction on the grooves of the belt.”

## REGULAR CHECKUPS

A good time to evaluate belt wear is when your vehicle is in the shop having the water pump, alternator or other component repaired, especially if the vehicle is up in age. The average price for a Gates EPDM belt is \$63, while a new belt and labor can run \$80 or \$90.

McGarity says as little as 5 percent of material wear can cause loss of tension, affecting the overall performance of components and leading to failure. Be sure to follow your operator’s manual for off-road equipment. John Deere recommends checking belt tension every 50 hours.

The easiest way to check for material loss is to use a gauge that fits be-



A missing rib indicates it's time for a new belt. (Photo courtesy Goodyear Engineered Products)



Worn backing means this belt has reached the end of its service life. (Photo courtesy Goodyear Engineered Products)

tween the ribs of the belt. Manufacturers Gates and Goodyear offer such hand-held devices that can be used with the belt on or off the engine.

The Gates Belt Wear Gauge has a "pin" or strip of plastic that sits above the ribs on a good belt. A finger hole at the end of the gauge enables the user to place the pin into a straight section of the belt and feel if it's above or below the rib. The gauge can also be used to check individual ribs. Changes in depth indicate misalignment or other problems.

**"Typically a worn belt is slipping. That either means the belt has run its course or you've got misalignment issues; you've got an idler bearing going out or a tensioner bearing going out or some other bearing going out on the drive."**

**Mark Lein**

Gates also offers a free PIC Gauge app that takes a picture of the grooves and evaluates the belt - green is good.

Goodyear's GatorGauge by Veyance Technologies offers three ways to inspect belts for wear. The first method works much like the Gates gauge. At the lower right are four small pins that fit into the grooves of the belt. Light between the gauge and the valley of the belt indicates the belt is in good condition. No light means the belt is worn and replacement is recommended.

A 2-inch window in the GatorGauge is designed for measuring rib wear. If two or more cracks appear in the window, it might be time to replace the belt. Other signs of wear include two cracks side by side in the same rib, belt chunking and cracks along the width of the belt.

A third measure of belt wear uses the slotted thickness indicator at the top left of

**Right:** The GatorGauge tool offers three ways to inspect for belt wear. (Photo courtesy Veyance Technologies)

**Below:** Gates Belt Wear Gauge. (Photo courtesy Gates Corp.)



the GatorGauge. If the belt slides into the slot, it's time for replacement.

**MISALIGNMENT A FACTOR?**

Another way to tell if your belt needs replacing is visual inspection. Larry Gorski, a technician with Mid-State International Trucks of Wisconsin in Wausau, Wis., says

he looks for pieces of missing rubber and abrasion. "If it gets off the pulley it will fray one of the edges," he says.

Misalignment typically indicates internal components of the tensioner have failed and the assembly needs to be replaced.

Belt-tensioning systems are most often used on vehicles with a single serpentine belt. Since 2004, manufacturers have been designing self-tensioning EPDM belts for select vehicles.

Stretch Fit (Gates) and Stretch Belts (Goodyear) maintain constant belt tension without a mechanical tensioner. Tensile cord inside the EPDM belt is designed to elongate and stretch. Once installed, the belt recovers its shape to maintain proper tension. Self-tensioning belts are slightly shorter than standard EPDM belts and cannot be interchanged. Self-tensioning belts also should not be reused. ■



