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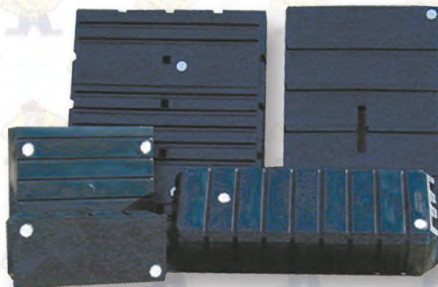


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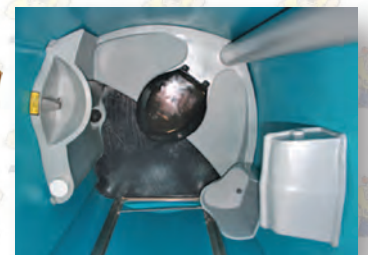
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By Jim Kneiszel

# Lane's Loo Is Helping the Homeless in a Fire-Ravaged California Community

Portable restroom operators can make a difference providing necessary service for the growing population of people living in the streets or in their cars

It's a sad reality, but for the past few years, I've started to see that serving the homeless, the transient populations and the working poor is going to be a growing niche market for portable restroom operators.

I have witnessed tent cities popping up in cities including New Orleans, Chicago and Milwaukee, and the number of people who populate them is astonishing. I have watched as the homeless shelters in my hometown have filled, leaving local and transient poor to fend for themselves.

Just last summer, we featured ordained minister and PRO Lance Oliniski in an On Location story covering his effort to bring shower trailers to the homeless in several Texas locations. Through his organization, Streetside Showers, Oliniski answered a call to provide these vital sanitary services, and he is currently training others to start similar operations in other parts of the country.

## LIVING IN CARS

The traveling charity shower trailers were something new. Oliniski recognized a great need for portable sanitation services, and he stepped up. Now there is a new homelessness trend emerging on the West Coast that requires the services — whether paid or donated — of our portable sanitation industry: safe parking lots.

Many homeless individuals and families are living in their cars on the streets of California — and in cities across the country. With overnight parking and loitering laws, they are forced to change locations frequently and are often left in dangerous situations and with no place to use a bathroom. In places like San Diego, San Francisco, Long Beach and Sacramento, civic leaders are experimenting with providing secured parking lots where the homeless stay in their cars and receive services like portable sanitation and counseling.

Safe parking lots may help homeless advocates consolidate needed services in controlled areas and slow the problem of public defecation and urination that's so prevalent in big cities these days. And your portable restroom company could play a role — either by serving nonprofit or municipal customers or partnering with charity groups to help their cause.

One place where a safe parking lot program appears to be working is in Sonoma, California, an affluent wine country community that has a significant homeless population because of wildfires and limited affordable housing. Thanks in part to a generous \$10,000 bequest, the Sonoma Overnight Support homeless shelter has started a safe parking lot program in addition to its existing winter shelter and day services.

The group has access to a large parking lot, and the city allows 10 cars of homeless people to stay there, a fraction of the estimated 30-plus Sonoma residents who live in their vehicles, according to Kathy King, the group's executive director. To serve the homeless in their cars, as well as the overflow from the shelter, the group spends about \$400 per month for a portable restroom that's serviced three times a week.

## THANK YOU LANE

The folks have Lane Norton to thank for the restroom. When the shelter volunteer passed away, she left \$10,000 to the organization, which decided to spend it on a portable restroom. Bill Norton recently dedicated Lane's Loo in honor of his late wife, and her donation will support the restroom placement for years, King says.

"She was diagnosed with lung cancer and died in July. All of the sudden I got a check. She didn't say anything to me. It surprised me. It was very sweet and very touching," King says. "Think of how many people she's helping. I've heard of people donating benches (to honor loved ones who passed away), but not port-a-potties. She had a wonderful sense of humor, and she would have loved this."



**Above:** Bill Norton is shown with the restroom honoring his late wife, Lane Norton. (Photos courtesy of Sonoma Overnight Support)

**Below:** Norton cuts the ribbon after the delivery of the donated restroom. Shown, from left, are Sonoma Overnight Support volunteers Lora Grimes, Nan Perrott, Ellen Brantley, Pamela Wiley, Norton and Barrie Eddy.





King says some of the worst wildfires in California and massive power outages certainly contributed to the homeless crisis in Sonoma. The disasters burned many people out of their homes, and there just isn't enough housing stock for them. And what is available is incredibly expensive. She says records show that 82% of the people seeking the shelter's services were already residents of Sonoma, and half of them are retirement age.

"It breaks my heart to see a 70-year-old living in his car. What kind of world is this when half of the people living in cars are over 60? Nobody gets this," King says. "One-fourth of them living in cars are working. We've been tracking [the problem], and it keeps ticking up and ticking up. I don't see an end to it."

## NO VANDALISM

The Sonoma Overnight Support program includes a home where four to eight people can sleep and a winter shelter at a church fellowship hall that sleeps 12 to 18. The group provided 2,000 showers and 17,000 meals in 2019, and it offers laundry service, hygiene kits, health services and haircuts.

Contrary to what some might expect, vandalism hasn't been an issue with portable restrooms provided part time over four years and now full time through the donation. King says she thinks the users appreciate having a safe place to find relief and they take care of it because they don't want it to go away.

"Knock on wood, we haven't had any issues with the port-a-potties," she says. "It gives people a sense of dignity, and it keeps the community safer and cleaner. This is a key thing for people to be able to wash their hands and keep clean. They don't want to be dirty. It dehumanizes them."

Whether the safe parking lots or other services related to homelessness could provide worthwhile revenue stream to PROs remains to be seen. According to King, San Francisco is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to attack a huge homeless and related sanitation problem. According to many recent news accounts, a number of other communities in California, Colorado and elsewhere are also starting to dedicate significant resources to the issue.

## GETTING INVOLVED

PROs could take a pulse of their local leaders to see if the problem needs addressing. And if civic leaders express an interest, local PROs can make themselves available to offer advice on placement and maintenance of restroom units. After all, members of our industry are the experts in meeting portable sanitation needs, and it never hurts to make that known.

