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cash register for Detroit's
new Rockstar Rental
restroom service

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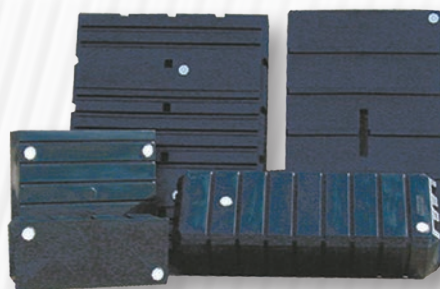


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Published monthly by



COLE Publishing Inc.
1720 Maple Lake Dam Rd. • PO Box 220
Three Lakes, WI 54562

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In U.S. or Canada call toll-free 800-257-7222
Elsewhere call 715-546-3346 • Fax: 715-546-3786
Website: www.promonthly.com • Email: pro@promonthly.com
Office hours 7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Central Time, Monday - Friday

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REPRINTS AND BACK ISSUES: Visit www.promonthly.com/reprints/order for options and pricing. To order reprints, call Jeff Lane at 800-257-7222 (715-546-3346) or jeff.lane@colepublishing.com. To order back issues, call Holly Gensler at 800-257-7222 (715-546-3346) or email holly.gensler@colepublishing.com.



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HOME on the RANGE

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On Location
A spotlight on the pros who are helping to build the future of off-grid living.
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CUSTOMERS | SUPPLIERS | EMPLOYEES | FAMILIES

This time of year, we reflect on the year that's passed and look ahead at what's to come. Satellite is thankful to our customers for their continued support and loyalty throughout 2021. We are grateful for the hard work and dedication our employees have shown and the sacrifices their families have made. We appreciate the diligence and resourcefulness of our suppliers, so we can bring you the products you need.

The Satellite family looks forward to the opportunity of serving and growing with you in 2022.

Contact us: PRO strives to serve the portable restroom industry with interesting and helpful stories. We welcome your comments, questions and column suggestions and promise a prompt reply to all reader contacts. Call 800-257-7222; fax 715-546-3786; email PRO editor Jim Kneiszel at editor@promonthly.com.



By Jim Kneiszel

Vandals Say, “Catch Me If You Can!” ... And Jason Starr Does



A Pennsylvania PRO finds creative ways to fight back when his restrooms are trashed

When Jason Starr’s grandmother, Martha Starr, age 90, called him “the firecracker,” she wasn’t kidding around. The 44-year-old owner of Starr Portables in Millville, Pennsylvania, has proven he’s a real pit bull when it comes to chasing down vandals who come after his restrooms. And, unfortunately, that’s happened too often lately.

Starr only officially took over the three-generation family business in December 2020 when he bought out his uncle, Greg, but he’s been working there for most of his life. And until the past few years, he doesn’t recall having to deal much with equipment vandalism across his rural territory. Recently, however, graffiti and destroyed portable restrooms have become more of a problem, and Starr isn’t taking it sitting down, to say the least.

If you are inclined to think vandalism is just part of the cost of doing business and that it’s a hopeless cause to track down and punish the culprits, you might want to consider how Starr has been able to beat the odds. Over the past year, this septic sleuth has identified vandals on three occasions and made them pay for their criminal activities. And now he faces his biggest crapper caper to date: a pair of trampled toilets at a local sports field that were deemed a total loss.

The latest destruction went down this summer at Streater Fields in Bloomsburg, where Starr Portables has been placing restrooms for years without incident. The structures were pushed clean off the skids, which had been secured in the ground with half-inch rebar stakes to prevent them from blowing over in the wind.

FIGHTING BACK

Hopping mad, Starr took to his popular Facebook page and offered a \$500 reward for information leading to the arrest of the vandals. His 3,000 Facebook followers took notice, and so did area media outlets. His reward offer was covered in the local *Press-Enterprise* newspaper



Above: Jason Starr of Starr Portables in Millville, Pennsylvania

and then picked up by two area TV news stations.