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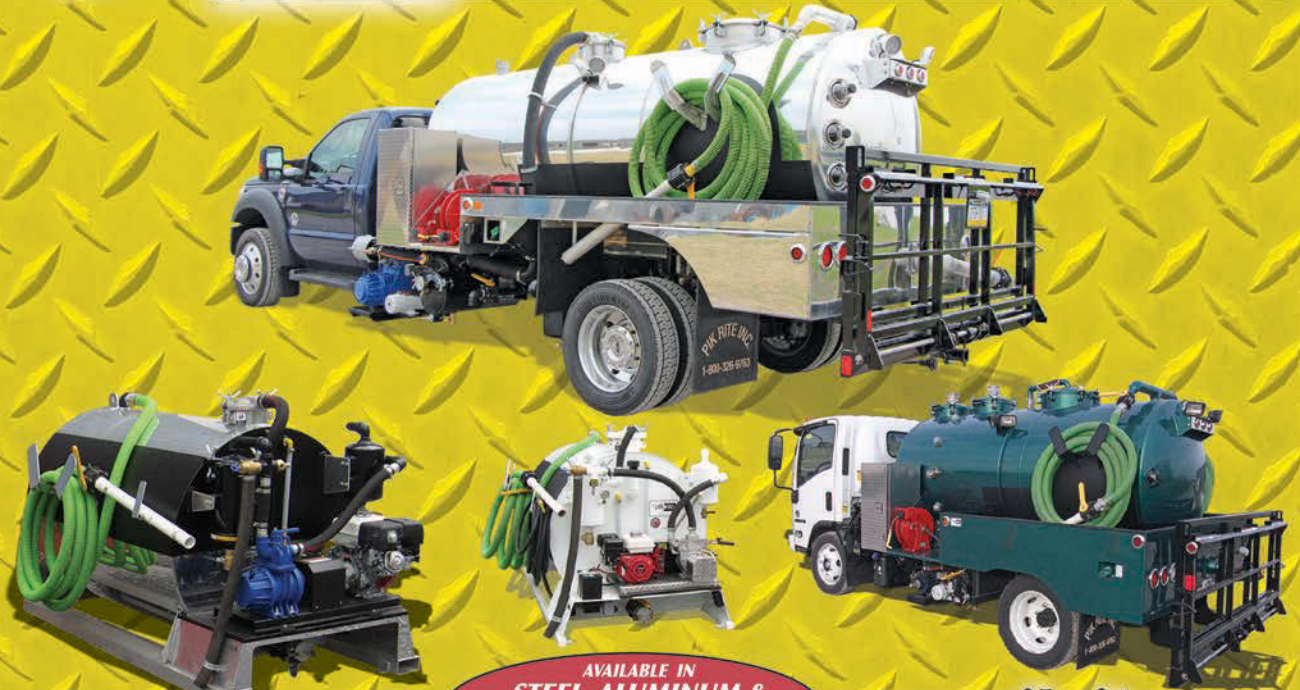
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Take 5 ... with Jeff Goldade

# Taking Flight

**A South Dakota PRO employs careful service, restroom upgrades and small, maneuverable service rigs to retain customers in a competitive marketplace**

By Ken Wysocky

Offering customers a wide variety of services has keyed growth at Sewer Duck Inc., a company that rents and services portable restrooms, cleans out drainlines and pumps septic tanks in about a 100-mile radius around Aberdeen, S.D.

In 1996, Jeff Goldade bought the company from his father, who eight years earlier had started Sewer Duck as a drain cleaning company. Goldade was just 19 years old, and two years later he entered the portable sanitation industry by buying three portable restrooms from Satellite Industries Inc. Why? There was only one competitor at the time, and Goldade saw an opportunity to fill a niche market.

As Goldade puts it, three restrooms soon turned into six, and six became nine. Then he started ordering 10 or 12 at a time. The company currently owns about 150 Satellite Industries restrooms, including five handicapped-accessible units; 12 VIP units (equipped with solar lights and hand-wash stations from Satellite); and 14 standard units with solar lights, plus seven free-standing Satellite hand-wash stations. Monthly rentals (mostly for construction sites) generate about 70 percent of the gross restroom revenues and special events contribute the rest.

The company's business volume is split just about evenly between restrooms, drain cleaning and septic pumping, and their seasonal cycles dovetail well, which helps keep cash flow more consistent year-round.

**EXPLORE FIVE ISSUES THAT AFFECT GOLDADE'S PORTABLE SANITATION BUSINESS:**



Owner Jeff Goldade is shown in the Sewer Duck garage with the company's 2011 Hino service truck built out by Satellite Industries. (Photos by Jay Pickthorn)

## 1 CULTIVATING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

"Everyone says they provide great customer service these days," Goldade says. "But just providing clean restrooms is not good enough anymore. You've got to provide exceptional, amazing and outstanding service."

