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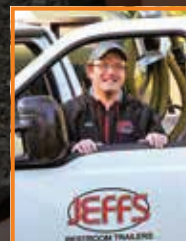
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December 2020
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The Clean Freaks

Whether servicing portable restrooms or picking up trash off the pavement, the folks at T&T Sweeping and Port-O-Let Service are sticklers for cleanliness

Page 14



FITS AND STARTS

Following a small-business dream, Jeff Pederson made his share of mistakes along the way. But now his portable sanitation business is looking up.

Page 20



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- 8** **From the Editor: PROs Prove Their Mettle in Uncertain Times**
2020 was a small business roller coaster, but restroom contractors hung on and came out of the wild ride on top.
- Jim Kneiszal
- 10** **@PROmonthly.com**
Check out exclusive online content.
- 12** **At Your Service:**
7 Steps to Closing Out a Successful Year as a Restroom Provider
'Tis the season for setting employee objectives, evaluating insurance coverage, tax-planning strategies and reviewing worker benefits.
- Jeff and Terri Wigley

COVER STORY



PROfile: The Clean Freaks
Whether servicing portable restrooms or picking up trash off the pavement, the folks at T&T Sweeping and Port-O-Let Service are sticklers for cleanliness.

- Dee Goerge

ON THE COVER: Three generations at T&T Sweeping and Port-O-Let Service have been cleaning up for customers in southern Maryland. Granddaughter Jenny Long, now the office manager, is shown with a Peterbilt service truck built out by Robinson Vacuum Tank and carrying a Fruitland pump. Restrooms are from PolyJohn. (Photo by John Boal)

- 20** **Business Incubator: Fits and Starts**
Following a small-business dream, Jeff Pederson made his share of mistakes along the way. But now his portable sanitation business is looking up.
- Betty Dageforde
- 24** **PSAI News:**
It's Not Easy Being Green, But It's What We Do
- Karleen Kos
- 26** **Product Focus: Holding Tanks and Transport Trailers**
- Craig Mandli
- 32** **Product News**
Spotlight: PolyJohn responds to unprecedented demand for hand-sanitizing solutions

COMING NEXT MONTH — JANUARY 2021

- **Take 5:** The young gun in Kansas
- **PROfile:** Covering Texas territory



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advertiser index

AllyPro	29
American Tank Co. LLC	13
Armal	15
CENTURY Paper	30
Century Paper Products	30
CRO	11
Cro Software Solutions	11
FLOWMARK VACUUM TRUCKS	17
FlowMark Vacuum Trucks	17
Hercules Industries, Inc.	31
IMPERIAL INDUSTRIES	15, 35
Imperial Industries, Inc.	15, 35
J&J	3
J&J Portable Sanitation Products	3
KeeVac	27
KeeVac Industries	27
Masport, Inc.	6
EXPLORER	
McKee Technologies/Explorer Trailers	34
Milwaukee Rubber Products, Inc.	5
NVE	25
National Vacuum Equipment, Inc.	25
NAVITAS CREDIT CORP.	15
Navitas Credit Corp.	15
POLYJOHN	36
PolyJohn Enterprises Corp.	36

PortaLogix	25
PortaLogix	25
Restroomtruck.com	34
RICH TRAILERS	5
Rich Specialty Trailers	5
ROBINSON VACUUM TANKS	33
Robinson Vacuum Tanks	33
ROEDA	29
ROEDA	29
SANSOM INDUSTRIES	9
Sansom Industries LLC	9
SATELLITE POLYPORTABLES	7
Satellite Industries	7
ScreencO Systems	29
ScreencO Systems LLC	29
THE SLIDE IN WAREHOUSE	23
Slide-In Warehouse	23
SURCO PORTABLE SANITATION PRODUCTS	34
Surco® Portable Sanitation Products	34
T.S.F. COMPANY	2
T.S.F. Company, Inc.	2
TANK WORLD CORP	10
Tank World Corp	10
WALEX	21
Walex Products Company	21



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By Jim Kneiszel

PROs Prove Their Mettle in Uncertain Times

2020 was a small-business roller coaster, but restroom contractors hung on and came out of the wild ride on top

If I had to sum up the year in portable sanitation in one word, it would be *perseverance*.

PROs entered 2020 with boundless enthusiasm, adding equipment and employees in response to a growing economy that promised more revenue opportunities from construction and special event clients.

By early spring, however, the upbeat mood came crashing down with the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. Every day in late March was filled with announcements of event cancellations — music and food festivals, athletic events, fairs. Many of our favorite entertainment institutions were gone for the entire year.

I recall talking to many of you in this time period about the gut punch you took as these profitable customers were falling by the wayside. Stunned by the reversal of fortunes, I'm not even sure if this news was sinking in with all of you. There was a disbelief, a denial of the grim situation. It was so fresh in those early days that I don't recall talk of mass layoffs, selling off equipment, or going into survival mode like I might have expected.

Then something happened — and in hindsight it should not have been unexpected. A new market was opening for restroom contractors. The sanitation part of portable sanitation was taking over.

ANSWER THE CALL

Customers who once dickered over adding an extra restroom on their construction site were now demanding it. Those who wanted to hold off on service until waste reached the brim of the holding tank were calling for more frequent visits from your technicians. Cost conscious clients who previously balked at adding a sink to their order suddenly wanted multiple sinks or hand sanitizer stands along with their restrooms.

All those years you preached to customers about the importance of the sanitation in addition to offering relief stations. And too often they wouldn't listen. But as the pandemic took hold, they became strong advocates for your message of cleanliness. As a result, you bought up every available sink and sanitizing stand and created a huge backlog of orders for industry manufacturers.

In addition, creative PROs who are skilled fabricators started building their own portable sinks to cope with overwhelming demand. I talked to

several contractors over the summer who grabbed whatever materials they could gather — metal, wood, makeshift sinks and sanitizer dispensers — to build and deploy workable solutions as fast as the orders came in.

In the course of a few months, the small business rollercoaster that is portable sanitation had gone from great optimism to the shock of losing so much work, to enjoying a resurgence by finding and going down a new path. In short, you took lemons and made lemonade. The transformation was heartening and a great example of American ingenuity.

IT WAS A "HUGE BLUR"

Recently, one of our metro New York PROs, Abe Breuer of John To Go — who we've featured in the magazine in the past — was the subject of a story in *The New Yorker Magazine*. He talked about this phenomenon.

Breuer explained how he placed units for drive-through COVID-19 testing sites, answered the call of utility companies who wanted shower trailers, and rented restroom trailers to so many couples who were moving their weddings outdoors. He talked about how customers took every sink he had to offer — a product that was once a hard upsell was now in demand.