“That Facebook post has had 68,000 views and 800 shares, and the next thing you know, it shows up on the news. It was crazy; it went big-time viral,” he recalled. After a few weeks, Starr upped his reward offer to \$700 and was confident the vandals will eventually be caught. “It will come out with time. Down the road someone is going to spill their guts about it. I’m bound and determined and headstrong that I will find them.”

If the past is any indicator, Starr’s confidence is warranted.

The spate of senseless sabotage started with a contract to provide 80 restrooms to two large construction sites for the same customer. Not too long ago, Starr and his crew noticed a shocking uptick in racist and other vulgar graffiti in many of the construction units. They were constantly

trying to keep up removing the scrawlings, but they just kept coming back.

One day Starr was on the job site and went to clean several restrooms. The first door he opened revealed the worker responsible for the damage.

“I opened the door to clean the restroom and here he was writing on it. I went right to the union steward on the site and they took care of it. They had the guy cleaning [a bank of 10 restrooms] on his lunch break,” Starr said. He hasn’t seen that construction worker since, and assumes he was fired for the graffiti, which was often directed at the construction supervisor.

CAUGHT ON VIDEO

In another instance, Starr had some help identifying a group of teens who ran over a construction restroom with a pickup truck. It’s a small town, and someone sent Starr a video they received via social media site Snapchat showing the boys celebrating as they ran over the restroom. One call to his friends at the state police and he located the ringleader.

Starr went straight to the young men and made an offer they couldn’t refuse. Give him \$550 to replace the unit or face charges. A few days later the teens showed up with a stack of \$1, \$5 and \$10 bills to pay for the damage.



Above: Starr has offered a \$700 reward for information leading to the arrest of vandals that destroyed this and another restroom stationed at a rural park.

"I wanted to give those kids a chance; that mess-up on their record could have hurt them when they got older," he said. Many young people deserve a second chance, he added. "I was a wild child, an adrenaline junkie, but I never damaged anyone's property."

Starr wasn't so charitable when another one of his units was snatched from a road construction site by, as it turns out, a past customer who rented restrooms for outdoor parties. He offered a reward for help, and a woman called and claimed the \$100 after she saw his unit in the back of a pickup truck heading down the highway. She provided the license plate number, then Starr and police found the unit in the thief's backyard.

"He said he was in a bar having cocktails with his buddies and they said [the restroom] was sitting on the road for free. What do you mean for free? He told me it was a joke," Starr recalled the man's reaction when caught. "He lied to me, and I said 'I'm going to prove a point with you.' If someone messes with me, I'm not going to put up with it."

In this case, Starr pressed charges against the man. In the end, he was paid \$700 in damages, got the unit back, and the man was sentenced to six months on probation and was forced to work 30 hours of community service.

"I don't lay down for them. I go after them guns a-blazin'," Starr said.

His persistence has paid off in the past, and I don't doubt that Starr will get to the bottom of the most recent vandalism in the park.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Starr's success at tracking down these offenders should offer a ray of hope for the portable sanitation industry that seems to be plagued by these costly property damage complaints. I have talked to many PROs whose profit margins have been reduced by all sorts of vandalism, from graffiti to tip-overs to fires. I welcome your suggestions on ways to reduce these incidents or blunt the impact they have on your business. Please share your tips at editor@promonthly.com and I will include them in a future column. ■

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A CLEAR-EYED DECISION

Texas PRO Preps Prospective Techs for Desolate Service Routes

Servicing portable restrooms along West Texas oil pipelines can be a lonely affair for techs at JIT Total Site Solutions. In this online article, Mike Drennan, JIT field operations manager, explains how he ensures new employees are ready for rural life on a service route.

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OVERHEARD ONLINE

“You can have it both ways — as in, speak out and hold people accountable while still maintaining good workplace relationships. The trick is to do it with the right motivation and attitude, and to hopefully work at a place where management builds a culture where accountability is prized.”

Don't Stay Silent About Unsafe Behavior on the Job
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BUYER BEWARE

The Ins and Outs of Purchasing Used Equipment

In this exclusive online article, the Association of Equipment Manufacturers offers a checklist of what to look for when purchasing new-to-you equipment. Take a look before calling about that used slide-in unit or vacuum truck, it might just save your portable sanitation operation a headache or two.