One aspect of that entails being organized and efficient, and establishing a great relationship with customers, including clear communication about things like drop-off and pick-up times. "Chances are that if we're organized and efficient, we'll come across a problem ourselves and fix it before the customer notices," he says. "That's the ideal situation ... to address a problem before it becomes a bigger problem."

Then there's sweating the details, like always having someone answer the phone, emailing price quotes to customers within minutes of their call and allowing customers to pay with credit cards and PayPal accounts.

"Most operators don't use credit cards because there's a small fee [2 or 3 percent] and it requires a little extra work," he says. "But it's very convenient for customers. Our customers can even pay online by going to our website. And we're outfitting our drivers with hand-held credit card swipers that connect to their cellphones. Whatever is most convenient for our customers gives us an advantage."

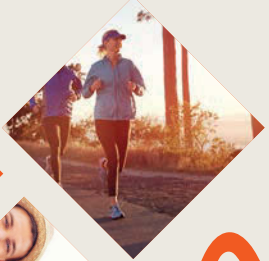
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## 2

## VANDALISM AND OVERUSE

To deal with graffiti and general abuse of restrooms on construction sites, Goldade says he first sends a letter with the monthly bill, putting the contractor on notice that additional charges will be applied if abuses continue. To substantiate the abuse, drivers take photos with their cellphones.

"The best way I've seen contractors deal with graffiti is to have the foreman threaten to make all workers take turns cleaning it whenever it occurs," Goldade notes. "That usually stops it pretty quickly."

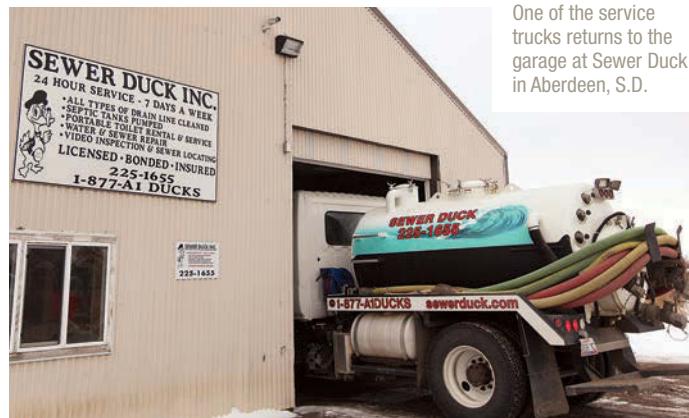
As for contractors who try to skimp on restrooms, Goldade makes the point that renting an additional unit or scheduling an additional cleaning every week is more cost-effective than the alternative. "It's going to cost more in the long run for us to make special trips," he says. "If they schedule additional service, then we don't have to stop everything and go out of our way just because they ran out of toilet paper two days earlier than expected or their restroom is overflowing," he says.



Technicians Daniel Frey, with wand, and Cregg Skarin work together to pump and refresh a Satellite Industries Maxim 3000 restroom at a construction site.



Technician Cregg Skarin provides winter service to a portable restroom. In sloppy winter conditions, restrooms posted on construction sites sometimes require extra services.



One of the service trucks returns to the garage at Sewer Duck in Aberdeen, S.D.

## 3

## GOOD TRUCKS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES

For portable sanitation, Goldade owns a 2006 International with a 1,250-gallon wastewater/250-gallon freshwater steel tank and Masport Inc. pump built out by Imperial Industries Inc., and a 2012 Chevrolet 1-ton pickup with a 600-gallon wastewater/250-gallon freshwater slide-in steel tank with a Conde pump (Westmoor Ltd.) from Satellite Industries. The company also runs a larger 2011 Hino built out by Satellite Industries with a Masport pump, used occasionally for portable sanitation but mainly for septic service.