"Everything is just a huge blur to me," Breuer said in the *New Yorker* article. "The market is as hot as it can get. The stage has been set to have a very, very busy 2021."

Looking back on the year, it's clear that many are suffering in business and as individual families. The virus has taken the life of so many thousands of people and sickened millions more. Unemployment was unprecedented during the early days of the pandemic and continues to threaten the well being of so many people. We all want to see a return to better days and to put this terrible chapter of the

world story to bed as soon as possible.

Yet for the portable sanitation community, I return to the word *perseverance* to explain how this industry has managed to keep going when everything turned upside down. In the face of worry, fear and the unknown, you kept getting up and going to work every day. Partly there was a determination based on your duties finally being recognized as an "essential service." And partly your actions were expected, as you are generally self-

I expect that hand-wash equipment will become a permanent fixture for all restroom orders even after the pandemic dies down. Workers at job sites and the general public will never again accept restrooms without sinks or sanitizers.

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BETTER DAYS AHEAD

As it turned out, so many of you told me you remained busy in 2020, but it was just a different kind of busy. In the end, some of the optimism of the New Year remained. This economic crisis was not 2008 all over again. Unlike the real estate bubble, we haven’t seen PROs drastically trim their staffs or their equipment inventories. I have not heard the kind of negativity that came with the last recession more than a decade ago.

What I have heard is that construction — both commercial and residential — continues like it did before the pandemic. And there is an expectation that events will return when a vaccine is available for COVID-19. And I expect that hand-wash equipment will become a permanent fixture for all restroom orders even after the pandemic dies down. Workers at job sites and the general public will never again accept restrooms without sinks or sanitizers.

So as we all head into the holidays and focus inward on our families and friends, I want to offer you congratulations on a job well done this year. And keep your hopes high for a better 2021. ■

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OVERHEARD ONLINE

“Not every company can spend more now, but every company wants to attract and retain the best talent for its team. ... But it's important to remember that people don't come to work just for money. Everyone wants to feel valued and do interesting work for a great company.”

— 8 Ways to Secure Top Talent Without Offering More Salary
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HIRE A VET

Tap Into a Skilled Pool of Prospective Employees

Many portable restroom operators struggle to find ready, trustworthy and quick-learning talent to run service routes; yet many unemployed veterans fit that bill. Read this online article to learn how veterans might be the solution to your hiring problems.

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SWOT

Evaluate the Status Quo Before Business Planning

Columnist Amanda Clark makes the case for thorough business analysis using a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats grid. Read this online article to see how a SWOT analysis can benefit your portable restroom operation.

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By Jeff and Terri Wigley

7 Steps to Closing Out a Successful Year as a Restroom Provider

'Tis the season for setting employee objectives, evaluating insurance coverage, tax-planning strategies and reviewing worker benefits

QUESTION: As new business owners, what advice can you share regarding end-of-year planning?

ANSWER: Our industry has fundamentally changed in 2020 and we need to be aware of this novel situation and continue to react accordingly.

Year-end planning encompasses the following major components:

1. Exploring tax planning strategies
2. Reviewing employee performance plans
3. Conducting employee reviews
4. Evaluating employee benefits
5. Reviewing all insurance plans
6. Performing a physical inventory
7. Examining year-end financials
8. Assembling documents for tax preparation
9. Comparing previous year's goals with expectations
10. Creating goals for the coming year

Given the many new and unique challenges this year, this question will be most effectively answered in two parts.

PART 1: In this column we will address activities 1-6 dealing with company and employee plans as well as physical inventory as close to the end of December as is possible.

PART 2: Next month, we will discuss activities 7-10 that concern financial aspects of the business after the close of business on Dec. 31, 2020.

DECEMBER YEAR-END PLANNING SUGGESTIONS:

1. EXPLORE TAX PLANNING STRATEGIES – A meeting in early December is an effective business strategy in managing the company's tax obligations. You may discover there would be advantages to purchasing equipment and taking delivery in 2020 as opposed to 2021. Depending on the numbers, this could range from taking delivery of another vehicle to simply purchasing first quarter supplies in December. Results will vary, but a planning meeting with your accountant or CPA is strongly recommended.

2. REVIEW THE COMPANY POLICY MANUAL – This year has necessitated many important changes in service and administrative procedures. Make

sure that your policies require daily employee questionnaires as to their health in terms of COVID symptoms well as knowledge of fellow employees that may have these symptoms.

In addition, policies should also be in place for social distancing, personal protective equipment (PPE including masks, gloves and, in some instances, face shields), proper daily cleaning and sanitizing of the service vehicles as well as office, work spaces and "community areas" such as the front desk, breakrooms, office supply areas and restrooms. Common-use equipment like printers and other technology should have cleaning policies and protocols included in the company manual.

In the event of a positive COVID test, written procedures should be in place outlining back-to-work testing and procedures.

Some PROs have also distributed their written policies on COVID to their customers.

With such a challenging year, more positive feedback, where warranted, is an excellent tool in maintaining morale and motivation after a year of hard work and ever-changing demands and responsibilities.

3. REVIEW EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE PLANS – The end of the year is an excellent time to review and modify these plans if new responsibilities have been added to or removed from their job duties.

With unprecedented changes in health consciousness everywhere, it is likely additional job responsibilities have been assigned to all employees. This information should be added to these performance plans so they accurately describe the job responsibilities for each employee.

4. CONDUCT EMPLOYEE REVIEWS – Prepare employees for the year to come in terms of evaluation and feedback. With such a challenging year, more positive feedback, where warranted, is an excellent tool in maintaining morale and motivation after a year of hard work and ever-changing demands and responsibilities.

As part of the review process, many PROs also work with employees to establish work-related goals for the coming year. Certain incentives for obtaining these goals could be established.

5. EVALUATE EMPLOYEE BENEFITS – This is an excellent time to review with your financial advisor concerning the performance of any company financial benefits such as an IRA, SIMPLE IRA, SEP plan or a stock plan. Do any changes need to be made in the coming year? Should any new benefit plans be added? Are these plans optional to the employees? If there are employer matching benefits, does the matching percentage need to be adjusted? This yearly meeting with your financial advisor is important and it strengthens the business relationship.

6. EVALUATE ALL INSURANCE PLANS – Although renewal dates may vary, as you are analyzing and evaluating your entire business, taking the time to review insurance rates, claims, and terms and conditions from the past year is worthwhile. Evaluate all insurance policies including general liability, health, vehicle and workers compensation.

