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Keeping employees injury free and productive is a top priority for Texas Outhouse

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Fair Food Frenzy

Social distanced drive-through buffet gives Minnesotans a taste of their beloved state fair amidst the COVID-19 pandemic

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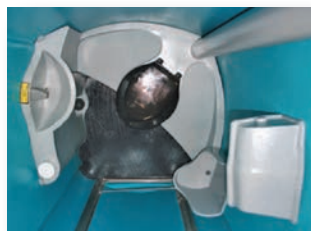
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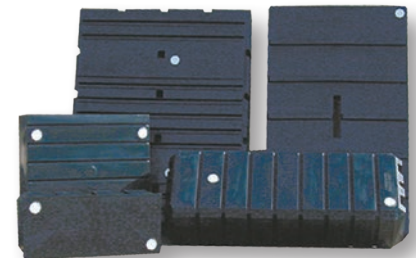
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Interior View of Deluxe TJ-III



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By Jim Kneiszel

In Springtime, Talk Among PROs Should Turn to Safety



It's time to recognize an award-winning safety program in the portable sanitation industry and consider some safety basics for restroom operators

Safety is job No. 1 in the portable sanitation industry, or at least it should be.

As restroom providers embark on another busy season, it's important to remember that without a healthy crew, you won't be able to answer the call to serve your important customers. Sure, revenue is needed to keep the engine of prosperity moving along for your company, but your workers provide the horsepower to drive that engine.

You should live by a simple credo when it comes to safety. Rustin Keller, the CEO of J.J. Keller — a leading supplier of safety and regulatory compliance solutions for companies large and small — put it in terms all small business owners understand. He said the goal of his company (and the goal of all portable sanitation companies) should be “ensuring employees make it home to their families every day.”

Especially in this industry dominated by small, tightknit companies, this standard is so true. Your employees are your friends. In many cases, their families are your extended family. So nothing is more important than ensuring they have the proper equipment and training to do their job safely.

In 2002, J.J. Keller instituted the SPOTY (Safety Professional of the Year) awards, given to leaders in American business who have gone above and beyond to stress safety in the workplace. And they recently chose a portable sanitation industry manager for this prestigious honor.

In this issue you'll get to read all about Jessica Flores and her efforts to build a successful safety program at Texas Outhouse/Luxury Event Trailers in Houston. Serving as safety manager since 2018, Flores has overseen

dramatic improvement in driver safety at the company that employs 130 people and services 30,000 to 50,000 restrooms weekly. The company is featured in our PROfile story this month.

SAFETY STRIDES

In announcing Flores as a SPOTY winner, J.J. Keller praised her for quickly ramping up a safety program that produced positive results.

“Beginning her career in the customer service industry and then logistics, Flores became intrigued by the safety element of how organizations operate and moved into safety management,” the Keller team of judges wrote. “Despite the challenge of having to master both OSHA and DOT safety knowledge, she accomplished a lot in a short time, expanding the framework for the Texas Outhouse program in only nine months, including an innovative safety training lab, and (the company) began seeing results almost immediately.”

Flores and Steve Rockey, the company's general manager, detail the award-winning safety program in writer Ken Wysocky's story. Though Texas Outhouse would be considered a larger company in the portable sanitation industry with 130 employees, they stressed that a similar emphasis on safety would undoubtedly benefit restroom companies of any size, even a mom-and-pop business with a few hundred units and a few trucks.

“Generally speaking, everyone faces the same problems. We all drive a lot of miles and do a lot of physical labor,” Rockey says. “There are people in this industry with just a one- or two-acre yard that I imagine can still benefit from a safety focus.”

“It only takes one bad accident to put a smaller company under. Smaller companies may not need to hire a full-time safety manager, but they can still find dedicated resources that can provide basic safety training,” adds Flores.

You can turn inside and read all the good news about the Texas Outhouse. In short, they have reduced crashes involving the company's trucks, helped keep rising insurance costs in check, and made overall improvements in the working conditions. All of this drives home the point made earlier by Rustin Keller: Safety programs help ensure employees return happy and healthy to their families at the end of the workday.

“It only takes one bad accident to put a smaller company under. Smaller companies may not need to hire a full-time safety manager, but they can still find dedicated resources that can provide basic safety training.”

— JESSICA FLORES

WHERE TO START?

I'll just take a moment to reinforce the types of safety initiatives any portable restroom company can begin this spring as crews get ready for long days driving routes to construction sites and special events. Consider these five ideas to build a safer workplace for your team:

REVIEW PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT NEEDS.

Even after 16 years as editor of PRO, I still too often come across photos of technicians failing to use appropriate PPE on work sites. Every service truck must be stocked with protective gloves, eyewear and hard hats. Further, workers should be provided with high-visibility vests and other clothing when it makes sense. Perhaps company-issued work boots with toe-box protection should be provided. Make sure each truck has a first-aid kit and that each worker is dressed appropriately for the job. Decide on a suitable dress code based on safety needs before the summer heat arrives.



Above: Jessica Flores is the safety manager at Texas Roadhouse/Luxury Event Trailers in Houston. (Photo by Jon Shapley)

IMPLEMENT TAILGATE TRAINING SESSIONS.

Begin with 15- to 30-minute weekly sessions with front-line workers covering best practices for a variety of issues, such as securing restrooms for transport, safe use of pressure washers, handling deodorizing chemicals, and morning and evening truck walk-around inspections. Brainstorm topics based on problems you've encountered with your crew, then write down an outline for each session listing points to emphasize. Cover trucks and other equipment commonly used, issues like ergonomics, safe lifting, and use of drugs and alcohol. Run through your listed sessions, then repeat occasionally to reinforce the messages.

SEE AND BE SEEN IN YOUR VACUUM TRUCKS.

Cameras, software driver safety "tattlers" and LED lighting are becoming more affordable all the time. Add backup cameras to each truck cab that show a view of the road and driver behavior. Backup cameras can help your drivers maneuver safely in tight work sites and spaces crowded with pedestrians. GPS software is available to track each asset along its route as well as unsafe driving behaviors. Use that data to help individual improve. Shed more light on nighttime work with spotlight cameras mounted off each corner of the vacuum tank. Add generous marker lighting on all four sides of the truck to improve visibility as your trucks go down the highway and when they have to stop in high-traffic service areas.