An option is to seek opportunities to donate your time, talents and restroom equipment to make things better in your community. You could consider partnering with a local church or shelter to offer reduced prices for your service or donate a couple units along your service route.

Whether as a paid service provider or as a donor, there are a few issues to take into consideration:

## Vandalism

While King says their unit has been well cared for, it's conceivable that units could be damaged in this type of setting. Of course, there is a risk of vandalism anytime you drop a unit off at a construction site. Assess the risk in any situation and either charge accordingly or accept that you may be donating time and materials at some point.

## Getting between the customer and local government

Before dropping off a unit for a group serving the homeless, make sure the city or other local governmental body has approved the program and placement of the unit. A safe parking lot program, for instance, could be considered controversial with neighbors. Follow the rules and you could feel like you're making a difference in the lives of disadvantaged people.

## Perceived safety issues for technicians

One of your biggest daily concerns is getting your drivers home safely at the end of a shift. Assess the safety of the location of a safe parking lot or homeless encampment before sending your crew on a service call. Is the organization hiring you providing security? Is the area well lit and monitored by the police? Get assurances about the safety of the area, and consider sending two technicians instead of one.

## Positive or negative publicity

Some in the community will appreciate you for providing necessary sanitary services to a population in desperate need. Others may not want to see your unit in an urban parking lot or see the homeless population congregating in a certain area of the city. If you understand and accept the uncertain reaction you'll receive for serving the customer or donating your units, you may find great reward in lending a helping hand.

## HOW DO YOU SERVE?

Is your restroom company involved in helping a charitable cause in your hometown? I've found PROs are very generous in doing good deeds in their communities, and we'd like to shed light on the many ways you can make positive contributions. Drop me a line at [editor@promonthly.com](mailto:editor@promonthly.com), and let me know how you share you time, talents and equipment. I'll highlight these efforts in a future column. ■

**"It gives people a sense of dignity, and it keeps the community safer and cleaner. It is a key thing for people to be able to wash their hands and keep clean. They don't want to be dirty. It dehumanizes them."**

**Kathy King**





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LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

## Connect With Customers via Livestream

If the idea of livestreaming from a job site you're servicing makes you break out in hives, this article is for you. Learn the ins and outs of using video on social media to inform and engage with portable sanitation clients.

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TRUST-BUILDING

## Improve Customer Engagement to Close the Deal

Want to make a great first impression on potential customers? In this article, columnist Jeff Haden provides nine tips to improve customer trust in your portable sanitation operation.

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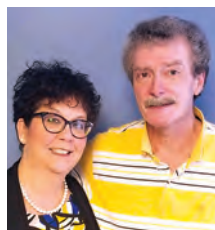
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By Jeff and Terri Wigley

# 5 Areas of Trucking Compliance Will Keep You Running Down the Road

**Department of Transportation rules and regulations ensure the safety of your drivers and the motoring public**

**QUESTION:** We are almost ready to start our portable restroom business. We have researched and examined vacuum trucks, restrooms, deodorizers and other supply items. We have spoken with our accountant at length. We have completed all required legal documents and have obtained our business license. We even visited our local wastewater treatment plant. There is one major area we know nothing about. Can you please summarize what we need to know and do in terms of being DOT-compliant?

**ANSWER:** The U.S. Department of Transportation is the regulatory agency all PROs need to be aware of and understand; PROs must abide by its appropriate guidelines, rules and regulations. In short, the DOT is responsible for ensuring the safety of trucks and truck drivers. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is an agency within the DOT that oversees the rules and regulations.

Five major components of dealing with the DOT are:

- USDOT identification numbers obtained and displayed on commercial vehicles
- Federal annual inspections of commercial vehicles
- Driver DOT medical cards
- Daily truck post-trip inspections
- DOT roadside inspections

## USDOT IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS

All interstate commercial vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating of 10,001 pounds or more must obtain a USDOT number that is unique to your company and that must be displayed on both sides of the vehicle. The usual placement is on the front doors.

Intrastate commercial vehicles vary from state to state in terms of this requirement. For example, in our home state of Georgia, USDOT numbers are indeed required. To find out about your state requirements, contact either the FMCSA field office in your state ([www.fmcsa.dot.gov](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov)) or your state's Department of Motor Vehicles.

## FEDERAL ANNUAL INSPECTIONS

All commercial vehicles with a GVWR of 10,001 pounds or more must be inspected annually by a certified inspector. Most truck repair shops have at least one inspector. Every 12 months, each commercial vehicle is inspected for safe operation. The inspection includes the thorough evaluation of such items as brakes, brake lights, exhaust system, fuel system, headlights,

**The driver must keep the DOT medical card with them at all times while operating the company vehicle.**

seat belts, secure cargo, steering system, stoplights, suspension, tires, turn signals, wheel rims and windshield wipers. After the vehicle has passed inspection, a federal annual inspection decal is affixed inside the cab of the truck. The placement is usually on the back glass of a vacuum truck. This decal can be easily seen by any officer conducting a roadside inspection.

## DRIVER DOT MEDICAL CARDS

The DOT requires that commercial drivers pass regular physical exams and provide the DOT with the results. Your personal physician may not be able to conduct these exams. The FMCSA requires medical examiners to be certified members of the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners. These certified doctors, physician assistants and nurse practitioners are numerous, and there is a searchable database on the FMCSA website.

Prior to the physical exam, the driver must complete a health history questionnaire including a list of medications and dosages, doctors' names and addresses, and other medical conditions such as vision or hearing problems, diabetes and heart-related issues.

The DOT physical includes testing of vision, hearing, blood pressure and pulse rate; urinalysis; and a physical exam of the body (eyes, ears, heart, chest, lungs, abdomen, equilibrium, spine and any other areas of physical surgery or scars).

The DOT medical card is usually good for two years unless the medical examiner believes that the patient has any medical conditions that need to be closely monitored. The results are sent to the DOT, usually by the examining facility. The driver must keep the DOT medical card with them at all times while operating the company vehicle.

## DRIVER VEHICLE INSPECTION REPORTS

The FMCSA Part 396, Section 396.11 of the code states, "drivers are required to complete a daily written post-trip inspection report at the end of each driving day." The driver should report any defects or deficiencies found on the truck. A company representative must certify any "defect or deficiency has been repaired or that immediate repair is unnecessary." The company must maintain the original copy for three months. Some states actually require both pretrip and post-trip inspections. Please research the exact requirements for your state.