Goldade says he prefers smaller service vehicles even though the mostly rural area Sewer Duck services is quite sprawling. That's because the Aberdeen municipal waste treatment plant is only a mile from the company's shop. "It's all very convenient," he notes. "Plus, if my trucks exceed 26,000 pounds, my drivers need a commercial driver's license (CDL). Then it's harder to find guys capable of driving them, plus you need a bigger garage or shop to store the larger trucks."

Moreover, Goldade says current business volume doesn't justify the cost of larger tanks and trucks. "If I get a bigger truck, I could service restrooms all week long without dumping, but my gas mileage would drop by half and I'd be hauling around larger loads, which isn't the right thing to do. My trucks can service everything we need in any direction in one day. And they're more maneuverable in tight spaces on construction sites."

## 4

## RESTROOM UPGRADES ARE A GOOD THING

Goldade believes in investing in new products that enable him to charge a higher rental rate and differentiate his business from competitors. A good example is restrooms with hand-wash stations and solar-powered lights, which he rents for a 20 to 30 percent higher rate than standard units. He either orders new Satellite restrooms equipped with one or both of those features, or retrofits older restrooms; a Satellite retrofit kit for both the light and a hand-wash station costs about \$400 but pays for itself fairly quickly at the higher rental rate.

"Sometimes I'll give a customer a one-time upgrade for just a 10 percent higher rate, just to get the restrooms out in the public eye," he notes. "The lights are very popular at special events, which usually go into the night. People love that they can see inside the restroom even if it's dark outside."

*(continued)*



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Jeff Goldade, left, is shown with his father, Lyle. Jeff bought the family business in 1996.

## 5 TAKING ON LOW-BALL COMPETITORS

Despite a saturated restroom rental market, Goldade says he can charge about twice as much as low-balling competitors by emphasizing his service advantages. He says operators who don't charge enough to be profitable hurt the industry as a whole.

**"If you provide good service, people will pay for it. But if you're charging half or two-thirds of what you should be charging, well, it's not good enough to just break even, last time I checked. But that's what a lot of guys do and they're just getting by."**

**Jeff Goldade**

maintaining the same cash flow," he adds. "And if you're really good at what you do and provide good service and don't lose any customers, then you've increased cash flow by 25 or 30 percent." ■

"If you provide good service, people will pay for it," he says. "But if you're charging half or two-thirds of what you should be charging, well, it's not good enough to just break even, last time I checked. But that's what a lot of guys do and they're just getting by."

"Sometimes they don't understand that if they have, say, 800 units, and they increase prices by 25 to 30 percent and lose 25 to 30 percent of their business, they've still reduced their overhead considerably while

*"Take 5" is a feature in which one PRO or industry leader shares unique business challenges with the entire portable sanitation community. It's a chance for service providers to meet over the back fence - and across the country - to learn more about each other and promote industry excellence. If you know a PRO who would be an interesting subject for "Take 5," send their contact information to [editor@promonthly.com](mailto:editor@promonthly.com).*



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# Trucks and Tanks

By Craig Mandli

## PORTABLE RESTROOM SERVICE TRUCKS

### AMTHOR INTERNATIONAL FLAT VAC

The **Flat Vac** multipurpose portable restroom tank truck from **Amthor International** allows the operator to carry up to 12 restrooms on top of the tank as well as pull a restroom delivery trailer. The body has a rounded bottom with a full-length formed sump design for ideal drainage and full baffles for tank strength. The flat tank has separate wastewater and freshwater compartments and an optional chemical or brine compartment. It is available in steel, stainless steel or aluminum. Each unit comes with a workstation, vertical cabinet and an aluminum extruded door with numerous shelves. A liftgate is installed behind the tank to load and unload restrooms. All units are custom built to specification. **800/328-6633; www.amthorinternational.com.**