PULL SURPRISE SPOT-CHECKS ON YOUR DRIVERS.

Announce to your drivers that you may show up on their routes at any time for a spot check of how they follow general safety and your service

protocols. Then at least occasionally intercept their routes and observe how they are doing for a few stops. Let them work and take notes on any necessary corrections. Unless they are working in unsafe conditions, don't interrupt them, but meet them at the end of the day to review your notes. Don't initially single out individual drivers for the spot checks but create a baseline for how all are handling service stops; then follow up with spot checks as needed or sporadically.

SPEND SOME QUALITY TIME ON THE OSHA WEBSITE.

The U.S. Department of Labor's www.osha.gov website is a treasure trove of important rules and regulations that are updated frequently. You can learn a lot by navigating hundreds of pages of information directed at construction-related industries and safety issues as they involve small businesses. It's easy and convenient to search for safety topics, compliance guidelines, recordkeeping and reporting, and explore government training resources that might help your crew stay safe.

STAY SAFE OUT THERE

If you have other ideas for PROs to add to their safety programs, share your ideas with me at editor@promonthly.com. And please join me in congratulating Flores and Texas Outhouse/Luxury Event Trailers for winning the SPOTY award. It's an honor and a noble pursuit to expend resources to protect front-line workers in the portable sanitation industry. ■



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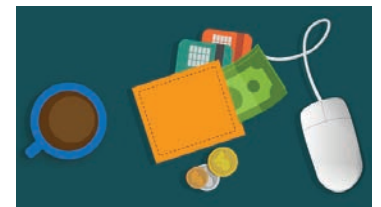
Can You Require Employee Vaccination?

With near-normalcy on the horizon, many portable restroom operators are wondering if they can require service techs to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Columnist Amanda Clark explores the issue in this exclusive online article. promonthly.com/featured

OVERHEARD ONLINE

“ Context creates two totally different experiences of the same facts ... Give customers the info and context they need to feel in control of the situation, even when you’ve got bad news to share. ”

- *How to Effectively Influence Customers When Logic Fails*
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BE PREPARED

Modern Technology Offers Customers Many Payment Options

From the staples of cash or check to electronic transfer options like PayPal, there are a plethora of ways these days for customers to pay you for services rendered. Here’s a look at the pros and cons of each; read more in this online article.

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MISSION ALIGNMENT

New Ideas Move Your Portable Sanitation Operation Forward

With any business, it’s only natural for some complacency to set in after pursuing the progressive ideas that helped you find success. In this online article, learn how your portable sanitation business can stay open to change and maintain that success.

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By Jeff and Terri Wigley

When Should a PRO Request Help From an Expert?

Sometimes it's practical to stick to your skills in driving a truck and servicing restrooms, while leaving other specialized tasks to professionals in their fields

QUESTION: What specific areas of their business could PROs outsource to others?

ANSWER: We all cannot be experts in every aspect that is required to run a company. Seeking outside help for your company is a sound business practice. We have heard it said that as PROs “we should focus our energy and strength on what we do best — portable sanitation — and let others help us with their strengths in their areas.”

Here are some business functions to consider outsourcing as well as suggestions as to how to identify, locate and successfully retain the experts who can best help you succeed.

Some business functions are almost universally outsourced by small- and medium-sized companies. We consider these as “basic” services, and they include:

1. Accounting/CPA
2. Insurance – Vehicle and Property
3. Insurance – Health
4. Legal

Other “common” tasks primarily performed outside of the company would include:

1. Fleet Maintenance
2. Facility Maintenance and Repair

Areas which should possibly be considered as “worth consideration” include:

1. Human Resources
2. Collections Agency
3. Tech Support
4. Digital Marketing

These areas of outsourcing are each covered below:

BASIC SERVICES

ACCOUNTING/CPA

Maintaining, organizing and measuring the financial condition of a company is one of the most important keys to success. From receiving payments to paying bills to payroll to taxes, successful and accurate accounting is required.

Some companies have found hiring either a payroll-only company or a complete payroll and benefits company provides financial savings as well as allows for more time to spend on working with employees and customers to provide top notch service.

Some PROs will elect to have a bookkeeper “in house” for day-to-day transactions such as preparing checks for signature and making deposits. An accountant, either an employee or an independent party, would then categorize revenue and expenses in order to compile monthly reports. Some PROs also employ an outside CPA to provide checks and balances with the accountant as well as to produce quarterly, half-year and annual financial reports. In addition, a CPA has the responsibility to compile and to assist in filing company taxes.

INSURANCE – VEHICLE AND PROPERTY

It has been said that “insurance is a relationship business” and we found that to be true in the many years that we owned our company. Developing a good business relationship with an agent is another key to business success. Work with your agent to customize your insurance plan to the meet the needs of your business and your budget. Annual meetings, at a minimum, are suggested by most in the insurance industry. A specialized agent for these important areas of the business and then a separate agent for health insurance is highly recommended.

INSURANCE – HEALTH

The only constant in health insurance is change. If this is a company benefit, finding an agent that specializes in this area is the best means of providing effective coverage for everyone in your organization. A mid-policy renewal meeting (either by phone or in-person) as well as a prior to renewal meeting are sound business practices in working this aspect of insurance.

LEGAL

A lawyer with a specialty in working with small businesses is ideal. This outsourced professional is needed to ensure that company legal

registration filings are accurate and current with state government and other agencies. Having a lawyer annually review company policies, employee handbooks and customer contracts are important safeguards.

COMMON SERVICES

FLEET MAINTENANCE

Service vehicles as well as pickup and delivery vehicles are the foundation of our industry. Proper maintenance and care of trucks ensures service schedules continue without interruption. While some PROs have in-house mechanics, most companies outsource this vital function.

A certified mechanic or company is important so federal annual inspections can be properly performed, regularly scheduled maintenance can be done, and service records can be maintained. PROs should not be totally dependent on their mechanics as route service technicians have the responsibility of pre-trip and post-trip inspections, which can indicate possible mechanical issues.