## DOT ROADSIDE INSPECTIONS

Each of the four previous requirements are planned, scheduled and handled as routine operations. Roadside DOT inspections, however, are unplanned and can be costly to both the company and the driver. Being prepared at all times is the best way to handle these random and unplanned occurrences.

The DOT conducts random inspections. If pulled over, the driver should be able to easily produce his or her current driver's license, DOT medical card and proof of insurance for the vehicle. In addition, the federal annual inspection decal inside of the truck must be visible and valid. The inspecting officer may or may not ask the driver to step outside of the cab where a review of the vehicle is done. As explained above, the USDOT number, if required, must be properly displayed. The officer will then examine the lights, tires and other parts of the vehicle. It is imperative as PROs that we make sure the truck does not have any leaky valves and that, if there is a load, it is properly secured.

According to the DOT, the most common citations given to truck drivers include:

1. Lighting violations. This is usually the first and easiest indication to the officer to pull over the truck
2. Failure to obey traffic signs and signals
3. Speeding
4. Following too close
5. Failure to wear a seat belt
6. Use of a hand-held phone
7. Inattentiveness
8. Improper load securement
9. Lane deviation
10. Improper registration or credentials
11. Noncompliance to the truck weight limit

The results of the inspection can be "clean," meaning no violations; violations are found but not serious; and the most serious of all, OOS, which means out of service.

Tips for handling these inspections are for drivers to be organized with the appropriate paperwork, friendly and attentive, and confident that the daily inspections of the vehicle on the company yard have been done accurately, efficiently and correctly.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

An excellent resource in understanding and complying with all of the DOT guidelines, requirements and programs in your state is to consider joining your state's Motor Trucking Association ([www.trucking-association.com](http://www.trucking-association.com)). All

50 states have associations in place to protect the interests of the trucking industry, educate members on both federal and state DOT laws, and serve as resources to members.

When Terri and I owned Pit Stop Sanitation Services, we were proud members of the Georgia Motor Trucking Association, or GMTA, and we benefitted from this partnership. We would like to thank Emily Crane with GMTA for providing answers to several of our inquiries on this topic. ■

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# RESTROOMS AND ROLL-OFFS

Easy-Haul has found the perfect combination of services to offer busy construction contractors in a fast-growing region of south Alabama

By Betty Dageforde

**W**hen a computer programmer starts a business, it's a sure bet technology will be front and center in handling as many aspects of the enterprise as possible. That was the case when Bobby Tucker started a roll-off container business in 2004, later adding portable restrooms.

Although successful as a programmer in the petroleum industry, Tucker realized there might be better ways to make money. "He liked the idea of being able to purchase equipment and that equipment generating the revenue," explains his son Austin Tucker, the company's vice president. "As a computer programmer, it was all on him to do the work, and this was a way equipment could make money for him."

In the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan in 2004, it looked like a roll-off container business would fit the bill, and in November of that year, the senior Tucker bought a truck and four containers, brought his brother Todd Roth on board and started Easy-Haul. Austin, a pre-med student, joined them in December, planning to stay temporarily.

*Bobby (left) and Austin Tucker are shown in the Easy-Haul yard. Their vacuum trucks were built out by Lane's Vacuum Tank and carry Masport pumps. (Photos by Jeff and Meggan Haller)*

## Easy-Haul Inc. Westlake, Louisiana

**Owners:** Bobby Tucker

**Founded:** 2004

**Employees:** 17

**Services:** Portable sanitation and roll-off containers

**Service area:** Baldwin and Mobile counties, Alabama

**Website:** [www.easy-haul.com](http://www.easy-haul.com)







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**Above:** Technician Joseph Mixon services a PolyJohn Enterprises restroom. His truck is a Ford F-550 built out by Lane's Vacuum Tank and carrying a Masport pump. **Above, right:** Technician Bennie Richardson logs service information on an iPad during his daily route. **Right:** At a wet and muddy construction site, Bennie Richardson washes the outside of a PolyJohn Enterprises restroom.



"My dad was also about to begin pastoring a church, and I told him I'd give him a semester or two, with plans of going back to school," he says. "But I ended up staying and working with him."

The company's 17 employees operate out of a building that houses their office and shop and an enclosed fueling, washing and storage garage on a 5-acre property in Fairhope, Alabama, located on the east side of Mobile Bay. Austin oversees overall operations, his brother-in-law Jarred Richardson manages the portable restroom division, long-time employee Justin Self handles the roll-off division, and Bobby programs software updates and helps manage operations. The four work mostly in the office, answering phones, dispatching staff and doing paperwork. Austin's mother, Pam, comes in weekly to do invoicing. Their service territory covers Mobile and Baldwin counties, the state's two largest counties.

## SAME-DAY SERVICE

Seven drivers work on the roll-off side, which accounts for about 70% of the company's revenue. Growth has been steady, and each year they've added 30 to 40 containers. They now have 615 20- and 27-yard Thompson Fabricating containers with Swap-Loader USA hoists and eight Peterbilt trucks.

One big selling point is offering same-day service when customers need it, such as for large demolition jobs. And they mean it.

"I tell our guys all the time, 'If we promise a guy that we'll get to it, then we've got to do everything we can to get to it,'" Austin Tucker says. "I think

"We all work hard, we get here early and work together to get the job done. At the same time, I get to go home and be with my family. And it's really rewarding seeing these guys have the same opportunity."

**AUSTIN TUCKER**



that's why a lot of our homebuilders stay loyal to us, because they know they can rely on us."

The company also has 40 20-foot cargo containers. It's not a huge part of the business, but customers appreciate being able to get one when they need it. The units are modified with a hook and bottom runners so they can be picked up and hauled by the Peterbilts.

## BRANCHING OUT

Over the years, the Tuckers thought about adding portable restrooms but were a little hesitant. But by 2012, they took the plunge and bought a truck and 75 units.

"Once we did it, it was extremely successful and we've done really well," Austin Tucker says. "Our homebuilder customers appreciate that they can get both a roll-off and restroom. It really keeps it simple for them."