### FMI TRUCK SALES WORKMATE

The **WorkMate** portable restroom service truck from **FMI Truck Sales & Service** has side-winder tanks with consistent equal-weight distribution, designed to extend brake life and improve handling. Two food-grade poly water tanks are plumbed to provide brine, freshwater, premix or any combination of fluids with no corrosion or rusty water. The ergonomic workstation has more than 60 cubic feet of storage to minimize restocking and driver movement. It can carry four restrooms on the bed, and the modular design allows components to be easily replaced or transferred if damaged. The vacuum system is plumbed using hot-tar hose and Masport components. Marine-style wiring is used, and all electrical systems are contained in a watertight panel with automatic-reset circuit breakers. Each system is color-coded and individually loomed. **800/927-8750; www.fmitrucks.com.**



### FLOWMARK DELUXE MODEL PRT

The 2,000-gallon **Deluxe Model PRT** service truck from **Flowmark** includes a 156 cfm, PTO-driven vacuum pump with vacuum/pressure modes; primary, secondary and final filter; dual inlets with 30 feet



of 2-inch tiger tail vacuum hoses with valve and wand assembly; a 4-inch discharge with 4-inch full port valve, camlock adapter and tethered dust cap. The cast iron DC10 pump has a stainless steel impeller and Leeson motor. Its Hannay spring rewind reel has 50 feet of garden hose. The external remote panel has watertight switches for PTO engagement, work lights and the water pump. It has four LED work lights, dual 2-inch bucket fills with 2-inch quick-opening valves and a two-unit fold-down toilet hauler. **855/805-7182; www.flowmark.com.**



### IMPERIAL INDUSTRIES PTM980

The **PTM980** portable restroom service unit from **Imperial Industries** has a steel two-compartment tank with 680-gallon waste and 300-gallon freshwater capacity. It is available in two models: a standard truck-mounted unit with a Masport HXL4V vacuum pump or a modular unit with a Masport HXL3V vacuum pump and 9 hp Honda gas engine. The modular unit is self-contained and can be mounted on a standard chassis frame or a flatbed. The modular unit comes complete with the electrical package and is prewired and plugs into a standard chassis trailer outlet adapter. **800/558-2945; www.imperialind.com.**

*(continued)*

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## PORTABLE RESTROOM SERVICE TRUCKS

### KEEVAC INDUSTRIES CW950

Mounted on a choice of chassis, the **Keevac CW950** is designed to provide lasting service in cold environments. The standard cold-weather package includes a heated tank, heated valves, heat tape and insulation on waterlines. The washdown pump and hose reel are mounted in an insulated, heated cabinet. The hydraulic system also has heaters on four-wheel-drive units. The tank is manufactured from A36 carbon steel. Single service with a 30-foot tiger tail hose and fold-down restroom carrier are standard. The freshwater compartment is lined with epoxy to prevent contamination. **866/789-9440; www.keevac.com.**



### PAC-MAC VP SERIES

The **VP Series** service truck from **Pac-Mac, a division of Hol-Mac Corporation**, comes with a 2,500-gallon tank with 66 inches OD and 156-inch shell length (also available in 1,500, 3,000, 3,500, 4,200, 4,500 and 5,000 gallons), a 1/4-inch-thick shell and 5/16-inch-nominal-thick heads, right-angle drive pump system, 20-inch rear and top manways, manway ladder with safety tread, bolt-on baffles and hose trays with drains, rear hose hooks, 4-inch intake and 6-inch discharge, and a premium two-component epoxy primer-sealer and polyurethane topcoat in solid and metallic colors. Options include a hydraulic-drive jetting system, 36-inch rear manway, multiple toolboxes, bedliner applied to hose trays and tank, a chemical-resistant two-part epoxy interior liner, safety beacon, rear sump and stainless steel float level indicator. **800/844-3019; www.e-pac-mac.com.**



### KEITH HUBER CORPORATION PRINCESS II

The **Princess II** portable restroom service unit from **Keith Huber Corporation** has a 160 cfm vacuum pump driven by a transmission-mounted PTO operated by push button, rear restroom carrier gate and four large, water-resistant cabinets with more than 30 cubic feet of storage space. It has a 1,500-gallon tank with 1,100-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater capacity, a pressurized water system with a 12-volt motor-driven pump that delivers 45 psi at 7 gpm, and 50 feet of 1/2-inch water hose on a spring-loaded retractable hose reel. It has a 3-inch intake with valve, dual-suction with dual water and hose reels, a four-way valve to control vacuum loading and pressure discharge, and a 2-inch water tank drain with remote-mounted driver's side valve for quick bucket fill. **800/334-8237; www.keithhuber.com.**