Also consider product liability insurance, key person insurance, inland marine insurance (for equipment that is stored on your property) and, building and property insurance, among others. If you would like to shop for new policies or providers, you would want to do this well in advance of your actual renewal date during the calendar year

7. PERFORM A PHYSICAL INVENTORY – The inventory process can be made less laborious by establishing an organized plan on which employees have been trained. An actual inventory in late December is strongly suggested as tax filing documents require inventory levels as of Dec 31.

Such a plan might include categorizing the equipment and creating a detailed inventory form for all employees participating in this process to complete. Everyone should be knowledgeable as to each specific type of equipment being inventoried.

Most companies in our industry delineate between “construction” and “event” equipment. Each type of unit is then listed. For example,

- Standard units
- Units with sinks
- Crane units
- Holding tanks
- ADA units
- Handicapped-accessible units
- Sink Stations
- Hand sanitizer stands
- Restroom trailers

Finally, each of the selected types of equipment are categorized as “construction” or “event.”

EXAMPLE: One route service technician reports 45 construction units, five event units, one ADA event unit and three construction sinks. At the end of route this information is combined with that of each route service tech and delivery team member.

On that same day, the same form is used to do a similar count in the yard. At the end of the inventory day, all equipment is counted, classified as to “construction” or “event,” and input into a spreadsheet type of application. Until year end, updates are made as the daily inventory forms are submitted.

A few special precautions: Always compare this year’s inventory to last. Be sure to consider any new equipment purchased this year as well as any equipment that was either sold or destroyed.

Your company’s inventory process will differ in specific details, but the overall concept should be similar.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

As with all information in these columns, we present suggestions based on best business practices in our industry. Next month, we will continue this topic as we propose strategies to consider in January of each year. Merry Christmas, happy holidays and happy new year! ■



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YOUR FRIENDS AT COLE PUBLISHING

The T&T crew includes, from left, Lewis Armstong, Wayne Lawrence, J.R. and Sierra Thompson, Matt Johnson, Jackie Thompson, Ricky Thompson, Jeremy Edwards, Sissy Thompson, Buddy Thompson, Austin Russell, Jenny Long and Denise Hollidge. The truck in the background is a Peterbilt from Robinson Vacuum Tank and carrying a Fruitland pump. (Photos by John Boal)



The Clean Freaks

Whether servicing portable restrooms or picking up trash off the pavement, the folks at T&T Sweeping and Port-O-Let Service are sticklers for cleanliness

By Dee Goerge

Three generations of Thompsons have offered entrepreneurial services in southern Maryland to make T&T Sweeping and Port-O-Let Service a familiar name. The most recent business — portable restrooms since 2006 — got new recognition this year. With lockdown due to the coronavirus, demand was down for restroom trailers for spring and summer events. But the need for hand-wash stations and restrooms at businesses and construction sites kept workers on their toes adapting to ever-changing procedures to meet regulations.

Along with the loss of their beloved matriarch, 2020 was a challenging year that the family tackled together to succeed as they have for half a century.

FROM DEBRIS TO RESTROOMS

Joseph “Buddy” Thompson grew up in a family of “watermen” — fishing, crabbing, clamming and oystering for a living. But in 1969, after serving in the National Guard, he returned home and decided to start a business on land. Buddy’s Disposal & Sons picked up trash and debris, with the support of his wife, Louise and his three sons. They ran the trash business for 20 years before selling it.



T&T Sweeping and Port-O-Let Service Clements, Maryland

Owners: Buddy, Ricky and Sissy Thompson

Founded: 2006 restrooms, 1989 sweeping

Employees: 10

Services: Portable restroom rental, sweeping and cleaning

Service area: Southern Maryland

Website: tandtswepingportoletservice.com

“Then he opened a sweeping company in 1989 because he felt he was young enough to build another successful business,” says his granddaughter, Jenny Long, office manager. “Buddy has always been self-employed and a strong business owner.”

He knew there was a need for sweeping as customers often asked if he could sweep the area when he was picking up trash. He purchased a Billy Goat, a small walk-behind sweeper/vacuum. The sweeping business grew, but by 2006, Buddy wanted to slow down — just a little bit. So he asked his son, Joseph “Ricky” Thompson, to buy into half of the business. Ricky ended his dump truck business, sold his truck and joined his father’s sweeping business.

“In 2008, Dad (Ricky) said, ‘let’s try port-a-potties,’” Jenny says, noting it was just a whim. “My dad is a go-getter. He doesn’t stop at all.”



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Left: Co-owner Joseph “J.R.” Thompson completed paperwork from the cab of his Peterbilt service truck.

Below: One of the owners, Sissy Thompson is flanked by her daughters, Jackie Thompson, left, and Jenny Long.



“There are more safety regulations. The guys have to wear masks; gloves have to be changed out often. On every stop they have to check sanitizers to be refilled.”

JENNY LONG

The whim turned out to be a good one, and soon portable restrooms overtook the sweeping side of the business. Third generation family members joined the business. Ricky’s son, Joseph “J.R.” started working in 1999 and runs daily routes pumping restrooms, while his sister, Jenny, started working with Louise, or Maw-Maw, as a high school senior in 2008. At 29, she manages the office to keep both sides of the business in order.

“Maw-Maw taught me everything I know about this business. Unfortunately she passed away in January (2020). I get scared sometimes when a situation approaches that I would ask her about. But I have learned to push through as she would want me to do and keep this business going strong,” she says.

Jenny had to become familiar with the sweeper side of the business, which her grandmother had taken care of, while Jenny handled the restrooms.

GROWING DEMAND

By 2013, T&T had 250 restrooms and four vacuum service trucks, and they’ve grown greatly since then due to demand from commercial and residential construction. Contracts with area military bases provides steady — and growing — work. For example, they provide 30 portable restrooms to Naval Air Station Patuxent River, for continuous building projects. Jenny took the initiative to go through the applications and red tape to get the contracts and to make sure all of T&T’s drivers qualify for DBIDS (Defense Biometric Identification System) passes to have access to the bases.

Over the years, weddings and weekend events such as air shows at military bases increased demand for trailer units, but that changed with the lockdown after the coronavirus hit.

“COVID-19 hurt us with our event trailers as they were rented for weekend use and everyone had to cancel their events,” Jenny says. “Our main

focus was to help other businesses who were suffering through this crazy pandemic.”

To comply with regulations, customers needed hand-wash stations when they reopened for business outdoors. Even though they had a good supply, T&T ran out of wash stations after supplying hospitals and other clients. Jenny tried to order more, but there was a back order. So instead, she and office worker, Denise Hollidge, came up with the idea to build wood stands for sanitizer dispensers that business owners/cooks could use to sanitize their hands.