FACILITY MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

When the facilities and amenities are properly maintained both in and around the office, employees are more comfortable and thereby more productive. Electrical, plumbing and other needs of the office need to be addressed and repaired or upgraded as needed.

Yard maintenance and repair is also important. Ensuring that the yard is properly lit, that security or property fences are properly maintained and that the warehouse is in good repair are important to both employees and management. Consider “experts” in these areas to keep the company’s infrastructure in excellent condition.

SERVICES WORTH CONSIDERING

HUMAN RESOURCES

Payroll, job recruitment, hiring and firing of employees, performance standards and group discount rates on benefits such as health insurance and workers compensation policies are a few of the tasks a PRO is expected to perform. Some companies have found hiring either a payroll-only company or a complete payroll and benefits company provides financial savings as well as allows for more time to spend on working with employees and customers to provide top-notch service.

COLLECTIONS AGENCY

Prompt and consistent payment of all your company invoices is the allure to using collection agencies. The PRO pays a percentage of billed revenue to the collection’s agency in return for payment of invoices and thereby eliminating the need for intensive accounts receivable work by office personnel.

TECH SUPPORT

Technology is constantly changing, and it changes at a rapid rate. Using the philosophy as described above — where we are experts in portable sanitation, and we employ experts in other areas — technology outsourcing is worthy of consideration.

Having computers that meet the needs of your company in terms of speed, storage capacity, reliability and function benefit both employees and customers. As with service vehicles, routine inspection and maintenance are vital in keeping your company’s data safe and secure. Any new hardware, software or data needs that you have can be properly and accurately researched by these technology support individuals. Finally, if any technical issues arise on a day-to-day basis you’ll have a contact for immediate expert assistance.

DIGITAL MARKETING

With phone book advertising an ancient artifact in terms of advertising and information, the digital age is where the world now resides. In the early days of online advertising, search engine optimization was the focus of getting the company’s name out to potential customers. A PRO had a website and attempted to refer the public to that site.

Today, digital marketing is more complex and more successful in securing new business. While some PROs opt to buy “ad words” to direct customers in an internet search, social media channels and other innovations have been developed, and many more will come.

Consider consulting a digital marketing company to explore economical ways to keep your name and services in front of consumers in a more effective and creative fashion. Increased sales can definitely offset this expense as well as secure your company as a leader in your market.

FINDING OUTSOURCE RESOURCES

How do PROs investigate, and potentially hire these outsourcing groups?

MUTUAL BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS – Companies you interact with are excellent resources for both recommendations and referrals. With the wide range of customers that use our services, consider companies in other areas of the waste industry, companies that roughly mirror the size of your company, and even other groups that you already work with as an outsourcing partner. Our experience shows that CPAs and insurance agents can provide numerous referrals as they also deal with the public in a wide variety of professions.

ORGANIZATIONS

Memberships in your local Chamber of Commerce or homebuilding associations are also excellent referral resources. Personal recommendations based on experience in the marketplace are the type of outsourcing contacts that PROs should seek.

EMPLOYEES, FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Similar to the previous recommendations but on a more personal level. These individuals can shoot straight with you and will give you very direct and frank feedback.

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

Local colleges and universities that are funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration and offer free training and guidance to small businesses. Your local SBDC can provide names of companies specializing in working with small businesses in your area. Free consultation is a benefit that all PROs should utilize. With over 900 locations, the services that this organization provides are local and convenient. For the vast array of services offered, consult www.sba.gov

We believe in the value of these SBDC organizations so much that our column next month will be dedicated to the question, “What is the SBDC and how can it benefit my company?”

FINAL THOUGHTS:

“Surround yourself with good people” is a phrase that has accurately described successful leaders and companies over the years. Outsourcing is a business strategy that allows you to concentrate on your business while having other individuals outside of your company work for you and contribute their areas of expertise to you and to your company. ■



Safety MATTERS

Keeping employees injury free and productive is a top priority for Texas Outhouse

By Ken Wysocky



Texas Outhouse/ Luxury Event Trailers

Houston, Texas

Owners: The Carl family

Founded: 1999

Employees: 130

Services: Portable Sanitation

Service Area: 50-mile radius around Houston

Website: www.gtxwaste.com

Portable sanitation companies and their crews know safety is important. But unfortunately, this critical aspect of employee training is not always top-of-mind — until something goes wrong.

A large urban restroom company, Texas Outhouse/Luxury Event Trailers, took measures to change that, and the lessons they've learned can help PROs large and small raise awareness of safety issues. The Houston-based contractor took a bold and uncommon step to hire a safety manager three years ago.

The payoffs? Substantially fewer driving incidents where employees were at fault; decreased driving-insurance costs; and a burgeoning, safety-oriented culture that has improved safety awareness and employee accountability, says Jessica Flores, the safety manager hired in 2018.

"From 2018 to 2019, we had a 75% reduction in the number of driving incidents per 10,000 miles driven that were our (drivers') fault," Flores says.

"Most of that decrease came from fewer vehicle-to-vehicle accidents and reduced property damage.

"And in the first two years of the program, we cut our overall driving incident rates in half," she says.

The program's success earned Flores a third-place Safety Professional of the Year award from J.J. Keller, a nationally known provider of regulatory, safety and compliance solutions to thousands of employers.

Of course, one could make the case that a safety program is a must at Texas Outhouse, which employs about 130 people, owns a 23-acre facility, services between 30,000 and 50,000 restrooms a week and has 70 to 80 service vehicles that rack up roughly 10,000 miles of windshield time per week.

Moreover, about one-third to a half of the daily restroom service stops occur at chemical plants and refineries — places that simply won't do business with companies that compile poor safety records.

“These days you can’t even bid on a contract without a safety program in place,” says Steve Rockey, the company’s operations general manger.