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A CULTURE OF ZEN

Keep the Peace Between Office and Field Employees

As a busy PRO, you must get ahead of conflicts between office staff and field technicians before it adversely affects business. In this online article, columnist Anja Smith shares how to foster better communication and employees amongst your team.

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By Jeff and Terri Wigley

It's Time to Swing Into Action With a Year-End Collections Plan

Prying the dollars from the hands of slow-paying customers can be a frustrating exercise. Try these tips to get paid now!

QUESTION: With year-end approaching, what are some effective strategies to collect delinquent accounts receivable?

ANSWER: For most PROs, as the special event season comes to a close, end-of-year activities such as equipment inventories, updating records and policies, planning new purchases for the year ahead and, of course, collections take priority.

We have assembled an outline of ideas and suggestions we have found to be effective, whether in our business or in conversations with other PROs throughout the years. Perhaps there is an idea you may want to adopt and customize for your own business.

GOALS

1. Collect delinquent account balances without writing the amounts off as bad debt expense.
2. Maintain good customer relationships while diligently working to close these aged open invoices.
3. Accomplish these goals in an organized fashion while utilizing good time management.

ORGANIZATION

Depending on the size of your company and the volume of work to be done, designate a specific person or persons to work on this collections project. Consistency in personnel ensures that customer conversations will be direct and consistent with no "he said that she said" communication issues with the customer.

Create specific times for this work to be done, preferably in an uninterrupted period. Depending on the scope of work to be done, some PROs will set aside several days, an entire week or the same days over several weeks for this project. Our experience is that Mondays and Fridays are not the easiest times to reach customers, even in office environments. Also keep in mind that your year-end work also competes with the Thanksgiving, Hannukah, Christmas and New Year's holidays. Plan your collections activities accordingly.

REPORTS AND WORKING DOCUMENTS

Most PROs will run an accounts receivable aging report that is usually in a standard format created by the software provider. This report will list the

age of open invoices in 30-day increments. Concentrating on "over 90 days" will capture the delinquent invoices. Some programs will calculate the exact number of days past due and list these totals from oldest to newest.

Another useful tip is to separate the past-due accounts by "active" and "inactive" job status. "Inactive" accounts will be the most difficult to collect since there is no current relationship with the customer on that job.

Create a call list and share this document with other administrative or operations team members. If any existing customers with delinquent balances call for pick-ups or state that their jobs will be soon ending, special emphasis can be placed on that account before it becomes "inactive." If this situation can be reported to the accounts receivable person or team, per management approval, there could be some gentle pressure applied to clear the old invoices before the final pickup could occur.

CUSTOMER CALL TIPS AND IDEAS

Generally speaking, PROs should attempt to create a positive tone on accounts receivable collections calls. Remember, each of these customers contracted with your company to provide portable restroom service either in the past or at the current time. Try to maintain a positive and professional attitude and they will be future customers as well.

Never infer that the individual you are speaking with on the phone is the party that owes the funds to your company. Avoid phrases such as "you owe us blank dollars" or "you are blank days delinquent on this invoice."

A "can you help me?" approach can be very effective in collecting funds, particularly near year end. Many times, the company or customer you are calling about old, open invoices are making the exact same phone calls to their customers. A PRO could possibly begin with "I would really appreciate your help in clearing this old invoice. You know how it is at year-end." This puts your customer in the position of providing help rather than being subjected to pressure to a "pay or else" ultimatum.

If you experience problems reaching certain customers on the phone, consider calling them at different times of the day. We have heard of some PROs calling their list in reverse order after all the initial calls have been made. Those customers at the beginning of the alphabet are then called at the end of the day rather than first thing in the morning.

Sending emails to customers that you cannot reach by phone requires aggressive follow up as the email addresses might be general mailboxes for the company.

POSSIBLE AREAS OF NEGOTIATION

Management approval may be needed for any deals offered to collect delinquent invoices. Be clear how much negotiating responsibility the employees have.