Besides the 325 wood stands they built, T&T’s portable restroom inventory includes 1,000 standard units for construction, 175 newer standard units for events and 50 handicap units, all from PolyJohn and Satellite Industries. To accommodate a growing number of events, T&T has an assortment of trailers: two 12-foot, a 15-foot, three 24-foot, one 20-foot and one 30-foot, built by Forest River Mobile Restrooms, Black Tie Products and Wells Cargo.

They also have an impressive inventory of accessory equipment: 50 single and 50 double sinks, 50 250- or 500-gallon holding tanks and 50 100-gallon freshwater tanks, all from PolyJohn.

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Left: Joseph “J.R.” Thompson stops on a service route. His Peterbilt truck was built out by Robinson Vacuum Tank and carries a Fruitland pump. Restrooms are from PolyJohn.

“We recently ordered 28 new PolyJohn portable restrooms because we were running out,” Jenny says. “Construction is eating us up.”

She’s not sure what is going on, but construction is booming in the small cities T&T serves in southern Maryland.

QUALITY EMPLOYEES AND EQUIPMENT

In addition to four working family members, T&T hires six employees, who are loyal to the family. “Most of our employees have been with our company for years,” Jenny notes.

When hiring, her father, Ricky, handles the interview, drug testing, criminal background check and training. The first week is spent riding with a T&T driver to make sure new employees remain interested in the job. The next week a driver rides with them to make sure they do the job correctly.

With a busy schedule, there isn’t a lot of time for meetings, but T&T squeezes in a few and had to add additional requirements with the coronavirus.

“There are more safety regulations. The guys have to wear masks; gloves have to be changed out often. On every stop they have to check sanitizers to be refilled,” Jenny says. Though T&T always stressed thorough cleaning, it became even more important.

To retain employees, T&T offers vacation time and health insurance, as well as good trucks and equipment.

“Our drivers all have company cellphones, with the Waze navigation app to get them to their destination fast and safe,” Jenny says. The app highlights new additions to their regular routes.

Other than an older 2007 Ford F-750 with a 1,100-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater steel tank and Masport pump built by Abernethy Welding, the fleet is new and up to date. It includes a 2017 Ford F-550 with 900-gallon waste/350-gallon freshwater tank, a 2015 Peterbilt with 1,500-gallon waste/500-gallon freshwater tank, a 2019 Peterbilt with 1,500-gallon waste/500-gallon freshwater tank and a 2019 Ford F-550 flatbed carrying an 800-gallon waste/350-gallon freshwater tank. The newer trucks have steel Robinson Vacuum Tanks units and Fruitland pumps.

For sweeping, they have 2014 and 2018 Isuzu NPR trucks with tanks from TYMCO and Billy Goat Sweeper.

“I get scared sometimes when a situation approaches that I would ask her about. But I have learned to push through as she would want me to do and keep this business going strong.”

JENNY LONG

MORE INFO

Abernethy Welding & Repair, Inc.
800-545-0324
www.abernethywelding.com

Black Tie Products, LLC
877-253-3533
www.blacktieproducts.com

Forest River, Inc.
574-266-7520
www.forestriverinc.com/
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www.fruitlandmanufacturing.com

Isuzu Commercial Truck of America
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www.isuzucv.com

Masport, Inc.
800-228-4510
www.masportpump.com
See ad, page 6

PolyJohn
800-292-1305
www.polyjohn.com
See ad, page 36

Robinson Vacuum Tanks Inc.
814-933-0927
www.robinsonstanks.com
See ad, page 33

Satellite Industries
800-883-1123
www.satelliteindustries.com
See ad, page 7

TYMCO
254-799-5546
www.tymco.com

Walex Products Company
800-338-3155
www.walex.com
See ad, page 21

STRONG WORK ETHIC

With three generations working together, different opinions are inevitable, with occasional clashes, Jenny notes. But the family always comes together. And all have inherited Buddy and Louise’s strong work ethic. Buddy, 79, and going through cancer treatments, shows up for work most every day.



Above: Technician Austin Russell fills the freshwater tank of his service vehicle before starting a route. The truck is a Ford F-750 with a 1,100-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater steel tank and Masport pump built by Abernethy Welding.

“He’s just here if we need him,” Jenny notes. He hangs out in the shop with the employee who power-washes the portable restrooms before being delivered to a new site. Buddy runs errands and occasionally delivers restrooms.

His approach has been to fix what you have and save for a rainy day. The 2007 truck is an example of that.

“My dad is getting more like his dad every day,” Jenny adds, as he also emphasizes good maintenance to make equipment last longer.

Ricky makes sure the trucks are power-washed every day, then wiped down and restocked with supplies. They are handwashed weekly. “Our drivers take great pride in our equipment. Sometimes when they arrive on a job-site customers ask, ‘Are these show trucks?’” Jenny says.

Portable restrooms are given the same attention — power-washed, disinfected, wiped down and restocked before leaving the yard. On site, service calls include a thorough washing and stocking, including Walex deodorant discs to keep the restroom fresh.

Besides being clean, the trucks have “bling” with polished chrome bumpers and extra lights. Ricky started it, and J.R. has taken it to another level.

“My brother’s truck looks like a Christmas tree going down the road,” Jenny laughs.

Her focus is the office and updating accounting with QuickBooks and Peachtree Financial Solutions software and using Facebook and the business’ website to reach out to customers. She has an office assistant, and her mother, Sissy, who operates her own business, helps T&T whenever they need her.



Above: Jeff Mundy operates a TYMCO street sweeper built on an Isuzu NRP truck. The company added portable restrooms to their established sweeping business.

FUTURE PLANS

The year 2020 has been challenging for T&T, as it has been for many businesses. But the diversity of services, a robust construction market and continued sweeping services have kept workers as busy as ever. Restroom trailers contracted for weddings in early 2020 were rescheduled for later in the year. And the business’ initiative to build sanitizing stations to meet needs from the COVID-19 crisis shows once again how the Thompsons recognize need and opportunity and respond.

So is there something new on the horizon? Maybe, Jenny says with a laugh.

“I told my dad we should pump septic tanks,” she explains. So far it’s just an idea, and finding good workers is the biggest challenge.

But who knows, in the future the Thompsons may decide it’s time to add another service as part of the T&T family business. ■



Left: Denise Hollidge, left, and Jenny Long go over T&T records at the company office.

LIFE LESSONS FROM MAW-MAW

Jenny Long worked for 12 years in the office side-by-side with her “Maw-Maw” Louise Thompson. Jenny still chokes up at the loss of her beloved grandmother who died at 76 on Jan. 15, 2020.