### SOUTHWEST PRODUCTS SERVICE TRUCK

Portable restroom service trucks from **Southwest Products** are customizable in a variety of sizes and configurations and include dual-side service, restroom carrier, custom lighting and dual-compartment freshwater/waste tanks. They are offered in traditional configurations, as well as a "hot dog" design with carbon steel waste tanks and a stainless steel internal tank, a 500-gallon freshwater tank and a Burks DC-10 water pump. They have a Masport water-cooled pump, bucket holders, primary and secondary shut-offs, HID light package and 2-inch bucket fill. Waste tanks start at 250 gallons and both trailer-mounted and slide-in vacuum tanks are available. **602/269-3581; www.southwestproducts.com.**

### LELY TANK & WASTE SOLUTIONS SERVICE TRUCK

The portable restroom service truck from **Lely Tank & Waste Solutions** has a 1,200-gallon, two-compartment steel tank with an 800-gallon waste compartment and a 400-gallon easy-fill freshwater compartment. The tank is mounted on a 2015 Ford F-550 with a 300 hp diesel engine and an automatic transmission. The vacuum system includes a Fruitland Eliminator RCF 250 pump package with 195 cfm free airflow. The tank has dual-service hose connections with 2-inch tiger tail hose, shut-off valve and service wand. Bucket-fill stations are located in the rear on both sides in front of the two-unit fold-down restroom carrier. Each workstation has a manifold with easy shut-off brass valves for water and chemical and a shut-off for the 50-foot water hoses with spray nozzles. Each side has full-length hose trays with a wand scabbard and a toolbox mounted for easy access. **800/367-5359; www.lelytank.com.**



## TRUCK PARTS/COMPONENTS

### ARMSTRONG EQUIPMENT ALUMINUM REPLACEMENT OIL TANK

Aluminum replacement oil tanks from **Armstrong Equipment** are available in 4- or 6-quart designs. The tanks have been developed with a bolt pattern to match all major manufacturers. They can be dropped in for replacement with no drilling required. Chained, vented fill caps prevent loss while an oil standpipe utilized in the outlet helps reduce oil contamination. **800/699-7557; www.vacpump.com.**



**FRUITLAND MANUFACTURING ELIMINATOR 250**

The **Eliminator 250** package from **Fruitland Manufacturing** includes an RCF250 commercial and continuous-duty vacuum pump that can create up to 180 cfm, heavy-duty and integral secondary shut-off, oil-catch muffler, drive coupling, vacuum/pressure gauge and all relief and drain valves. Hydraulic or gearbox drive adapters make the vacuum system easy to hook up. The compact package measures 26 inches wide by 23 inches high. The vacuum pump has low oil consumption, including an automated oiling system with steel oil lines, pump oil level sight gauge, vane gauging ports, antishock design and three primary cooling phases. **800/663-9003; www.fruitlandmanufacturing.com.**



**OAKLEY VAC VAC-U-DRUM**

The **Vac-u-Drum** portable vacuum system from **Oakley Vac, a Division of WMW**, is capable of vacuuming solids and/or liquids into open-top 45-gallon drums or various other containers. The compact unit is effective for use in remote locations or confined areas traditional vacuum trucks cannot access. Filled drums can be removed by ATV, helicopter, barge/boat or other small vehicles. Units come in a number of configurations. **800/663-1624; www.oakleyvac.com.**



**L. T. & E. HEATED VALVE COLLAR**

Heated collars from **L. T. & E.** are designed to prevent valves from freezing. Made of 304 stainless steel, collars are available in 3-, 4- and 6-inch sizes. Connected to the cooling system, the collars circulate antifreeze and are bolted between two flanges (ANSI or TTMA bolt pattern). They include extra pipe couplings for installing the optional 110-volt heater and thermostat for freeze control when the truck is parked overnight. **800/296-8035; www.ltetanks.net.**