A BENEFIT TO ANY PRO

But Flores and Rockey note that even small operators who don’t serve customers in riskier settings like petrochemical plants can benefit from a safety program. Whether companies are big or a mom and pop, the same risks exist: driving accidents, injuries incurred while loading/unloading restrooms or getting in or out of trucks, getting splashed with restroom-cleaning chemicals while not wearing personal protective equipment and so forth.

“Generally speaking, everyone faces the same problems,” Rockey says. “We all drive a lot of miles and do a lot of physical labor. There are people in this industry with just a one- or two-acre yard that I imagine can still benefit from a safety focus.”

Flores agrees, noting that a lack of safety protocols can financially endanger companies.

“It only takes one bad accident to put a smaller company under,” she says. “Smaller companies may not need to hire a full-time safety manager, but they can still find dedicated resources that can provide basic safety training.”

Flores says she thinks interest in creating safety-centered cultures is growing. She points out that when Texas Outhouse hosted a Portable Sanitation Association International event last year, a lot of company managers asked her about her job role and responsibilities because they were thinking about creating a similar position in their organizations.

RIISING INSURANCE COSTS

Along with concern about maintaining employees’ well-being and health, rising insurance costs prompted Texas Outhouse management to consider a sharper focus on employee safety.

“Insurance rates are going absolutely nuts in our industry — 20% to 30%

“It only takes one bad accident to put a smaller company under. Smaller companies may not need to hire a full-time safety manager, but they can still find dedicated resources that can provide basic safety training.”

JESSICA FLORES



Top Left: Safety manager Jessica Flores waits with Timothy Byrd, an operations supervisor, as he prepares to check trucks entering the yard at Texas Outhouse. He is inspecting to make sure the Safety Vision Observer 4000 HVR high-resolution cameras properly work, and fire extinguishers are charged. (Photos by Jon Shapley)

Above: Timothy Byrd inspects a restroom service truck as it enters the company yard after running a daily route. Most of the large fleet is built out by Satellite Industries and Lely Tank & Waste Solutions (now owned by American Tank).

increases every year for vehicle liability,” Rockey says, noting that insurance premiums are based on a five-year history of accident rates. “We were horrified at the insurance-rate increases, so the ownership (the Carl family) became convinced that we needed a safety manager.

“I came from the oil and chemical industry, where safety is tattooed on your eyelids,” he continues. “So I really wanted to up our game with deeply rooted systems and work on the root causes of accidents and injuries.”

Rockey explains that the big savings from a safety program comes through reduced driving-insurance premiums. Those premiums also are affected by the overall performance of drivers in the portable sanitation industry, over which the company has no control, just as a homeowner’s insurance rates can increase because customers with the same insurance carrier get hit hard by hurricanes thousands of miles away, for example.



Top: Jessica Flores inspects the supply of safety gear kept in her office. As safety manager, she wants to make sure the company is well-stocked with items including high-vis clothing and other PPE.



Left: Driver Justin Branch secures a Satellite restroom to a pickup and delivery truck.



“I came from the oil and chemical industry, where safety is tattooed on your eyelids. So I really wanted to up our game with deeply rooted systems and work on the root causes of accidents and injuries.”

STEVE ROCKEY

tion driver-orientation guidelines, based on federal motor-carrier safety regulations. It’s held offsite and the four-hour course is taught by a certified third-party facilitator, she says.

“We couple that with our own three-hour, in-house safety-orientation course, where we cover everything from fire prevention and protection to emergency response and evacuation to hazard communication and lock-out/tag-out procedures,” Flores explains.

THE NITTY GRITTY

Another part of safety orientation covers the company’s driver-safety policies. It essentially explains the do’s and don’ts of driver safety: What employees need to do if they’re hurt on the job, reporting incidents to supervisors within 24 hours, adherence to local traffic laws, no use of hand-held devices while driving, wearing seatbelts and so forth, she says.

Employees also must take an annual two-hour defensive-driving course. It’s held on-site and includes some behind-the-wheel exercises, the basics of 360-degree vehicle walk-around inspections and using the three-points-of-contact system to enter and leave vehicles.

“We have some drivers that get in and out of their trucks 70 to 80 times a day,” Flores says. “We’ve had a couple cases where a driver steps out of a truck and sprains an ankle because the ground is uneven. So having contact with two hands and one foot is important.

“It sounds like a little thing, but it’s a big thing for us,” she says.

In addition, drivers who service restrooms at refineries or chemical plants must take training through the Houston Area Safety Council. It covers basic safety guidelines provided by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration. In addition, some companies require drivers to watch a safety-orientation video at their facilities before they’re allowed to service restrooms, she adds.

But because of the five-year period used to calculate rates, decreasing those costs can take time, akin to turning around an ocean liner, he says.

“Our goal is reducing the number of insurance claims,” Rockey explains. “We presume that as those higher-incident years in our five-year record fall off, our rates will go down. That’s where we’ll save the most money.

“We know that the cost of insuring trucks on the road goes up every year,” he adds. “We’re just trying to get them to go up less.”

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Initially, not every employee was receptive to the new emphasis on safety. But Flores says most employees were won over by a consistent, structured approach backed by data.

“As soon as we were able to gather enough data and share it with them, they started to realize we were going to keep observing them and holding meetings,” Rockey says. “So over time, we turned the tide and now have them thinking about safety.

“It’s difficult to start up a safety program in any kind of business and I think Jessica has done a really good job,” he adds. “She does training in both Spanish and English and is very entertaining, which keeps guys focused.”

The program’s primary emphasis is safe driving. That’s accomplished via multiple levels of training. One focuses on federal Department of Transporta-



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Texas Outhouse uses signage to reinforce safety protocols in an area where restroom deodorant chemicals are mixed. Note the fire extinguishers present on the left the right in the photo at garage bays.

TECHNOLOGY ASSIST

The company also uses technology — dashcams made by Safety Vision and a GPS/fleet-management system developed by Telogis (a Verizon company) — to bolster its safety efforts. The Safety Vision Observer 4000 HVR high-resolution cameras are driver-forward models, but the company gradually is converting to front- and driver-facing cameras that provide a more comprehensive look at drivers’ behind-the-wheel behaviors, Rockey says.