Besides missing her deeply, Jenny remembers her panic of being alone in the office. Though she had done the work on her own before, she missed the security of Maw-Maw’s backup. But thankfully, she found other support.

“I had a close friend who’s like family to us who came to help me in the office. And, if I didn’t know better I’d swear she’s Maw-Maw’s clone. It’s almost scary,” she says with a laugh, about her co-office worker, Denise Hollidge.

Louise was stubborn and old-school, keeping tax records on paper with handwritten and pasted information. She resisted technology and the computer software Jenny uses for payroll and other accounting work. Louise wasn’t into the internet or social media.

But she understood people — not to overly trust, but to always be polite and respectful. It’s something Jenny continues to do — finding ways to resist retorting with her own angry words to irate callers.

Louise was also a good mediator.

“If we had a problem with a worker, she solved it,” Jenny says, and she was the mediator in the family as well.

It’s a skill, Jenny is working on, as her assistant Denise has taken on that role for now. At the same time, Jenny recognizes her grandmother’s traits in herself. She acknowledges OCD in the specific way she handles taking care of checks and the way she files. And at 29, she aspires to carry on the family business that her grandparents have successfully operated for 51 years.

“My Maw-Maw raised three boys and ran a business,” Jenny says. “She was definitely the heart of the business.”

The Business Incubator introduces readers to new restroom operators. We will revisit owners of the startup companies when they become more established to find out how they met many challenges along the way. If you know someone new to the portable sanitation industry who you would like to suggest for one of these features, send his or her contact information to editor@promonthly.com.

Jeff Pederson is shown with his Ford F-350 with a Satellite Vacuum Trucks tank and a Conde (Westmoor) Super 6 pump. (Photos by Brad Stauffer)

Fits *and* Starts

Following a small-business dream, Jeff Pederson made his share of mistakes along the way. But now his portable sanitation business is looking up.

By **Betty Dageforde**

Jeff Pederson started his portable sanitation business in 2017 when he was 24. He had no college education, no trade school background, no experience in the industry. His education can only be described as the School of Hard Knocks.

Shortly after high school Pederson began a career as a baseball clubhouse manager in Little Rock, Arkansas, taking care of players and coaches. He enjoyed it but the 16- to 20-hour days were grueling. So when a restroom trailer vendor working at the stadium suggested he buy a restroom trailer and start his own company, Pederson was ripe for conversion. He'd never heard of restroom trailers, but two months later owned a 2017 Forest River three-stall Cargo Mate and had a business, Jeff's Restroom Trailer Rentals, focused on the wedding industry.

Between lack of business and industry knowledge, sketchy advice and admittedly bad decisions he didn't get far and the initial excitement of owning his own company quickly dampened. But Pederson didn't give up. After about a year he did a reality check, returned home

to Bovey, Minnesota, and started over, this time a lot more savvy and with support from family and friends. He still works a second job – graveyard shift doing housekeeping at the hospital – but says he enjoys it because it gives him a lot of time to work on the business, which he reports is starting to pay for itself.

In hindsight there are many things Pederson says he'd do differently — “But hindsight is 20/20,” he says.

BE CAREFUL WHO YOU TRUST

When Pederson bought his restroom trailer, he successfully navigated his first challenge — learning on the fly how to drive the trailer home from the Forest River factory in Indiana. “It was 12 nerve-wracking hours,” he says, “but a good first learning experience.” On the other hand, he regrets turning down Forest River's offer to explain the features of the trailer because the ballpark vendor's partner who went with him said he would do that and help him get his business started — a promise not kept.

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Left: Jeff Pederson sets up a Forest River restroom trailer for service near his Bovey, Minnesota-based business, Jeff's Restroom Trailer Rentals.

Below: Posing with a Forest River restroom trailer, Pederson says his fledgling business is starting to pay for itself.

"So I didn't know how to operate it, fix it or dump it," he says. "I also had no idea what to price the trailer at so I gave away rentals for pretty cheap."

Pederson financed his trailer through a finance company associated with the ballpark vendor's partner. The fine print was confusing and unclear.

"I've read that contract a hundred times," he says, "and I even asked them what the interest rate was and they just said it's built into the loan. I figure I'm paying like 23%. That prevented me from growing because I was paying \$1,200 a month with no income and no idea how to run a business. It handcuffed me." A bank has since told him they would have charged 6% over 5 years, for a \$450 monthly payment.

DIVERSIFY

Pederson says it would have been better to start out with portable restrooms along with the trailer because traditional single units are cheaper to buy, easier to rent and almost maintenance free. Only later did the vendor's partner tell him that's how most people do it — "And it was like, man, I wish I had known that when I started."

When he moved to Bovey, Pederson considered portable restrooms but hesitated, as there were several competitors. But in July 2019 he bought a few units — "just to experiment." He now has 13 (Globals from Satellite Industries) and soon plans to have 20 and a couple Liberty wheelchair-accessible units. In early 2020 he bought a vacuum truck — a 2004 Ford F-350 with a Satellite Vacuum Trucks 300-gallon waste/150-gallon freshwater aluminum tank and a Conde (Westmoor) Super 6 pump.

He also bought a second trailer — a Forest River two-station unit. He wanted a new unit but the long lead time would have caused him to lose jobs

"A good online presence has really been successful. And word-of-mouth is becoming really big now, thankfully."

JEFF PEDERSON



already lined up. In a stroke of luck, a man from Minneapolis contacted him wanting to sell a new trailer he bought for a project that got canceled. "His mother-in-law found me online," Pederson says. "It was identical to what I'd been looking for. It was one of those things that was just supposed to happen." The unit came winterized, something he wished he had thought of for his first trailer, which is usable only six months of the year.

PLANNING MAKES PERFECT

Pederson says if he had it to do over, he would take at least six months to prepare for owning a business. "I would also do market research, make brochures and flyers and do advance marketing. As I've evolved, I really see how big of an impact that has on a business because nobody knew who I was when I started."

He also suggests new PROs give a lot of thought to their company name. Jeff's Restroom Trailer Rentals describes Pederson's original business idea but doesn't leave room for future plans, which might include shower, utility and refrigerated trailers, along with portable restrooms. He's now hesitant to change the name for fear it might hurt him. "If you change your name it's almost like you go out of business," he says. "You lose your history which can hurt you from a branding and financing perspective."



Jeff Pederson delivers a Satellite Industries restroom.