The division employs four technicians. Equipment is from PolyJohn Enterprises: 575 standard and high-rise portable restrooms (in the same yellow as their roll-off containers), nine wheelchair-accessible units and 27 hand-wash stations, as well as a number of holding tanks. The company also has a four-station restroom trailer from A Restroom Trailer Co. (ART Co.).

Construction accounts for about 85% of the company's portable sanitation work, much of which is residential — large condominium projects along the beach, for example. The company's goal over the next year or two



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*The Easy-Haul team includes (front row, from left) Ronnie Malec, C.J. Jones, Vernon Edwards, Robert Bishop, Todd Roth, Justin Self and Jarred Richardson. In the back row, from left, are Terry Rencher, Tim Crowe, Bennie Richardson, Dodson Brown, Quinten Rencher, Travis Brown, Joseph Mixon, Bobby Tucker and Austin Tucker.*

is to increase its event business through advertising and social media and by developing more contacts in the industry. Events include the Gulf Coast Hot Air Balloon Festival, Theater on the Bluff and a lot of weddings. About 20 of the event units have Walex Products solar lights, which are a hit with customers and users.

The company has five vacuum trucks — Ford F-550s (2016-19) built out by Lane's Vacuum Tank with 950-gallon waste and 300-gallon freshwater steel tanks and Masport pumps. They prefer smaller trucks because it's easier to find drivers and the trucks are more maneuverable on job sites. The company uses Walex deodorant products. Disposal is at a few nearby treatment plants, but Tucker says it's getting harder across the state to find plants that will accept portable restroom waste.

## CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

The company strives for professionalism in an industry that sometimes suffers with a negative image, Tucker says. Employees work on how they look, how they behave and how they speak.

"The drivers wear uniforms," Tucker says. "They're not out there in just a T-shirt or a plain white shirt. They wear a polo shirt with our logo on it. They look nice, and they're trained to be professional. Our goal is that if we put a restroom on your job site, then that builder's customer should be OK to go in there and use it. It's something we pride ourselves on."

New hires go through a week of training, spending time in the office and on the road with other drivers, so right from the beginning, they understand company expectations about professionalism and the best way to service units.

The Tuckers insist units be referred to as portable restrooms in an effort to change the negative image the industry. When people use another term, company personnel gently correct them. This philosophy began on the roll-off side: They do not refer to roll-off containers as cans, for the same reasons.

## CUSTOM SOFTWARE

Bobby Tucker created all the company's software, including programs for accounting, inventory, routing and dispatch. Drivers use iPads. In the morning, after doing a pretrip inspection, they log in and enter the mileage of the truck. That then goes into the maintenance program so Ronnie Malec, shop foreman, can stay on top of oil changes and general maintenance. Drivers then pull up their schedule for the day. Google Maps and Apple Maps are integrated into the software to assist in finding their jobs. When they click "done" on a job, the office is immediately notified.

"That way we're assured they're actually servicing each one," Austin Tucker says. "It also helps us to efficiently dispatch them and make sure

## MAKING OUR OWN SIGNS

About seven years ago, the management team at Easy-Haul made the decision to purchase a large color printer so the company could create its own signage and other promotional materials.

"We did it primarily for the convenience," Austin Tucker, company vice president, explains. "We got tired of using a sign company and then they would go out of business or something would happen and we could no longer use them. The equipment was not cheap, but it did cut the cost of our signs tremendously." They make all the signage for their roll-off containers and portable restrooms; and with 1,200 units in inventory, signage is no small expense. Having the printer on hand has also allowed them to occasionally print banners and signs for charity golf tournaments and projects for the church where Tucker's father, Bobby Tucker, used to be a pastor.

The unit is a floor-model Hewlett-Packard Latex 315 inkjet printer, which uses latex ink. It can print stickers, signs, posters and banners up to 54 inches in height. The company uses vinyl rolls 150 feet long and 54 inches wide, but the unit can also print on paper and fabric.



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routes are being managed efficiently. It pulls in the latitude and longitude and shows how far the driver was from that job site, so if a customer calls and says the guy never came, we can tell them he was there or we can say, 'You're right. Let's see what happened.'" The software shows truck locations at all times, so if an emergency comes up, it's easy to identify who should be sent.

## PROMOTING FROM WITHIN

Tucker says they're very competitive in the labor market. They pay fairly, provide health and dental benefits to employees and their families, and have a good reputation as an employer. A number of employees have been with them for a long time.

New hires often come by way of employees bringing in family members or making referrals.

"I've had a lot of that, and that's been extremely successful," Tucker says. "It works well because when you've got one brother in the roll-off and another one in the restroom, it seems like there's a little bit more accountability for each of them — not wanting to mess it up for the other guy."

They tend to get their roll-off drivers — a higher-paying position requiring a commercial driver's license — from the portable sanitation division. It's a great way to provide new hires an opportunity to get on board, work with the company and then move up, Tucker says.

## GOING HOME EVERY DAY

Tucker admits it's not necessarily glamorous working in the sanitation industry, but he appreciates that he can work alongside his dad and his family.

"We all work hard, we get here early and work together to get the job done. At the same time, I get to go home and be with my family," he says. "And it's really rewarding seeing these guys have the same opportunity."