The company also recently implemented a weekly audit program in which supervisors remove the video cards from randomly selected trucks. Supervisors then review the video footage as well as make sure the trucks are clean and well-maintained, he says.

The supervisors then fill out a report form and submit it to Rockey, who in turn submits it to the company’s owners. “If we spot questionable behavior, we have a discussion with the driver,” Rockey says. “We’re not trying to be Big Brother and pick on them. We’re just trying to spot things.

“We used to only pull the camera cards when a driver had an incident, but we thought we

should do it more often,” he continues. “And as a result, the number of questionable behaviors continues to decline.”

SAFE CLEANING, TOO

The company also trains employees how to safely clean restrooms. The company owns tens of thousands of restrooms made by Satellite Industries and hundreds of handwash stations manufactured by Satellite and PolyJohn Enterprises.

The company also owns roughly 50 luxury restroom trailers, mostly from Satellite, plus some specialty trailers from Progressive Trailers (a J.A.R. Capital Group company). It also invested in an on-site waste treatment plant that uses a system manufactured by Wastewater Technologies.

To properly and safely clean all these restrooms and trailers, Texas Outhouse puts restroom route drivers through a safety course at its own on-site training center. The course lasts for one full workday and covers the basics of how to clean restrooms efficiently, safely and rapidly, Rockey says.

“That includes wearing the proper PPE, such as gloves and safety glasses so they don’t get waste on their skin or in their eyes,” he explains. “We also warn them about things that often get left in restrooms, such as syringes. If you can imagine it, people have thrown it into a toilet. There also are the physical risks related to pulling hoses and working with chemicals.”

ROOKIE SUPERVISION

After the first day of safety training, new employees ride with an experienced driver for a few weeks before they can drive routes solo, Rockey says.

Drivers also are trained to use a tablet computer to take photos of restrooms after they’re cleaned; this alleviates potential disputes if customer don’t think restrooms were serviced, he says.

“The tablets tie into our Tower enterprise resource planning software

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Above: In Jessica Flores' office you'll find her Safety Professional of the Year award from J.J. Keller on prominent display along with safety materials. She was a third-place winner in the competition for the safety program she developed at Texas Outhouse.

(from AMCS Group), made for the portable-sanitation industry," Rockey says. "The drivers upload photos into the Tower system along with the restroom's GPS coordinates. That way if a customer calls and says we didn't clean their restrooms today, we can look and tell when the driver was there and where the restroom was when he cleaned it."

In addition, Texas Outhouse also owns between 70 and 80 service vehicles, mostly Hino and some Ford chassis outfitted by Satellite and Lely Tank & Waste Solutions (now owned by American Tank), with tanks sizes ranging from 900 gallons waste/150 gallons freshwater to 1,500 gallons waste/300 gallons freshwater. The manufacturers of vacuum pumps on the trucks include Masport and National Vacuum Equipment.

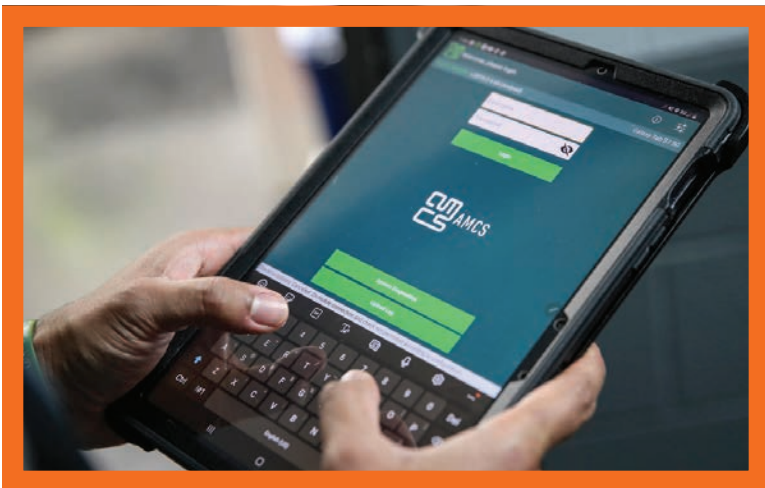
The company also owns vacuum tanker trailers made by Troxell Trailer.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

To further stress the importance of safety for workers, the company holds monthly 30-minute meeting for various groups of employees, from office staff and route drivers to wastewater-treatment plant operators and shop workers (mechanics, welders, painters, etc.), Flores says.

"For office staff, we might talk about ergonomics and for drivers we cover various safety topics and trends, as well as talk about any

Below: Ryan D'Souza, a business analyst at Texas Outhouse, shows how employees use tablets to complete day-to-day tasks.



incidents that have occurred since the last meeting," she says.

One key to a successful safety program is keeping things fresh, Rockey and Flores agree. "It's easy for people to become numb to it all after a while," he says.

To avoid that, Flores periodically changes things up.

"Everyone absorbs information differently, so you have to try different things to get their attention," she says. "Physically showing them something in a different way helps to keep a topic fresh."

"Showing video clips of other drivers' accidents is really effective," Rockey adds. "Drivers are very visual learners, so videos like that provoke a lot of good discussions."

Overall, Flores believes the program has built a safety-oriented culture.

"It's created a dramatic paradigm shift in how employees think about safety," she says. "Typically employees clock in and clock out and don't really keep safety in mind.

"But now, employees come up to us and ask what we think about various situations," she continues. "They're owning up to things and are so much more transparent about and engaged in safety in ways they weren't before. It's been very gratifying to see this change." ■

ON-SITE TREATMENT BOOSTS EFFICIENCY

Route drivers at Texas Outhouse used to dispose of waste at four or five local treatment plants in the metro Houston area. There were two primary drawbacks to this: Disposal rates ranged from 6 to 9 cents per gallon and drivers often waited in line for half an hour or more, says Steve Rockey, operations general manager at the Houston-based company.

"When you provide about 10,000 services a week and generate 40,000 to 50,000 gallons of waste per day, it gets expensive," he says. "And time is money."