By the time Pederson moved to Bovey, he had more knowledge, realistic expectations and a plan. He moved in with his parents, saving money and giving him a place to store the trailer. His father, Jeff Sr., a retired concrete worker, has been teaching him the mechanical aspects of the trailer and his mother, Beth, helps with bookkeeping and answering the phone as needed.

Pederson has registered with wedding planners, partnered with a tent rental company and attends home and bridal shows. “The combination of all those plus a good online presence has really been successful,” he says. “And word-of-mouth is becoming really big now, thankfully.”

FRIENDS AND THE FUTURE

Pederson has also received a helping hand from others in the industry. A PRO acquaintance from Boston, Tom Harris, explained how to operate the trailer, gave him marketing pointers and recommended Pederson network with local PROs. Alpha Mobile Solutions has answered numerous questions about the trailers. A local web design company is redesigning his homebuilt site. Others have given him advice about Google AdWords and how to charge. Attending the Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport Show (WWETT) Show was also very helpful.

In the next 12 months Pederson hopes to build up the portable restroom work through event and construction work, hire his mother full time and quit his hospital job. He has long-term plans, as well.

“By my 10th year I’d like to have 500 portable restrooms and maybe eight restroom trailers and two shower trailers,” he says. “I’d also look at adding refrigerated trailers.” Those plans will require hiring employees — which he knows will be a new kind of challenge for him to face. “It’s nerve-wracking to think about,” he says. “You’re putting your reputation in somebody else’s hands.”

It’s been trial by fire for Pederson, but he persevered and is as enthusiastic as ever. “I’m just fortunate I’m still operating and things are going as well as they are,” he says. ■

MORE INFO

Alpha Mobile Solutions
877-789-1213
www.alphamobilesolutions.com

Forest River, Inc.
574-266-7520
www.forestriverinc.com/restroomtrailers

Satellite Industries
800-241-7951
www.polyportables.com
See ad, page 7

Satellite Vacuum Trucks
800-883-1123
www.satellitetruckxpress.com
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Karleen Kos is executive director of the Portable Sanitation Association International. She may be reached at karleenk@psai.org or 952-854-8300.



It's Not Easy Being Green, But It's What We Do

By Karleen Kos

Christmas is the time of year when you see a lot of red and green. It's festive — and most everyone enjoys it. But the holiday season ends quickly. Portable sanitation is forever, and so is our commitment to being green. If you read PRO, you are probably aware of this important aspect of our work. But can you articulate it to your customers? Can you make it part of the value you sell? Here are some ideas to help you with that:

Your customers may not know the basics. Start at the beginning. A couple of years ago I was chatting with a group of friends. When I mentioned that all water from toilets — sewer or portable — is treated and eventually comes out a tap again, they were stunned. They were also surprised that the chemicals we use in portable restrooms can help accelerate the process of breaking down waste, which is beneficial to the treatment plants. Make sure you know how to explain these “good guy” things and cover them in your literature or on your website.

We save water. The PSAI conservatively estimates that portable restrooms save 125 million gallons of fresh, drinkable water each day. We calculate the savings like this: A flush toilet uses about 1.8 gallons of clean water. Currently there are an estimated 3.6 million portable restrooms in the world. If just 2.2 million are used 20-30 times per day, that equals 125 million gallons of water that is not being flushed. Of course, this is an average, and you can debate our estimates. But no matter how you figure it, portable restrooms save a lot of water — and that's an important point in times when water is hard to come by.

We reduce greenhouse gases. Treatment plants cost money and natural resources to build and operate. A 2015 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency report estimated, “Drinking water and wastewater systems account for approximately 3% to 4% of energy use in the United States, resulting in the emissions of more than 45 million tons of greenhouse gases annually.”

So as portable restrooms save water, we help take some of the load off of wastewater processing plants. This indirectly helps the environment by reducing greenhouse gases used in water treatment.

An often-forgotten way that portable sanitation helps reduce greenhouse gases is by reducing the number of miles people have to drive in their cars to get to a restroom. At construction sites, parks, soccer fields, outdoor stadiums, recreational facilities and other locations where portable restrooms are provided, fuel is saved because it isn't necessary to drive to a restroom facility.

Our units are recyclable, and that process makes them eco-friendly. Most portable restrooms today are made from polyethylene. A single unit can last between 10 and 20 years. When it reaches the end of its life, the polyethylene can be recycled up to 10 times before the materials are compromised. So do the math. The plastic from a single unit can be used for between 100 and 200 years when properly recycled, thus saving fuel and space in the landfills for centuries.

Recycling also saves energy. According to the Association of Plastics Recyclers, recycling polyethylene saves 88% of the energy it takes to start with new plastic and limits greenhouse gas emissions by 71%.

Summing it up. Kermit the Frog made the song “It's Not Easy Being Green” his signature tune starting in 1970. The next year, the PSAI was formed. Throughout our history we have worked with portable sanitation operators and suppliers to promote environmentally friendly practices and bring this message to the public. It's something we'll continue to do as we work to achieve our vision of a world in which clean and safe sanitation is accessible to everyone. Join us! ■



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HOLDING TANKS AND TRANSPORT TRAILERS

By Craig Mandli

DECALS

ALLIED GRAPHICS DECALS

Decals from **Allied Graphics** are designed to stand up to tough environments. Their adhesive is designed exclusively for the portable restroom industry to stick and stay put on units. The decals use premium, long-life vinyl and ultraviolet inks to hold up and look good for years, according to the maker. The decals can also be applied to sinks and trailers. **763-428-8365; www.allied-graphics.com**



ROEDA DECALS

Roeda decals include a tough, 4 ml permanent adhesive vinyl and UV fade-resistant inks that work suitably for many applications such as portable toilets, restroom trailers, hand sanitizer stands and outdoor sinks. They come in a wide variety of stock UV inks, but can also be printed with any custom Pantone match, so brands are



always looking their best. Decals can be cut to any size or shape, large or small, in any quantity. A UV clear-coat or lamination adds extra protection against the elements. A wide variety of options and adhesives are available. Customers can supply existing logos or have one designed. **800-829-3021; www.roeda.com**

HOLDING/STORAGE TANKS

IMPERIAL INDUSTRIES 12,500-GALLON STORAGE TANK

The 12,500-gallon storage tank unit from **Imperial Industries** includes a 6-inch dump, 4-inch intake, heavy-duty pull skid attachment and level indicator. Available options include custom tow, hitch and axle packages, and intake agitation. It is designed for various applications, including field edge load and unloads, shop or yard storage, and grease separation. **800-558-2945; www.imperialind.com**