**MASPORT PUMPER SCENT**

The **Pumper Scent** odor-control device from **Masport** is designed to use exhaust from the vacuum pump to eliminate odors. The vaporizer chamber is placed directly after the oil separator on the truck setup. Heat and airflow from the vacuum pump activate the scent that bonds with the air molecules to eliminate foul odors from grease traps, septic tanks and portable restrooms. Piping sizes for the vaporizer chamber are available from 1 1/2 to 4 inches so they can be used on all rotary vane vacuum pumps. **800/228-4510; www.masportpump.com.**



**MORO USA DCSS**

The 12-volt **DCSS** washdown pump from **Moro USA** is designed to fill sinks and restroom holding tanks. It has a maximum delivery rate of 20 gpm at 42 psi and a 1 hp, 12-volt DC motor, 1-inch discharge and 1 1/4-inch intake. It comes with a high-grade stainless steel impeller, Viton elastomers and a pressure switch and 12-volt solenoid allowing full control flow at the nozzle without damaging the pump. It has an industrial-grade epoxy-coated painted motor to protect against rust. It has a stainless steel pump head that won't break in freezing winter temperatures. It weighs 52 pounds. **800/383-6304; www.morousa.com.**

**PIK RITE HEATED VALVE JACKET**

Heated valve jackets from **Pik Rite** are designed to protect valves from freezing in cold weather by circulating engine coolant through a jacket in front of a valve on any truck. Easy to install, TTMA flanges allow for universal mounting. They are available in steel and stainless steel materials as well as 3-, 4- and 6-inch sizes. **800/326-9763; www.pikrite.com.**



**SATELLITE INDUSTRIES BIFFS PATHFINDERS RESTROOM DISINFECTION SYSTEM**

The **Biffs Pathfinders** spray cleaning system distributed by **Satellite Industries** is designed to clean and disinfect portable restrooms without the use of brushes, buckets and wipe-down towels. The enclosed aluminum unit has a 1,250 psi power-wash pump with auto shut-off, 4-gallon disinfectant reservoir with adjustable flow rate and dual spray guns. One gun operates at 5 gpm for charging the tank while the other functions as a high-pressure sprayer for cleaning or low-pressure sprayer for applying disinfectant. A twist of the wand handle switches the unit from power-wash to disinfection mode. Once the restroom is disinfected, the technician can change the nozzle and refill the waste-holding tank. **612/221-1100; www.biffspathfinders.com.**



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### CRESCENT TANK MFG. FLAT VACUUM TANK

The Flat Vacuum Tank from Crescent Tank Mfg. has a low-profile design with low center of gravity for hauling up to eight portable restrooms, additional water tanks and any other equipment needed for the job. Liquid waste is held inside the truck bed, and it has a separate freshwater poly tank. The vacuum tank is constructed from 1/4-inch mild steel construction and has primary and secondary traps, a prefilter, oil-catch muffler, two 3-inch sight glass waste level indicators, a 2-inch ball valve vacuum inlet on both sides, 25 feet of 2-inch vacuum hose with wand assembly, and a 3-inch gravity discharge ball valve on the rear driver's side. The freshwater tank is constructed from poly plastic with a 12-volt water pump that pumps 5 gpm at 60 psi. It has 50 feet of retractable 3/8-inch hose. **585/657-4104; [www.crescent-tank.com](http://www.crescent-tank.com).**



### LMT HOT-DIP GALVANIZED VACUUM TANK



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available in 300- to 5,000-gallon capacities with customizable options. They are available with single or multiple compartments. Galvanized tanks can remain unpainted or be painted for a more traditional appearance. **800/545-0174; [www.vaxsteel.com](http://www.vaxsteel.com).**

### MID-STATE TANK CO. SERVICE TANK

Aluminum and stainless steel service truck tanks from Mid-State Tank Co. can be manufactured for portable restroom trucks. A popular unit is the 1,500-gallon, two-compartment stainless steel tank, which has a pressure/vacuum pump for dual service and water system. Other tanks and options are available. **800/722-8384; [www.midstatetank.com](http://www.midstatetank.com).**