The solution? A significant investment in a treatment plant on the company's 23-acre facility on the eastern outskirts of Houston. Built in 2016, the plant features a fairly compact footprint of about 100 feet long by 40 feet wide. It houses a customized version of a Biorotor aerobic-treatment system made by Wastewater Technologies.

Processed wastewater drains into a sanitary sewer line and is treated by the city of Houston; solid waste is landfilled. The plant is permitted to process up to 50,000 gpd, seven days a week, he says.

Rockey declined to say how much the treatment plant cost, but notes that the 10-year cost of ownership is "very positive."

"We did an analysis of the cost of building our own treatment facility and determined we could send processed wastewater to the city of Houston for substantially less than using third-party disposal facilities."

Furthermore, after the plant is fully depreciated, operating costs will decline further, he notes.

Most of the plant's operations are automated, so it requires just one full-time operator, and that employee assumes other responsibilities, too, he says.

Here's how the system works: Drivers bring in their trucks at the end of the day and a night crew empties the waste into a sump. The night-shift employees also refill the trucks' gas tanks and resupply them, too, Rockey explains.

The waste then passes through several treatment phases designed to settle and separate solids and then filter out small particles. The effluent also passes through a biotreatment phase, then is clarified and sanitized with ultraviolet light to kill lingering bacteria, he says.

"It's a pretty interesting biological treatment process that uses a rotating drum," he says. "It's also fairly scalable – if you want to double the size, for instance, it's easy to do."



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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.



Standards Reviews Are Critical to Industry Advances

By Karleen Kos

In the seven years since I joined the Portable Sanitation Association International (PSAI), we have made a great deal of progress in helping the reputation of portable sanitation. Frequent readers here and of the PSAI's biweekly newsletter *Association Insight* know our organization has always been committed to establishing and evolving standards for the industry. In the October 2020 issue of PRO, I talked about the current process for updating standards related to work sites, fields and temporary labor camps. Here are other standards efforts that are underway:

International Working Agreement (IWA) on Woman Owned Businesses. Beginning in fall 2020, the PSAI engaged with nearly 300 individuals and organizations around the world in the development of an IWA to set common definitions related to women's entrepreneurship.

Although the U.S., Canada and several others have used their own definitions for years, the terminology has not been harmonized around the world. That makes it difficult for women to grow their businesses, obtain financing and otherwise compete in the marketplace. Since sanitation in general and portable sanitation in particular are areas where more involvement is needed, it made sense for the PSAI to join in this process. We hope the new IWA will help women around the world become successful in our industry through easier access to programs and funding. The IWA was published in early March.

Urine reclamation. In 2017 the PSAI engaged with professionals and scientists interested in isolating urine. These experts are finding ways to transform liquid human waste into a product to sell rather than a nuisance that needs treatment or disposal. Since disposal is an increasing challenge for portable sanitation operators, we felt it was prudent for the PSAI to be at any table where alternatives were being discussed.

In late 2020 a group of these professionals — now known as the Gold Ribbon Commission on Urine Reuse (GRC) — began to explore the creation of standards, white papers and other resources to aid in the adoption of urine reclamation as an alternative to disposal. The PSAI is serving on the executive body for the GRC.

Currently the GRC is developing a scope of work and reviewing existing laws, rules and standards that may be relevant to our project. It is particularly important that the PSAI be at this table because of the potential opportunities for monetizing urine that could result from this effort.

As an accredited standards developer, we have offered to provide necessary support for creation of an ANSI standard if that turns out to be one of the steps that makes sense. It is also important to make sure any documents created are written with good information about how portable units and vacuum trucks are constructed and used.

You can get involved. You might not think of yourself as an expert. You don't have to be. If you run a portable sanitation company, you have a lot to offer these and other projects the PSAI is working on. For example, you can:

1. Volunteer on the PSAI Standards and Guidance Committee (SGC). The SGC meets about once a month and works on assignments in between. They research, develop and recommend industry standards that serve the best interests of the public and raise the image of the portable sanitation industry. This year they will be leading the charge on updating the ANSI/PSAI standards and the best practices for service technicians.
2. Serve on a consensus body. Each new or updated standard must be approved by a representative group of materially interested parties using procedures approved either by ANSI or the PSAI board of directors. If you serve on a consensus body, you become an expert on a standard, help to make it the best document it can be, and vote on the language. Consensus bodies for several standards and best practices are forming now.
3. Comment on standards drafts. Even if you don't have time to become involved on a committee or consensus body, you can still comment on standards in draft form. Watch PSAI newsletters for notices about providing feedback during the open comment period. If you participate, your ideas will be taken seriously and given weight, but you do not get to vote on the final documents.
4. Attend PSAI informational sessions about new and updated standards. Throughout the year we'll be holding virtual roundtable sessions and educational sessions at our conferences regarding the proposed updates to standards and new standards we are considering. These are great opportunities for you and your team to educate yourselves about the standards and best practices. You can also provide feedback and learn how to implement them at these sessions.

Questions? Want to get involved? Email me at karleenk@psai.org or call me at 952-854-8300. We'd love to have you.

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Below: Rich Anderson, of Jimmy's Johnnys, provided needed sanitation to help the Minnesota State Fair salvage revenue with a food parade during the COVID-19 epidemic. (Photos by Brad Stauffer)

FAIR FOOD FRENZY

Social distanced drive-through buffet gives Minnesotans a taste of their beloved state fair amidst the COVID-19 pandemic

By Dee Goerge

ON LOCATION

- » **THE JOB:**
Minnesota State Fair Food Parade
- » **LOCATION:**
Falcon Heights, Minnesota
- » **THE PRO:**
Jimmy's Johnnys, North Branch

THE TEAM

With the coronavirus and shutdowns in 2020, portable restroom operators lost most or all of their business for event rentals. On May 21, Rich Anderson, owner of Jimmy's Johnnys in North Branch, Minnesota, learned about the cancellation of the Minnesota State Fair, his biggest event of the year. He was disappointed but not surprised. He was pleasantly surprised a couple months later when he was contacted by fair officials about providing restrooms for a scaled down replacement event. A limited number of cars would be allowed to drive through the fairgrounds for a Minnesota State Fair Food Parade, to be held on three long weekends (Thursday-Sunday) starting Aug. 20.