One approach, after proper approval, would be for the PRO to offer waiving some or all finance charges if the delinquent payment is received by a specific date. Depending upon the current financial and tax position of the PRO, eliminating delinquent accounts receivable in the current year could be advantageous to the company and make this a viable option to offer to the customer.

We have also heard of future offers being made by the PRO if the delinquencies are resolved. One strategy is to offer the customer free delivery and pickup on the next unit ordered if the old invoices are paid in full. The amount of this PRO's offer was significantly less than the amount past due by the customer, but it was another method of making the process positive.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Any verbal commitment of payment, a payment plan, a time commitment, or any other pertinent information given over the phone should be followed by an email confirming the conversation. This assures there is no miscommunication and the "I thought that you said" or the "I never said" conversations taking place.

"Thank you for helping me to resolve this account" in the email and any other positive remarks to the customer are generally helpful as well.

Do not mail open invoices or other communication to the delinquent customer. The "it must have gotten lost in the mail" response wastes time and effort on the part of the PRO while the amount owned by the customer continues to age.

EXTRA EFFORT

Depending on the amount due and the circumstances of the situation, offer to pick up the check. This saves the customer the time and effort of mailing the funds and avoids mail delays. Some PROs have had route service technicians pick up checks from the superintendent at the job site. Carefully consider having employees pick up cash from customers as there is potential exposure for the employee to be falsely accused of receiving more money than they turned in to the office upon completion of the route. The safety of the driver carrying cash on the service truck is also a consideration. PROs need to make their own decisions about receiving cash payments made to their company.

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS ...

After unsuccessfully approaching the collection of delinquent funds from a positive and customer-friendly approach, consider your legal options on filing liens on the property where the equipment was rented. Consult your state and local laws to correctly complete this process. Another final negotiation technique could be to tell the customer that a lien will be filed if payment is not received by a specific deadline.

FINAL THOUGHTS

PROs provide quality service in return for a fair price. Until such time as delinquent invoices have been paid, that professional service has been completed for free. PROs need a year-round and consistently executed accounts receivable process that can be intensified at year-end, or at any time that delinquent invoices become an issue.

While these were merely suggestions and observations, we hope that each PRO will work to improve their collections process. ■



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Below: Owner Jay Paige is flanked by Jim Paige (left) and Chelsea Owens. Their fleet of trailers are from Rich Restrooms and Comforts of Home Services. (Photos by Amy Voigt)



Business **INCUBATOR**

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.

Happy couples ring the cash register for Detroit's new Rockstar Rental restroom service

Hearing WEDDING BELLS

By Dee Goerge

Jay Paige had never been inside a restroom trailer when he purchased one sight unseen in 2017 to start his business, Rockstar Rental LLC, in Sterling Heights, Michigan, near Detroit. At 27, he was restless doing maintenance work and wanted to start a company that provided a service. After talking to a friend who worked in the restroom business, Paige researched online to learn more about the industry and who the competitors were in his part of Michigan, specifically serving wedding venues.

"I thought it was a good business because [the need for] it will never go away. People always need to use restrooms and people are always getting married," he says, adding he enjoys driving trucks and hauling trailers.

Paige set up an LLC and purchased liability insurance before making the 3 1/2-hour drive to Indiana to pick up a three-station unit from Rich Specialty Trailers. Back home, Rockstar Rental had a rocky start. There was more competition — about half a dozen businesses in the area — that Paige hadn't known about and no one rented his restroom trailer the first couple of months. His friend, who had put up half of the money for

the first trailer, decided to exit the business. So the friends worked out a payment plan for Paige to buy him out.

With social media exposure, Paige booked his first rentals the third weekend of June. They set the tone for the variety of events he would contract with — one was a graduation party and the other was a VIP rental for the rapper Big Sean at a Detroit event. He finished his first year with 25 rentals.

By 2018, he was ready to add another trailer and expand services. In 2020 he had booked 165 restroom rentals.

PAY ATTENTION TO REQUESTS

"What changed for us is that we were getting lots of calls for tables, tents and chairs," Paige says. So when he learned about a rental company going out of business he purchased those items to add to Rockstar Rental.