"Some of our roll-off drivers were driving over the road and weren't able to be home with their families. It's a lifestyle change for them and their kids," he continues. "Being able to hire guys like that and see it make a difference in their lives is important to me and probably the most rewarding part of the job." ■

## MORE INFO

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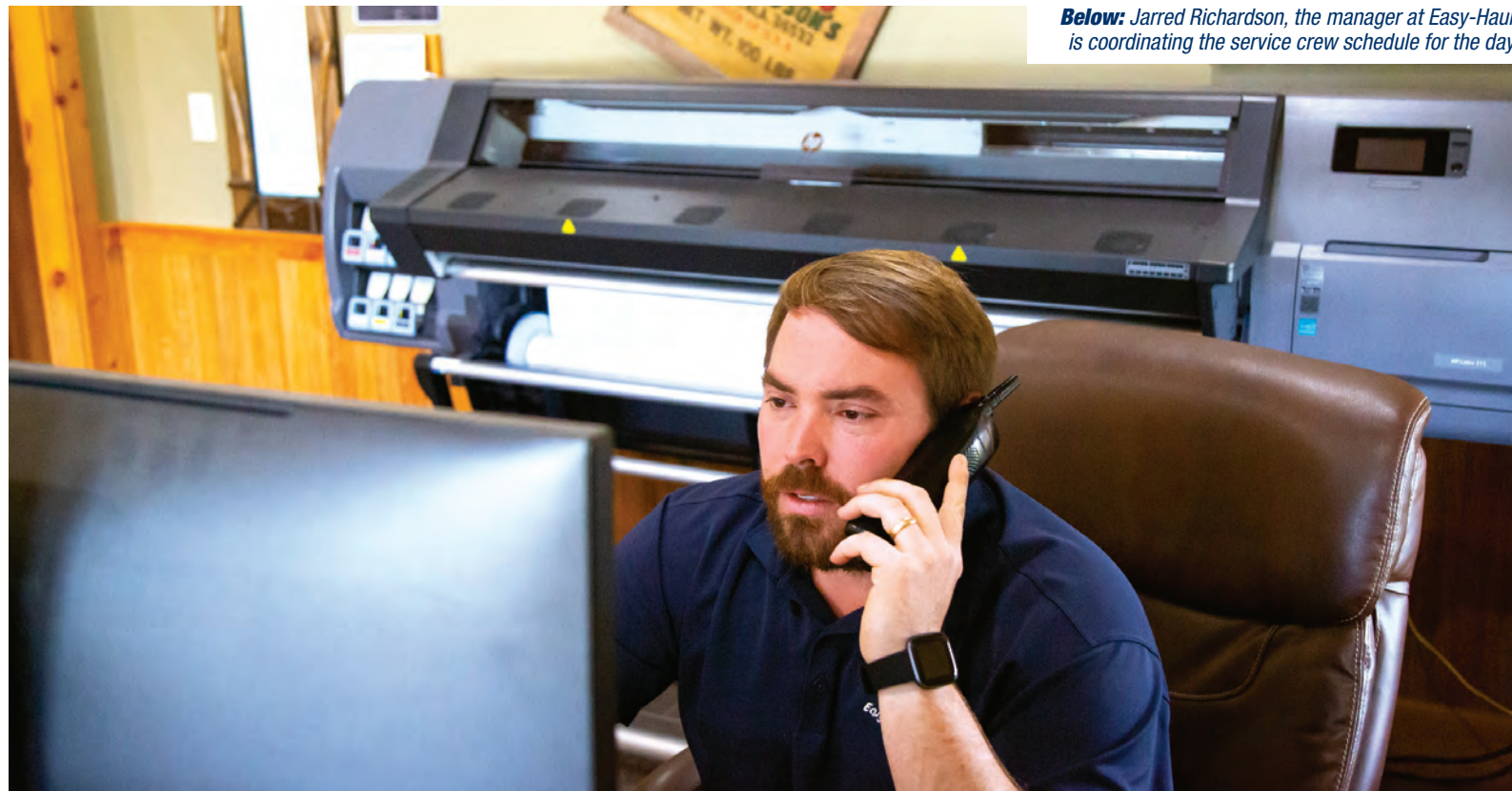
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**Below:** Jarred Richardson, the manager at Easy-Haul, is coordinating the service crew schedule for the day.





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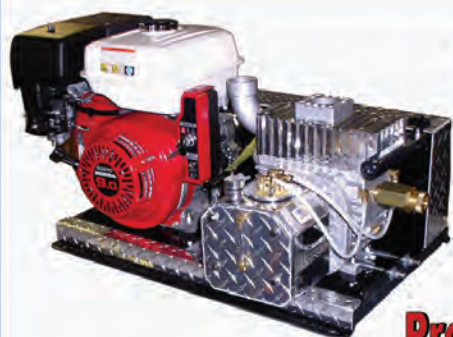
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Ad on page 35	<b>PolyJohn</b> 2500 Gaspar Ave., Whiting, IN 46394 800-292-1305 • 219-659-1152 www.polyjohn.com		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Bubble Gum, Cherry, Mulberry	✓
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Jim Kneiszel

**T**hese restrooms are serving the response teams near the site of a tragic high-rise construction collapse that took the lives of several workers in 2019. You can see the collapsed building in the background.

Portable sanitation products play an integral role in almost every construction project, offering convenient relief for workers doing the heavy lifting. Unfortunately, they are also deployed in the event of an event like this one, which reminds us as an industry about the daily dangers of working on a construction crew or for restroom technicians serving workers who scale the heights to build impressive structures.

Here are a few clues to help you identify the location of the restrooms:

1. Note the palm trees; this should help you narrow the search based on climate.
2. The cross streets are named for an animal you will never see in this region and a type of manmade waterway.
3. The history of this city is fraught with tall tales, legends, lore and tragedy. It has been underwater, but it always rises.
4. Regional cuisine and music are the lifeblood of this community.
5. The damaged building was to be 190 feet tall and include tourist lodging, apartments, a national chain restaurant and parking garage.
6. Streetcar service a few hundred feet from the restrooms was blocked by the building collapse.

To win the contest, name the city and collapsed building shown in the photo, as well as the streets that intersect at the location of the three restrooms. The winner will receive recognition as a geographical whiz. Send your responses to [editor@promonthly.com](mailto:editor@promonthly.com). The winner will be announced at [www.promonthly.com](http://www.promonthly.com) and through the *Portable Restroom Operator* Facebook page. ■

**SEND YOUR MYSTERY PHOTOS!** Do you have an interesting spot where you've been dropping and servicing restrooms? Send photos to [editor@promonthly.com](mailto:editor@promonthly.com). We will credit you for submitting to Where's the Restroom?