POLYJOHN ENTERPRISES HOLDING TANK

PolyJohn Enterprises holding tanks are for collecting waste in portable restrooms and job site trailers. It may be a necessity for long-term restroom placements where indoor plumbing is not an option. Made from durable plastic, the design is functional and discreet. It's also compatible with other PolyJohn restrooms and sinks, and it can be easily configured with most types of plumbing, according to the manufacturer. It can be used for outdoor worksites or special events to complete a portable restroom area. Tanks are available in 250- and 300-gallon capacities. **800-292-1305; www.polyjohn.com**

HOLDING TANK TREATMENT

WALEX PRODUCTS COMMANDO BLACK HOLDING TANK CLEANER

Black holding tanks can be difficult to clean and sanitize, and cleaning these tanks manually is an unpleasant task. **Commando Black Holding Tank Cleaner** from **Walex Products** is a safe and natural cleaning product for portable restroom trailer holding tanks. The eco-friendly product disperses billions of healthy bacteria to break down the waste buildup that causes odors. The portion-controlled packs are formaldehyde-free, safe for septic systems and dissolvable. Drop a few packs into the tank, fill with water, and in 24 hours the tank will be clean and sanitized, according to the maker. **910-371-2242; www.walex.com**



LIGHTING



J&J CHEMICAL J-LIGHT

J&J Chemical offers two solar-powered motion-sensor lights designed for portable restrooms. **J-Light 45** offers five superbright, cool-white LEDs emitting 45 lumens with a 3.2-volt, 600mAh rechargeable battery. **J-Light 65** has 10 superbright, cool-white LEDs emitting 65 lumens with a 3.2-volt, 1,200 mAh rechargeable battery. Both are easy to install and fitted with a motion sensor to activate the light and day/night sensor so they will not activate in the daylight. They switch off after 45 seconds of inactivity. J-Light 45 requires a 1.5-inch hole, while J-Light 65 requires a 2-inch hole. **800-345-3303; www.jjchem.com**

LUNARGLO SOLAR LIGHTS

LunarGlo solar lights are designed to meet the needs of the portable restroom industry. They are automatic, are power washable, operate for up to 80 hours on a charge and have a two-year warranty. Other products include the LunarVent solar-powered vent fan, as well as mounting hardware to adapt solar lights to a wide variety of applications. **574-294-2624; www.lunarglo.com**



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The **Super Mongo Mover** from **Deal Assoc.** is an industrial hand truck designed to move standard and handicapped portable restrooms. It has two axles, which allow it to balance on its own when tipped back. Once tipped back, the restroom can be easily pushed or pulled, and it provides

easy access to the roof for cleaning. It is ergonomically designed so smaller individuals can easily tip back and move restrooms. It has a steel and aluminum frame, and only aluminum touches the body of the restroom to prevent rust-staining the restroom. The unit is available with tires and inner tubes or never-go-flat solid foam tires. It is available with four, six or eight wheels. **866-599-3325; www.dealassoc.com**

TRANSPORT TRUCKS/TRAILERS

AMERI-CAN ENGINEERING TOTER

Toter portable restroom transport trailers from **Ameri-Can Engineering** are available in lengths of 16 to 40 feet and have a carrying capacity of up to 20 restrooms. A drop bar enables large units, such as ADA-compliant and handicapped-accessible units, to be transported. Their easy-load design saves time in use, and trailers are made of steel for strength and years of dependable service, according to the manufacturer. **574-892-5151; www.ameri-can.com**



CRESCENT TANK VACUUM TANK

The **Crescent Tank** vacuum tank is completely flat inside and out. It can carry up to 10 portable restrooms, and the

weight capacity is the same as a flatbed truck. It has no baffles, allowing it to be emptied completely to avoid internal corrosion. With the included pump at specified cubic feet per minute, unnecessary fatigue of the structure is eliminated and the life of the tank is prolonged. It is made from 1/4-inch-thick steel for structural strength. Its workstation is designed for the portable restroom industry. The liftgate rail width allows units to fit, and multiple liftgate decks and rail options are available. Freshwater is held inside the external 1/2-inch-thick poly tank. It can be installed on any chassis within the specifications required for each model based on axle ratings and maximum load capacity. **585-657-4104; www.crescenttank.com**

JOHNNY MOVER TRAILER SALES TRAILER

The portable restroom transport trailer from **Johnny Mover Trailer Sales** has skid-locking, using an iron bar with a chain-binding system to secure multiple units.

Models are available to handle six to 20 restrooms, and all feature brakes, paint options, lighting, leaf-spring suspension, front deflectors to protect units from road spray and debris, and optional powder-coating and chrome wheels. **800-498-3000; www.cesspoolcleaners.com**



LIQUID WASTE INDUSTRIES TRAILER

Custom-built portable restroom delivery trailers from **Liquid Waste Industries** carry six to 24 restrooms and come with or without sides. They are built with heavy-duty steel and come

standard with torsion axles, electric brakes, flush-mounted lights, and 10- or 13-inch wheels and tires. Custom upgrades include gates, leaf-spring axles, fold-down ramps, LED lights and choice of hitch. **877-445-5511; www.lwiinc.com**

MCKEE TECHNOLOGIES - EXPLORER TRAILERS TRANSPORTER

The **Transporter** from **McKee Technologies-Explorer Trailers** has easy-to-adjust

carrier slats that box in any size restroom skid. Even multiple-size skids can be configured securely in the same load, providing safe, flexible transportation for many styles of portable restrooms. Models range from 8 to 48 feet, accommodating up to 24 units. All include fully independent suspension axles designed to eliminate side-to-side shock transfer. An optional front wind deflector protects units from road spray, stones and wind loading. Hot-dip galvanizing is available for corrosion protection. **866-457-5425; www.explorertrailers.com**