Anderson rode with Cory Franzmeier, operations manager for the Minnesota State Fair, along the route to plan where to set up restrooms and sinks. A couple of weeks before the event Scott Engren, manager of special event deliveries for Jimmy's Johnnys, transported and set up the restrooms. During the event, special event service technician Claire Morrisette serviced the restrooms.

COMPANY HISTORY

Jimmy's Johnnys has come far since Anderson and his wife, Julie, purchased a 20-year-old portable restroom business with 250 units in 1999. Now they have 2,500 units and an average of 20 employees, making the company

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Above: Rich Anderson and Claire Morrisette kept in constant communication while maintaining the portable sanitation equipment for thousands of fairgrounds visitors.

Right: Jimmy's Johnnys owner Anderson, left, and technician Morrisette position a Satellite Industries hand-wash station at the food parade. Keeping adequate wash stations available was critical to allaying COVID-19 concerns at the event.



one of the largest in the Twin Cities. Initially located 50 miles north of downtown Minneapolis, Anderson grew the business intentionally by crossing Interstate 694 to add the metro market.

“Our main business core is a five-county area (around the Twin Cities), doing events and construction,” he says.

In addition to portable restrooms, Jimmy’s Johnnys offers luxury restroom and shower trailers, freshwater tanks, grease barrels and storage containers. The company turned the corner to compete with big companies in 2012 when it won the bid to provide 300 portable restrooms to Minnesota’s State Fair that traditionally runs for 12 days through Labor Day.

“We have a good relationship with Cory. He trusts us and wants our input of how many restrooms and services to do,” Anderson says. In 2019, Jimmy’s Johnnys provided service three times a day for 280 restrooms. Anderson and three service technicians and his two sons stayed in a bunkhouse-style camper on the fairgrounds for the entire fair. Two additional service technicians serviced restrooms outside the main fairgrounds.

THE MAIN EVENT

As the second biggest state fair in the U.S. (Texas has the largest), Minnesota fair organizers decided they had to come up with some kind of alternative when the 2020 fair was canceled. They focused on food — one of the big reasons visitors attend the fair. Following the lead of other states, they came up with a plan to sell tickets (\$20 per vehicle, up to five people, plus \$3 facility and \$2 service fees) for people to drive through and order food (for an additional cost) from 16 vendors. The fee included a free state fair insulated bag to hold the food that was purchased.

The number of tickets each day was limited, and people signed up for specific times that they could drive through the 1.5-mile route. Visitors used their own pens to fill orders that vendors took and delivered to people in their cars. Wearing masks was required for vendors and encouraged for visitors. Along the route, which could take up to two hours, there was live music, a trivia game, photo opportunities and other entertainment. At the end of the route, there was a parking lot where people could stop and eat the food they had purchased and shop for state fair merchandise.

“We were super tickled that we got to do something with the fair this year. It’s become a tradition for us to do the fair. As small as it was, it’s probably our biggest event of the year.”

RICH ANDERSON

BY THE NUMBERS

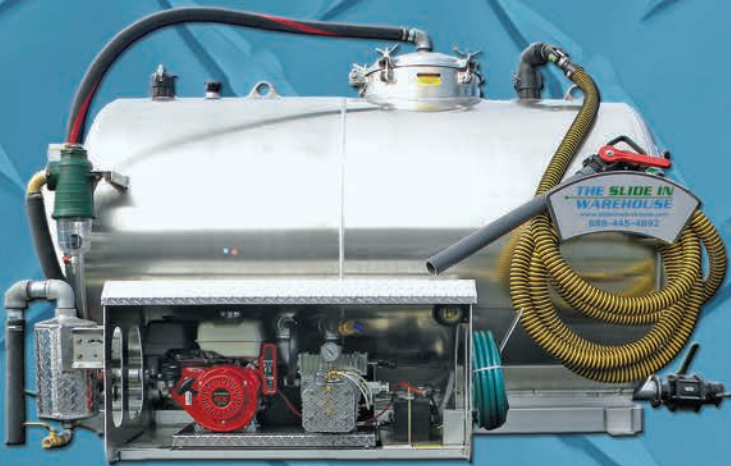
“Initially Cory and I planned for just 26 restrooms, based on handling 1,200 cars from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. They started with a lower number to ensure people didn’t have to wait hours in line,” Anderson notes. But before the event started they upped the number to 48 restrooms, including six ADA units. That proved to be a good thing as numbers increased to 1,600 cars each day.

Many of the PolyJohn PJ3 units were set up in three banks, at the beginning, middle and end of the route. Others were located near vendors, as were nine Satellite Industries Breeze hand-wash sinks and two Satellite 300-gallon wastewater holding tanks for a couple vendors.

The restrooms were serviced using a 2018 Dodge 5500 MD Series 950 from Satellite Vacuum Trucks carrying a 600-gallon wastewater/300-gallon freshwater steel tank and a Masport pump.

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Right: Technician Claire Morrisette disinfects a Satellite Industries ADA-compliant restroom during the Minnesota State Fair Food Parade.

Below: Rich Anderson at the Minnesota State Fair Food Parade in August 2020.



LET'S ROLL

Engren set up the restrooms a couple weeks early so fair organizers could adjust the route and put up barriers to prevent people from getting off track.

"Claire went down the day before (the first food parade day) to inspect the route with the map," Anderson says. "It was a good thing he did, because they moved some of the restrooms, and he said it was tight for the truck driving through the car lane."

With a phone call, Anderson learned that Morrisette should drive through the fire lane set up for auxiliary vehicles. He serviced all the units

starting between 4 and 4:30 a.m., so he could finish by 8 a.m. Morrisette worked at the State Fair in past years and knew the procedure and where to unload at the fairground's dump station and where to get water. For COVID-19 protocol, he hosed out units thoroughly and used industrial strength disinfectant. He was also on call and resupplied and moved restrooms as needed.

Between using the fire lane and pumping when the fairgrounds were closed, the job went well, Anderson says. Planning for the right number of restrooms was also easier, because they knew exactly how many cars would go through each day.