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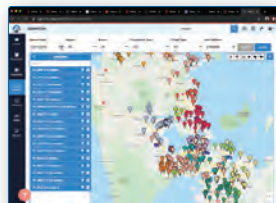
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# The Big WASHOUT

Iowa farmer, firefighter and restroom operator  
faces down a devastating Missouri River flood  
to provide needed services for his community

By Dee Goerge

**F**irefighter, farmer and campground owner Clay Lincoln hadn't thought about adding another career, one in portable sanitation, until his restroom provider ended the business relationship to pursue another venture. With 120 campsites along the Missouri River near Pacific Junction, Iowa, in 2016, the PRO convinced Lincoln that a \$12,000 slide-in unit to service his own campground would pay for itself within a year.

For his business, Linkon Logs Portables and Event Services, Lincoln recalls, "I also bought 18 portables and did the campground, school and parks." In the second year, he added servicing two more campgrounds and purchased 16 Satellite | PolyPortables Maxims and a Satellite Suites Selfie trailer to service events such as the Taco Fest and Memorial Park fireworks show.

"I had a great second year. And going into my third year, my goal was to get a built truck," he says. After shopping for a truck with specific options he wanted, he purchased a 2014 Ford F-550 from FlowMark Vacuum Trucks with a Masport pump, 900-gallon waste and 300-gallon freshwater aluminum tank, and dual-side service — perfect for working with campers and restrooms.

"Many of the campgrounds need the RVs pumped out along with portable restroom services. Many times guests of the campgrounds will use the portables, while RV owners need the blackwater and graywater dumped on a regular basis," Lincoln says. "Linkon Logs services seven campgrounds in the area, and it provides a great opportunity for extra revenue."

"This truck has saved me," he says, referring to how useful it became in the spring of 2019 when severe flooding in the region affected his campground, business property and father's home.



Clay Lincoln is the owner of Linkon Logs Portables and Event Services in Pacific Junction, Iowa. Flooding of the Missouri River in 2019 caused major damage to the family's property. (Photos by K.C. McGinnis)

## EXPLORE FIVE ISSUES THAT AFFECT CLAY LINCOLN AND LINKON LOGS PORTABLES AND EVENT SERVICES

### 1 SURVIVING FLOODS, SERVING IN A TIME OF NEED

Living along the Missouri River, the Lincoln family has learned how to deal with minor flooding that occurs, but March 16, 2019, was the worst they had seen since 2011. In 1997, Lincoln's father, Dennis, farmed 1,500 acres and started a campground, Riverview Acres, on the land along the river that he couldn't farm. Lincoln took over the farm and campground in 2010 when Dennis was going through cancer treatments.

Because the 2018-19 winter was so brutal, many of the owners had moved their campers out of the campground. In March, when snow turned to rain, the floods hit. The campground and his father's home with the shop buildings where Lincoln kept his portable restrooms and equipment were the most vulnerable. With the help of fellow firefighters, Lincoln moved his father and stepmother out of their home. Lincoln moved his restroom inventory to his home on high ground near Glenwood. His campground manager used a skid-steer to pull out most of the campers that were left. Only about 10 campers in the muddiest areas were lost in the flood.

At first, the water flowed over the levee. Later the levee broke in several places. It submerged the campground and filled Lincoln's two shops, rising 14 feet above ground level. When the water receded, the family started cleanup on the house and shops, and they hosted Vice President Mike Pence on his tour of the region, raising awareness for a disaster relief bill.

"Shortly after, it reflooded and made us realize we can't fix anything until the levees are fixed," Lincoln says. The campground closed for the 2019 season, and he wasn't able to plant any crops.





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However, the flood created demand for portable restrooms at schools and government facilities. The city of Glenwood lost its water plant, and the schools were shipping in water to flush toilets. At the school district's request, Lincoln and two other providers brought in 80 units and hand-wash stations to service four schools. Lincoln also set up units for several government facilities, including the courthouse and City Hall.

Having just purchased a truck, Lincoln hadn't planned to buy restrooms, but he bought 44 Satellite | PolyPortables Maxims to meet the demand.

"It hindered cash flow, but I expect twice the growth of income from the year before and it'll benefit me in two or three years," he says, noting that because of farming, he understands how income ebbs and flows each year.



The Linkon Logs Portables and Event Services team includes, from left, Dennis, Clay, Preston and Collin Lincoln. They are shown with an enclosed Big Horn trailer used for restroom delivery.

## 2 JUGGLING CAREERS, HELPING HANDS

"Very seldom do I worry about downtime," says Lincoln with a laugh regarding his busy schedule. He credits his career as a firefighter for having the opportunity to operate a portable restroom business. Firefighter work schedules are typically 24 hours long. Most work every other day for eight to 10 days before getting a string of four or five consecutive days off. The consecutive days off allow many firefighters to stay at home with young children or pursue other side jobs. Health insurance initially attracted him to firefighting in 2007 after attending college, running a gas station, café and motel, and being a nursing home operator.

He loves his job as a firefighter and appreciates the opportunity it gives him to farm and run the campground and restroom businesses. Farming and campground skills help with the business, and his business management degree provides an outline for understanding economics.

"But honestly, I think it's just about hitting the ground running. You deal with things as they pop up," Lincoln says. He has also been surprised how helpful vendors and other portable restroom operators have been as he learned the business. "I've never been in a business where people help each other so much."

Working with his firefighting schedule, he sets up routes in different directions so he can service all the restrooms within seven days. For more frequent jobs, such as the 10 restrooms at a grain plant that need servicing every other day, he relies on his sons and their friends.



Preston and Collin Lincoln use a PodiCab 500 from F.M. Mfg. to load a Satellite / PolyPortables restroom for delivery.

## 3 WORKING WITH A YOUNG LABOR POOL

With business growth and a demanding schedule, Lincoln is at a point where he needs a full-time employee. But because he couldn't farm and didn't have a campground to run in 2019, he continued with what worked in the past: teen helpers and creative scheduling. "I would never have imagined that boys 16 to 18 would line up (for this work). It's the 'throwing hay bales' of this era," Lincoln says, comparing restroom work to a traditional summer farm job.

The job appeals to youth because, instead of working full time for minimum wage, the teens work part time at \$15 per hour and have a flexible schedule to participate in summer sports and events. Lincoln's oldest son, Preston Lincoln, 18, delivers and services restrooms, helps with routes and even handles some sales. Younger son Collin, 15, helps set up restrooms and also cleans, stocks and power-washes units; and his daughter, Hallee, 14, also power-washes restrooms, cleans the trailer and helps with billing. Lincoln's wife, Brooke, owns a salon and keeps the family schedules in line.