"That's what helped us take off the second year. Customers like that they can call one vendor, write one check and deal with one crew," he

(continued)



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Left: Jay Paige uses a John Deere 3025E tractor to move restrooms in the Rockstar Rentals yard.

Below: Chelsea Owens adds finishing touches like a basket of toiletries to a Rich Restrooms trailer.

says. “We’re all in now. We love the wedding industry.”

He credits his fiancée, Chelsea Owens, for the work she does on social media and the website for leading clients to Rockstar Rental. She is also part of the working team, right along with the guys, cleaning, setting up tents and transporting trailers.

Paige does that too, plus answers the phone and handles all the bookings.

While weddings are their main focus, the couple does corporate events and has rented to film crews, the Detroit Tigers, a PGA golf tour and concerts such as the Aretha Franklin Tribute at the newly named Aretha Franklin Amphitheatre in Detroit, where Kanye West led a *Sunday Service* performance. Clients find Rockstar Rental through positive reviews online.

“Customers like that they can call one vendor, write one check and deal with one crew. We’re all in now. We love the wedding industry.”

JAY PAIGE

BUILD ON YOUR STRENGTHS

One reason for the good reviews is quality service and quick response to calls. Paige relates how Owens’ sister was frustrated when she was planning her wedding and businesses didn’t answer the phone or return calls. If Paige isn’t available to answer the phone, he makes sure to call right back and responds to emails promptly.

He has more time to answer phones and take care of other parts of the business because he doesn’t deal with one job most restroom businesses have — pumping the restrooms. He either takes the trailers to the storage yard with a dump station that he rents or he hires a septic pumper to pump them on location.

Though it’s an extra cost, it works for the business.

“Trucks are expensive and it’s one less truck to insure, one less license,” Paige says of his choice to not deal with pumping. “We focus on what we’re good at.” However, as the business continues to grow, he notes he will likely be adding a vacuum truck in 2022.



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

“One thing I stress is building solid relationships,” he adds. That includes the pumpers he hires as well as competitors in the area.

“I don’t view them as a threat. You never know when you need them, and you can trade work in each other’s area,” he says. Though he’s a fairly new company, he’s reached out to a couple of even newer businesses, and they’ve traded work and helped each other during busy times.

In 2020, Paige and Owens expanded to include their fathers, Jim Paige and Greg Owens, who found themselves without work after the established companies they had worked for closed.

BE UNIQUE

That focus includes continuing to respond to clients’ needs and offering something a little extra.

For example, Paige’s building skills came in handy when he came up with a bar design using recycled pallets. The bar can be hauled in a pickup and is narrow enough to go through standard house doors.

(continued)

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Right: Jay Paige and Chelsea Owens prep a Rich Restrooms trailer for a new customer in the company yard.

Below: Jay and Jim Paige wash the exterior of a new restroom trailer from Comforts of Home Services.



They are popular add-ons with restroom trailers, and during slow times Paige offers the bar as a bonus with a rental. One customer liked the bar so well he purchased one, and the other three bars stay regularly rented during the wedding season.

He also made cornhole and football bowling games that are popular in Michigan. Paige also offers coolers, dance floors (oak, maple and pine), lighting, generators and a golf cart (rented from a rental company). Because they were inexpensive, he purchased popcorn, ice cream and snow cone machines available to rent.

"It's just something else to offer. They go out two or three times a month for birthdays and graduation parties," he says.

STAY CONSISTENT

While Rockstar Rental offers a variety of add-ons, the restroom trailers are the heart of the business.

"We like to keep them as elegant as possible," Paige says. But the trailers are all very similar, so other than size, he doesn't offer different levels of amenities. That keeps it simpler and eliminates room for negotiation if customers want a different model that's already booked.

After purchasing his first trailer, Paige learned about and attended his first WWETT Show, which educated him about build quality and details. Paige developed his own customized list for trailers he's purchased since

then — porcelain toilets and pedestal sinks, Corian countertops and neutral interior colors. None have hot water, because of the cost and it's one more thing that can go wrong, Paige says.