WRAPPING IT UP ... ALMOST

After the food parade ended on Labor Day, Morrisette pumped the units to prepare them for transport. Engren planned to use a 16-unit Ameri-Can restroom transport trailer to move them back to the shop on Tuesday. Then Morrisette heard a rumor that a couple of more weekends of the food parade were planned for October. He mentioned it to Anderson's wife Julie, and Anderson called Franzmeier. He confirmed it, so the restrooms were left in place. The extra days were a nice surprise, Anderson says.

"We were super tickled that we got to do something with the fair this year. It's become a tradition for us to do the fair. As small as it was, it's probably our biggest event of the year," Anderson says. ■

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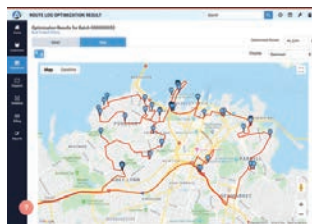
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By Craig Mandli

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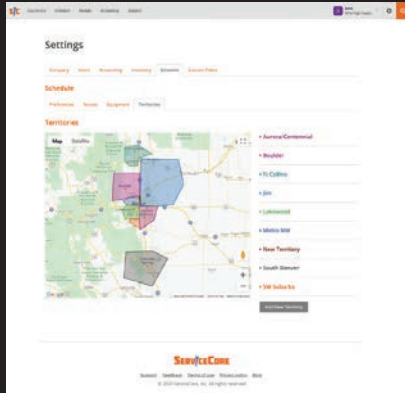
CASE STUDY

Company simplifies routing and invoicing

PROBLEM: Crazy Mountain Industries, a septic and portable restroom service company in Livingston, Montana, sought a solution that would allow managing drivers' schedules in its rural location. The company needed to route without addresses and be able to operate without cell service. Office staff had previously been entering invoices by hand each month — a process that took two to three days to write, record and mail.

SOLUTION: Crazy Mountain chose ServiceCore. Every route is optimized for efficiency and location. The team manages the drivers' schedules in Yellowstone Park, customizing the latitude and longitude of service locations as needed. They also use the optimization feature to make the routes as efficient as possible. Invoicing takes minutes per month and can be done directly in the software. The office staff can see where each unit is and what inventory is available by date.

RESULT: Crazy Mountain Industries is happy with their choice. "It takes 10 minutes to do invoicing," says company co-owner Deonne Hillman. "It took me longer to stuff the envelopes than to do the invoicing." **844-336-0611; www.servicecore.com.**



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In a combined effort with their suppliers Lippert and Burlington Graphics Systems, OI President Chuck Millsagle (center) presented Hope thru Soap founder/CEO Jason Winters (right) with the keys to their new shower unit.

OI Restrooms supports Hope thru Soap

Optimus Industries, located in Elkhart, Indiana, delivered a custom shower trailer to Hope thru Soap in Atlanta. Hope thru Soap provides a mobile shower experience to the less fortunate and homeless in Atlanta.

AirVote reaches 1,000 locations

AirVote announced it had reached its milestone of 1,000 locations across the U.S. and Europe.

“While AirVote QR smileys can be effective in a variety of industries, we discovered that the portable restroom industry is where our value is realized from day one,” says Angelique Denneman, co-founder and head of customer success. “It allows restroom users to communicate directly with the operators about the cleanliness and supplies. Even though the user comments are anonymous, they have been constructive and actionable, allowing operators to optimize their maintenance trips schedules.” ■

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PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Walex offers eco-friendly Bio-Pak deodorizer

By Tim Dobbins

Industries across the globe have made efforts for years to become more eco-friendly in procedures and products, and the portable restroom business is no different.

The demand for ecologically friendly deodorizers is expanding, and Walex's Bio-Pak is a natural drop-in deodorizer designed to eliminate odors using natural enzymes, a substance produced by living organisms that acts as a catalyst to bring about a specific biochemical reaction.

"All-natural deodorizer is a growing market," says Corey Morton, Walex's director of sales and business development. "Walex introduced the portion control system decades ago with Porta-Pak, but the Bio-Pak resulted from extensive research by our research and development department to a new, highly effective natural enzyme-based formula to control odor and liquefy waste."

Operators can use Bio-Pak to keep the holding tanks inside restroom trailers and portable restrooms free of foul odors and also to reduce mounding. The packets are designed to be mess-free and dissolve quickly when placed into liquid.

Each Bio-Pak bag comes with 50 sachets, with each one preportioned to provide about one week of odor control depending on the usage and climate. To use, drop a packet into the toilet with an added five gallons of water. The proper amount of water is crucial to their effectiveness as it allows waste and paper to fall below the waterline allowing the enzymes to begin working.

"Bio-Pak is biodegradable, nonstaining, biocide-free, formaldehyde-free and California-compliant," Morton says. "With all that, it still has the same EVERBLUE color and fragrance as Walex's other portable restroom deodorizers."

Bio-Pak's formula is able to break down paper, eliminating the need for special toilet papers, and is designed to contain everything necessary to deodorize a tank, according to Morton. So it's important not to mix it with any other chemicals or treatments. The enzyme-based formula digests built-up waste on tank walls and sensors that are a common source of odors in portable restrooms even after pumping or dumping the tank.

The natural enzymes make the Bio-Pak septic safe. **800-338-3155; www.walex.com.** ■

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The Evogen High Capacity No-Touch Toilet Seat Cover Dispenser from Hospeco Brands Group now holds up to 250 seat covers, accommodating two Evogen Toilet Seat Cover refill packs. Users simply wave a hand near the clearly marked sensor on the face of the dispenser to receive a fresh, ready-to-use, individual seat cover. The increased capacity translates into cost savings for high-traffic facilities by cutting down on service time for maintenance staff. Other timesaving features include a flashing red light on the front of the dispenser that indicates when it's time to refill, and an easy-read power indicator light near the battery housing alerts staff when it is time to replace the four AA batteries. The automated single-dispense mechanism is designed to help ensure less waste over manual-pull dispensers. **800-942-9199; www.hospecobrands.com.** ■

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