The teen crew is available during the busiest part of the year when Lincoln may have three or four events on a weekend. He works on his days off, and the teens cover the rest.

Just because his crew is young doesn't mean he expects less from them. "The seed is planted, and I see that Preston understands the business is successful because we clean a little better than the other guy," Lincoln says, and Preston passes that on to the rest of the crew. "They become more responsible. They may not run a business, but they learn that doing the little things will help you succeed."

**"I think it's just about hitting the ground running. You deal with things as they pop up. ... I've never been in a business where people help each other so much."**

**CLAY LINCOLN**

### MORE INFO

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**Satellite | PolyPortables**  
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[www.satelliteindustries.com](http://www.satelliteindustries.com)

**Satellite Suites**  
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[satelliterestroomtrailers.com](http://satelliterestroomtrailers.com)



## 4 BUSINESS CONDUCTED THE "SMALL-TOWN" WAY

There may not be a large population with lots of markets to serve, but living in a rural area has some benefits. If you do a job well, word tends to get around and new clients come to you. Early on, a local construction company owner gave him the opportunity to provide restrooms for crews. The framers and electricians "sang my praises," Lincoln says, because he kept the restrooms clean. "Now I have almost all his business."

He currently services four communities in a 45-minute radius including construction, golf courses, weddings and events. Small-town customers tend to be loyal if you provide good service and follow through with what you say you will do, he says. "I try to provide construction rental services the same as we do for a wedding party. It's all just service. The challenge for me is: How far do I travel before I just break even? Is it worth going 45 miles for two restrooms?"



Lincoln sets up restrooms for a customer.

## 5 INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE

Every investment Lincoln makes improves efficiency or helps meet customer demand. In addition to the newly purchased truck, Lincoln has an enclosed Big Horn trailer that carries up to seven restrooms. Besides making the transportation of restrooms safer and easier, the trailer is a moving billboard, stickered with his business' logo and phone number for advertising. An F.M. Mfg. restroom mover makes it easier for him and his young crew to maneuver units on location.

In addition to about 80 Satellite | PolyPortables restrooms, Lincoln added a two-station Selfie trailer to his inventory to offer a trailer unit for weddings and corporate events.

Lincoln plans to run Linkon Logs full time (along with farming and operating the campground) in 2027 when he retires as a firefighter. Prior to that, he hopes to find the right person to work full time in addition to his part-time crew. "They are great labor, and I think it's really good for the kids to experience real work. It brings out a lot of character, and they learn to work with people," he says. ■

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## PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

### Reelcraft Industries retraction technology makes for safer hose management

By Craig Mandli

If you've used a retractable hose reel on your service vehicle for any length of time, you've no doubt either been slapped by or caused damage because of a wayward quick-returning hose. The REELSAFE Series RS7000 from Reelcraft Industries aims to make those problems of the past.

The REELSAFE system pays out like a traditional reel, though is specifically engineered to retract the hose at an average walking speed. The centrifugal clutch, integral to the reel base, greatly decelerates the hose retraction speed by up to 83% compared to a Series 7000 reel. The reel retracts at 2 mph — a rate designed to match the average human walking speed of 2 to 3 mph. The safety mechanism helps make the reel a fit for multiple applications.

"Really it's a fit anywhere hose management is needed or required, including traditional washdown, potable and blue water supply," says Aaron Edds, product manager for Reelcraft Industries.

The reels can handle 1/4-, 3/8-, 1/2- and 3/4-inch hose diameters in 25-, 50- and 70-foot lengths. Options are available for low pressure (up to 300 psi), medium pressure (up to 3,000 psi) and high-pressure (up to 5,000 psi) applications. The integral clutch creates a consistent retraction speed regardless of fluid or environmental temperatures, safely protecting personnel and equipment. It requires no field adjustment, and the through-shaft fluid path eliminates hose interference during reel rotation. It includes a seven-position hose guide arm for multiple mounting configurations, and its reel dimensions and mounting pattern are identical to the Series 7000, making it an easy swap. According to Edds, the additional safety component was a customer request.

"Typical retractable hose reels include a very powerful spring specifically engineered to fully retract the included length of hose full of fluid," he says. "As the spring force required is considerable, if the hose is accidentally let go by the operator, it can do damage to technicians, equipment and customer property. Careful consideration and research were performed to mimic the average human walking speed and perform consistently in all weather and temperature conditions."

A number of diverse beta sites tested REELSAFE units during development and users have requested additional models, Edds says. **800-444-3134; www.reelcraft.com.** ■

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## INDUSTRY NEWS

### Liquid Environmental Solutions purchases Atlas Pumping Service

Liquid Environmental Solutions acquired the assets of Atlas Pumping Service, a provider of sewer, septic, grease trap and used cooking oil services in the San Diego area. Atlas Pumping Service, based in Lakeside, adds an extensive network of nonhazardous wastewater customers to the existing LES operation in the Southern California area.

### All Safety Products to distribute P-POD

All Safety Products has been appointed the authorized U.S. distributor of the P-POD collapsible portable restroom. Designed for rapid deployment in locations with limited access, the P-POD measures 38.5 inches tall when folded. ■

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# ODOR CONTROL

By Craig Mandli

## GRAFFITI REMOVAL

### CENTURY CHEMICAL GRAFFITI WIPES

**Graffiti Wipes** from **Century Chemical** are designed for fast, easy cleanup of ink from nonporous surfaces. The abrasive, yet nonscratching fabric can be used on a variety of surfaces, including portable restrooms, showers, partitions and hand-wash stations. They are premoistened with an environmentally safe and biodegradable cleaning formula that removes paints (including enamel), ink and permanent marker. A few swipes dissolve unwanted paint and graffiti, according to the maker. Each case contains six canisters; and each canister holds 70 wipes that are 9 1/2 by 12 inches. **800-348-3505; www.centurychemical.com.**