## VACUUM TANK PARTS/COMPONENTS

### IMPERIAL INDUSTRIES TANK HEADS

Code and non-code flanged and dished tank heads from Imperial Industries are available in sizes ranging from 42 to 84 inches in diameter. They come in a choice of steel, aluminum and stainless steel construction. **800/558-2945; [www.imperialind.com](http://www.imperialind.com).** ■



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## INDUSTRY NEWS

### Sioux names sales and marketing manager

Sioux Corp. named Jesse Hanssen sales and marketing manager. Sioux manufactures industrial application-specific cleaning equipment, water-heating and chilling systems, steam generators and related custom equipment.



Jesse Hanssen

### Wastequip named among Best Places to Work

Wastequip was named among the Best Places to Work for the second consecutive year by the *Charlotte Business Journal*. Wastequip was selected for its open-office environment and community involvement. ■

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**Side Engine Style**  
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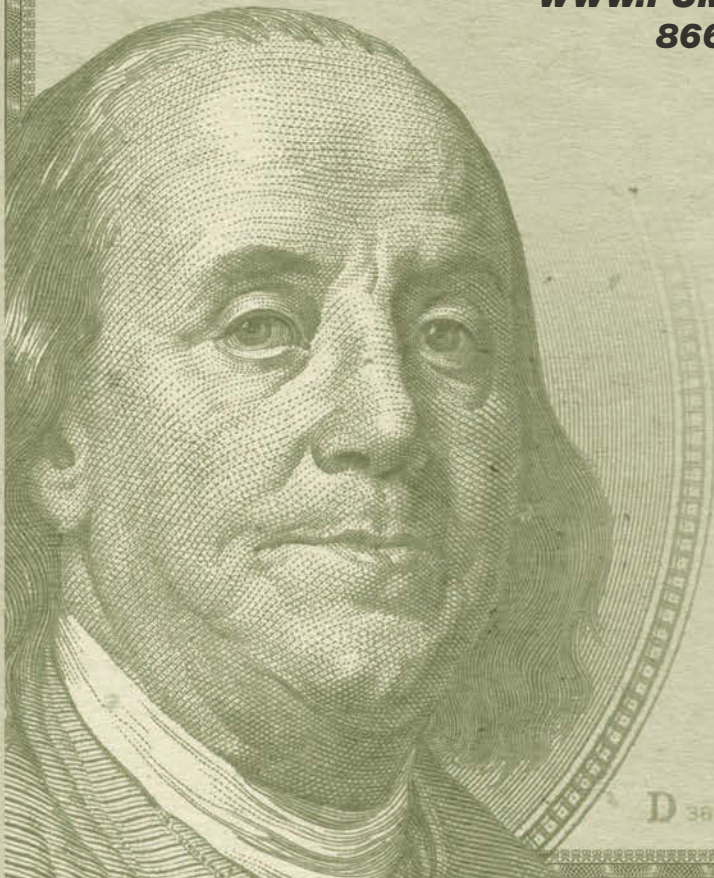
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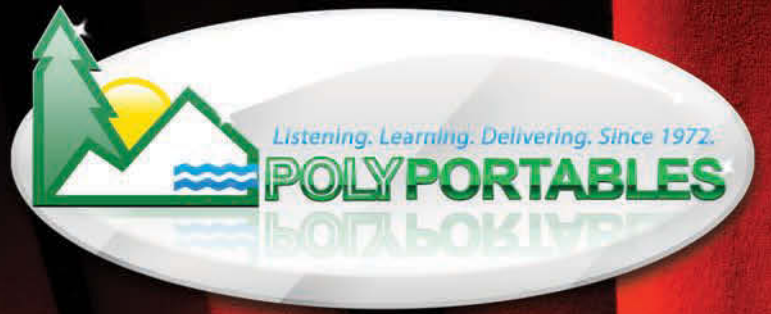
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