PIK RITE FLATBED RESTROOM HAULER

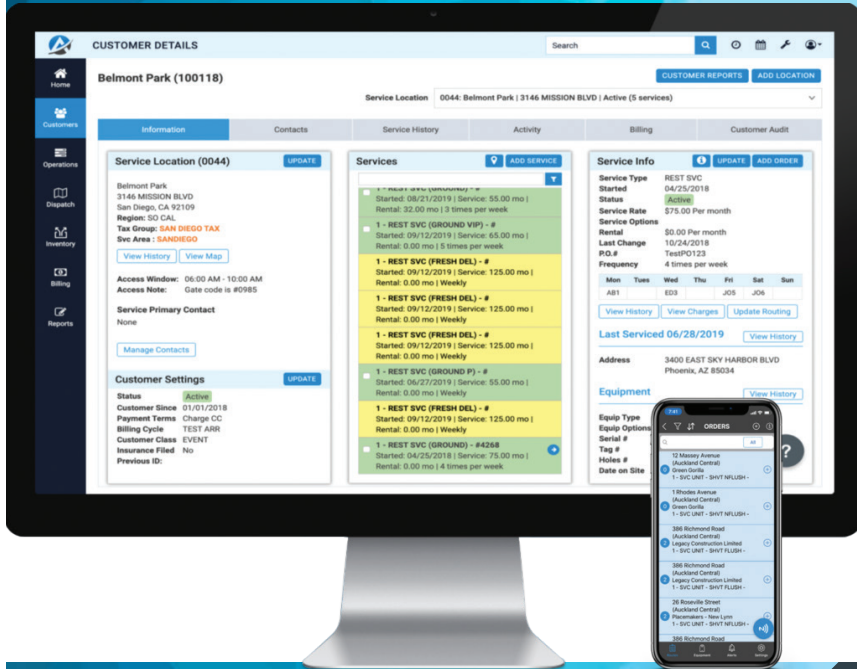
The **Flatbed Restroom Hauler** from **Pik Rite** has a 650-gallon tank, flatbed and liftgate. The tank has a 400-gallon waste compartment and internal 250-gallon freshwater compartment for even weight

distribution. The truck includes a National Vacuum Equipment 304 vacuum pump, dual 2-inch fill hoses, 20-gpm washdown system, dual-spring return freshwater hose reels and dual 2-inch bucket fills. A 20-inch top manway, 5-inch sight eyes and clear hose sight tube are included. The truck is also equipped with a 98-by-102-inch aluminum flatbed and Thieman TVL liftgate. Two diamond plate toolboxes are mounted on the passenger side. The truck has an LED running light kit with a durable, fully molded wiring harness. **800-326-9763; www.pikrite.com**

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PRODUCT FOCUS

PRO-TAINER PRO-PORTA TRAILER

The Pro-Porta Trailer from Pro-Tainer offers multiple features specific to the portable restroom industry. All trailers have removable dividers that create space for ADA-compliant units and aluminum ramps for loading and unloading restrooms. The trailers also have a lock-down mechanism called the Pro-Latch that is part of the ramp system and automatically locks down the base of the restroom. **800-248-7761; www.protainer.com**



SATELLITE VACUUM TRUCKS MD995 FLAT VAC

The Satellite Vacuum Trucks MD995 Flat Vac provides added capacity for hauling restrooms. It is designed with space for eight standard units, with a 695-gallon waste and 300-gallon freshwater tank. Ergonomic features, including lowered service area and easy-to-reach stainless steel cabinets, are designed to increase driver efficiency and reduce fatigue. **800-883-1123; www.satellitetruckxpress.com**

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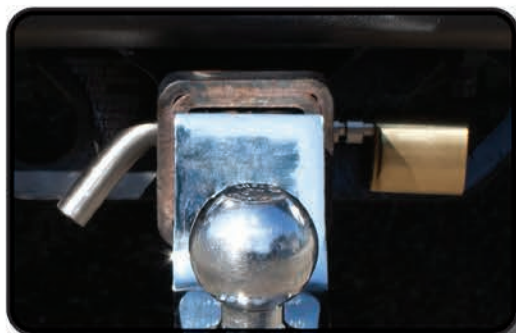
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PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

PolyJohn responds to unprecedented demand for hand-sanitizing solutions

By Craig Mandli

The COVID-19 pandemic has put cleanliness and sanitation on the mind of everyone. The enormous need for safe and effective hand sanitizer, and effective methods to apply it, has companies like PolyJohn devoting substantial amounts of research and development toward the cause.

The Emergency SaniStand or E Stand was designed, tested and began production in less than two weeks through PolyJohn's in-house engineering team in early spring as a direct response to COVID-19, according to marketing director Danny Schaver.

"Once all the regulations were put in place, the demand for sanitization skyrocketed," he says. "The E Stand was designed to be manufactured fast, and to be assembled and disassembled quickly, so our customers could store and deliver far more products than traditional hand sanitizer station options."

As a companion product to the E Stand, PolyJohn also began producing and marketing Bulk Hand Sanitizer. "It was launched after a lot of testing was done to bring the best product to market, when hand sanitizing chemicals were being produced by everyone, including breweries," says Schaver. "We wanted to make sure that the hand sanitizer we released met high standards and would be a product that would last in the market, even when stricter regulations came into place."

The E Stand is compatible with PolyJohn soap dispensers. The dispensers include an O-ring seal that makes them leakproof, even when turned upside down. They not only dispense regular hand soap, but also gel-form hand sanitizer. According to Schaver, the E Stand and dispensers, along with the Bulk Hand Sanitizer, are helping fulfill a huge need in the world market, but the products are also sustainable long-term.

"It's not just special events that require sanitizing anymore, but nearly every retail store and every restaurant right now," he says. "But that may not be the case in the future, so we made the E Stand easy to disassemble and store flat. You can potentially store hundreds where it would take the same room to store a quarter the number of traditional hand sanitizer stations."

In a world where the supply doesn't always equal the demand, PolyJohn has managed to keep up with orders. "So far people love that they can get the product quickly and that they can supply more of their customers," Schaver says. 800-292-1305; www.polyjohn.com

COXREELS PC10 Series power cord reel

The PC10 Series power cord reel from COXREELS joins its UL-approved product line in both the U.S and Canada. The reels are heavy-duty, industrial-grade power sources. They can replace tangled extension cords and self-retract to increase safety, productivity and efficiency. 800-269-7335; www.coxreels.com



Bee Valve multipurpose gauges

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Imperial Industries Shatterproof Sighteye

Customized specifically for the septic service and portable restroom industry, the Shatterproof Sighteye from Imperial Industries is a direct replacement for glass sighteyes that can shatter easily in severe environments. They are designed in-house by the company's engineering team. 800-558-2945; www.imperialind.com ■





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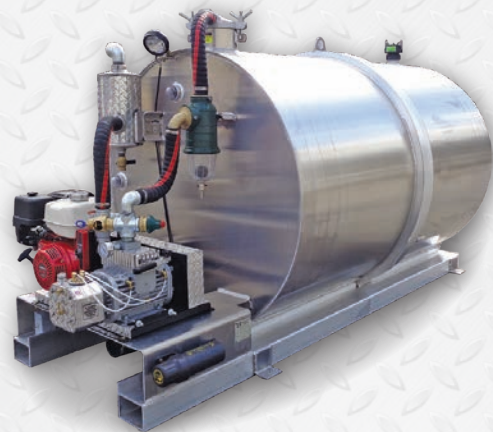
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