### SUNRISE ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIFIC WIPE OFF

**Wipe Off** from **Sunrise Environmental Scientific** eliminates product runoff and drip down, as it sprays out as a gel that clings to hard surfaces. This gelling property makes the target surface and the product interact. It stays where it's sprayed, offering an effective solution for graffiti removal, according to the maker. Its ability to cling to graffiti-covered surfaces eliminates the need to reapply. **800-648-1153; www.sunrisenv.com.**



### WALEX PRODUCTS BANISH GRAFFITI REMOVER

**Banish Graffiti Remover** from **Walex Products** is a user-friendly formulation that removes graffiti and leaves surfaces protected from future graffiti. It removes most types of graffiti and many stains from smooth, nonporous surfaces such as plastics, glass and metals. It can be used to remove marker, paint, pen, pencil, grease, tar, crayon, dirt and calcium buildup. In most cases, it will remove the graffiti in less than a minute on unpainted surfaces, according to the maker. It is sold in 1-, 5- and 55-gallon containers. It should be sprayed onto the surface being cleaned and allowed a minute or two to work; then use a Banish Pad or soft scrub brush to agitate the product on the surface to help the removal process. **800-338-3155; www.walex.com.**



## ODOR CONTROL

### ARMAL SCENT BOX

**The Scent Box** from **Armal** incorporates a fragrance — vanilla balm, rose sensation, apple blossom, pinewood trail or strawberry field — in the wall panels of the restroom during the manufacturing process, ensuring a pleasant scent inside. The unit has a heavy-duty, spring-coil door with a wind-resistant device to ensure closure when unlocked and an overlapping wall assembly for greater safety. Options include a recirculating kit with filter and freshwater flush that works in combination with the pump kit. **866-873-7796; www.armal.biz.**



### J&J PORTABLE SANITATION PRODUCTS TRUEX SQUEEZE BOTTLE

**The Truex Squeeze Bottle** from **J&J Portable Sanitation Products** is a convenient, no-leak, easy-to-use 1-liter bottle filled with nonformaldehyde Truex Liquid Power portable toilet deodorizer. The squeeze bottle speeds up productivity and reduces messy and costly spillage. It provides long-lasting deep blue color, advanced time-released odor eliminating technology, and breaks down paper and waste, reducing mounding. **800-345-3303; www.jjchem.com.**



### JOHNNY'S CHOICE BY CHEMCORP SENSORY GRAND DISKS

**Sensory Grand Disks** for portable restrooms from **Johnny's Choice by Chemcorp** are designed to eliminate tank odors. They are simple to use and are available in many long-lasting fruity fragrances. **888-729-6478; www.johnnyschoice.com.**



### LUNARGLO SOLAR EXHAUST FAN

**LunarGlo** offers a solar-powered exhaust fan, which when mounted on the 4-inch vent stack can remove 23 to 40 cubic feet of air per minute on a sunny day with a gentle breeze by pulling the air from the holding tank up the stack. The fan motor is designed to function for up to 40,000 hours of continuous use. It can be coupled with a scented biscuit hung from the side vent to create a pleasant interior environment for users. **574-294-2624; www.lunarglo.com.**





### **POLYJOHN ENTERPRISES COOPER'S BEST DEODORIZING PACKETS**

**Cooper's Best Deodorizing Packets** from **PolyJohn Enterprises** give portable restroom operators an environmentally friendly option that helps control odors. These packets offer the ease and efficiency of an individually packaged deodorizer combined with a "green" formulation of bacterial agents that dissolves waste and destroys odors. Use one packet for 5 gallons of freshwater to service a unit. A case includes 250 packets. **800-292-1305; www.polyjohn.com.**



### **SAFE-T-FRESH ECO BLUE**

**Eco Blue** eco-friendly deodorizer from **Safe-T-Fresh** is a packet product with no hazardous materials that doesn't sacrifice fragrance or deep blue color. Its malodor control technology eliminates chemical processes by naturally absorbing malodors. It is biocide- and bacteria-free, making it biodegradable and treatment plant friendly. It is designed to provide a worry-free week of service with a lavender scent at any temperature. **800-883-1123; www.satelliteindustries.com.**



### **SURCO PORTABLE SANITATION PRODUCTS POTTY FRESH PLUS PORTABLE TOILET PUMP SPRAY**

Oil-based **Potty Fresh Plus** portable toilet pump spray from **Surco Portable Sanitation Products** eliminates stubborn odors in portable restrooms and provides long-lasting freshness. This deodorizer is easy to apply and contains Metazene odor-neutralizing additive that destroys the particles that cause vaporous malodors at their molecular level. Simply spray on the hard interior surfaces of any portable unit and odors disappear. It is suitable for urinals, on portable restroom walls and any other noncontact surfaces. It is available in xtreme clean, cherry and lavender fragrances, and it can be ordered in cases of quart bottles, 5-gallon pails or 55-gallon drums. **800-556-0111; www.surco.com.**



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## PORTABLE RESTROOM TRUCKS

2004 F550, 202k, 850/250 - \$10,000. 2004 GMC 4500, 16' stakebody delivery truck w/ liftgate, 182k - \$8,500. Located in VA. Contact egx@comcast.net for pics. (T05)

2016 Hino 268A, 1,400/600. \$65,900. Florida. Call for pictures - 239-633-4766. (T05)

2015 Ram, 131,000 miles, 6.4 Hemi auto transmission, 700-gallon waste and 300 fresh. \$45,000. This is the 1050 waste body from FMI. Rich 612-221-2800 or rich@jim-mysjohnnys.com. (T05)

2014 Hino 195 stainless steel pump truck, Best Enterprise built 1,050-gallon tank (300 water/750 waste), Conde PTO driven pump. Runs perfect and dealer maintained, 185k miles. \$34,000. Call 718-634-2780. (T06)

1,600-gallon portable toilet service unit (tank only). (Stock# 13762). [www.VacuumSalesInc.com](http://www.VacuumSalesInc.com). (888) VAC-UNIT (822-8648). (TBM)

2014 Imperial, 1,175 aluminum portable toilet service unit (775 waste/400 water) with Masport HXL4 pump (No Truck). (Stock #71975V). [www.vacuumsalesinc.com](http://www.vacuumsalesinc.com). (888)VAC-UNIT (822-8648). (TBM)

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