His fleet includes trailers from Rich Specialty Trailers — a 2017 three-station and two 2019 two-station trailers. He also has a 2016 two-station and a 2018 two-station from Comforts of Home Services. The most recent purchase was two 2021 four-station units from Comforts of Home. Paige bought an enclosed trailer and built it out as a refrigeration trailer to complete the fleet.

He pulls the trailers with four Ford F-150 pickups and a Chevrolet 2500, all with gas engines.

PANDEMIC SOLUTIONS AND THE FUTURE

The refrigeration trailer was a good investment during the COVID pandemic when a Meals on Wheels program rented it for six months. It's also popular with restaurants when coolers break down and around Thanksgiving when room is needed to store turkeys.

Like other wedding venues, Paige had many cancellations in 2020, which he resolved by giving customers their deposits back in the form of \$200 gift cards to use in the future.

Though there were losses due to the pandemic, there were also opportunities. Many smaller events and some weddings evolved into outdoor events, that went into November, longer than the usual season.

"We also had a couple long-term rentals," Paige notes. A Walgreens store needed restrooms for additional employees, and Chick-fil-A rented a restroom to have next to the trailer they sold food out of near a shopping mall.

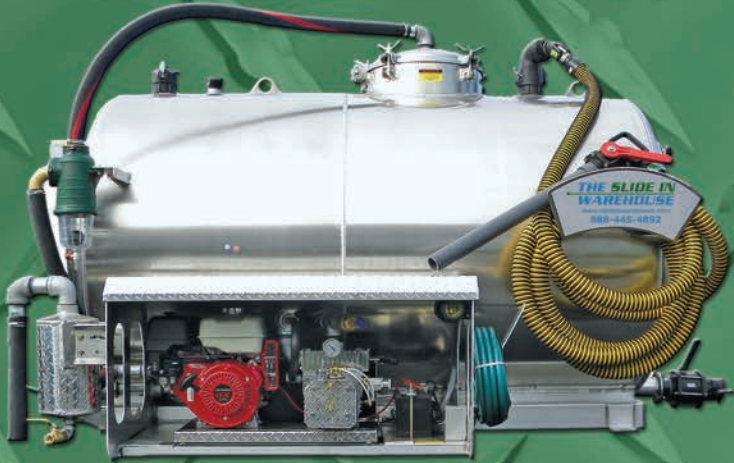
"I don't have any regrets. We've been pretty blessed," Paige says of getting through 2020 and the start of his new business.

With good relationships and positive reviews, he looks for continued success.

"I'm not sure if we are getting a little more popular or there's just a need, but in January we were three months ahead on the number of bookings that we don't usually have until April," Paige notes.

If that continues, Rockstar Rental should have no problem keeping him, his fiancée and their fathers busy throughout the year and in the future. ■

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Above: The Security Sanitation team includes, from left, Amy Fritz, Naomi Eickenroth, Rick Arnold, Mandy Sogge, Cody Mavis, Israel Ruoff, Spencer Sogge, Rich Sogge, Nate Wilkes, Jack Sage, Cole Nevarez, Robert Snyder, Brandon Sogge, Brandon Flanagan, Larry Yetter, Ray Fritz and Drew Burmania. (Photos by Mike Krebs)

OUR Team is Tops

“I spend about an hour every morning to have a quick talk with each guy, as they come in, to see what their needs are and give them their paperwork for the day.”

RICH SOGGE

When you live in a beautiful area and work with a great team, it’s easier and rewarding to run a business, according to Rich and Mandy Sogge.

The couple owns a couple of businesses in the lakes area of northwest Michigan on the shores of Lake Michigan. Though the region can be challenging in the winter, it’s also filled with recreational opportunities and events that need portable restrooms from their Security Sanitation business, based in Traverse City. Increased demand from construction and popular attractions has helped them grow from 200 units purchased from a business in 1997 to 2,400 today in a variety of colors and styles.

EMPLOYEE TO ENTREPRENEUR

After graduating from high school, Rich worked for a large local excavating company along with his dad and brother. He thought he’d be there for the rest of his working career, until an annual review. That’s when his employer told Rich he was doing a great job and could see him working there the next 30 years. Although he loved his job, it got Rich thinking, “Do I want to work for someone else for the next 30 years, or can I do this on my own and make my own destiny?”

So, in 1994, when the opportunity came up to purchase Belanger Excavating, he partnered with his dad and brother to buy the business,



The success of Michigan's Security Sanitation is built on a foundation of great workers and excellent customer service

By Dee Goerge

which Rich and Mandy bought out later. Along with digging basements and residential work, they focused on installing septic systems. The business was successful enough to require a new shop in 1997, and in the process of renting a portable restroom on a job site, they learned the owner of the company wanted to sell the business. It was the largest portable restroom business in the area at the time.

"Traverse City is a nice place to live, so construction is busy and there are a lot of festivals," Rich says, which made the business a wise investment.

At first Security Sanitation was just a sideline business, he notes, but as demand grew, he real-

ized its potential and took it more seriously. Over the next years he expanded by buying out three more companies that had between 150 and 300 portable restrooms. In 2007, the Sogges added Belanger Septic to their holdings and sold the excavating part of the business. Both the septic and portable restroom rentals continue to grow, with about two-thirds of the income coming from portable sanitation.

COLORFUL INVENTORY

Because they purchased from different companies, the restrooms at Security Sanitation come in sedate grays and greens to colorful pastels in pink, purple and blue.



Security Sanitation Traverse City, Michigan

Owners: Rich and Mandy Sogge

Founded: 1997

Employees: 18

Services: Portable sanitation, septic pumping

Service Area: 5 counties in northwest Michigan

Website: www.belangersseptic.com



Above: Technician Robert Snyder services a bank of restrooms at the Buckley Old Engine Show grounds in Buckley, Michigan. All portable sanitation service trucks are from Marsh Industrial and run NVE pumps.

Right: Rich Sogge is shown at Security Sanitation with a truck built out by Marsh Industrial and carrying an NVE pump.

"We like the Tuff-Jon restrooms (from T.S.F. Company Inc.) for our rough winters for construction," Rich says. They also work well for the 100-150 restrooms and sink units they provide for agriculture, especially the many cherry orchards and grape vineyards in the area. The 2,400-restroom inventory also includes Aspen, Comfort XL and ADA-compliant units from Satellite Industries as well as PJ3 models from PolyJohn.

With growing interest in the region as a wedding venue, Security Sanitation invested in six restroom trailers from A Restroom Trailer (ART) Company, two each of three-stall, four-stall and six-stall units.

The business' most recent purchase included 75 T.S.F. hand-wash stations to add to the 75 units it already had, plus 25 hand sanitizer stations from PolyJohn. The focus on hand sanitizers has been part of the business for a long time.

The Sogges' business has two locations with 25,000 square feet of shop space to maintain, clean and store all vehicles and event equipment inventory.

Rich ordered the 75 extra wash stations at the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown in early 2020. It proved to be a smart move.

"We lost construction for about eight weeks, I worried about that and the loss of events and school activities," he says. "But everyone [grocery stores and businesses that sold food] wanted sink units and hand sanitizers, and by the end of the year we ended up ahead [on income]. We also did a lot more septic work. We are in a big area for second homes and people stayed at their cabins and needed their holding tanks pumped more often."

With the increase in business, he hired more employees in 2020, who will be appreciated as demand for septic and portable restroom services



continues to grow. "We wanted to get enough employees so they are not working every weekend," Rich says.

HARDWORKING TEAM

"We're nothing without our guys and gals. We have great people who work here," he notes, emphasizing the importance of the team to make the business successful. Employees have 401(k)s, full family health care, vision, dental and life insurance and higher-than-average wages. As a result, employee retention is good. A few have been with the company more than 15 years; one has been there more than 25 years.

Key employees with experience — Rob Snyder (lead restroom service technician), Larry Yetter (lead septic service technician), Cole Nevarez (satellite shop manager) and Jack Sage (the longest-tenured employee) — pass down their knowledge to all the other employees. The rest of the team includes Cody Mavis, Izzy Ruoff, Brandon Flannagin, Chris Fineout, Nate

(continued)



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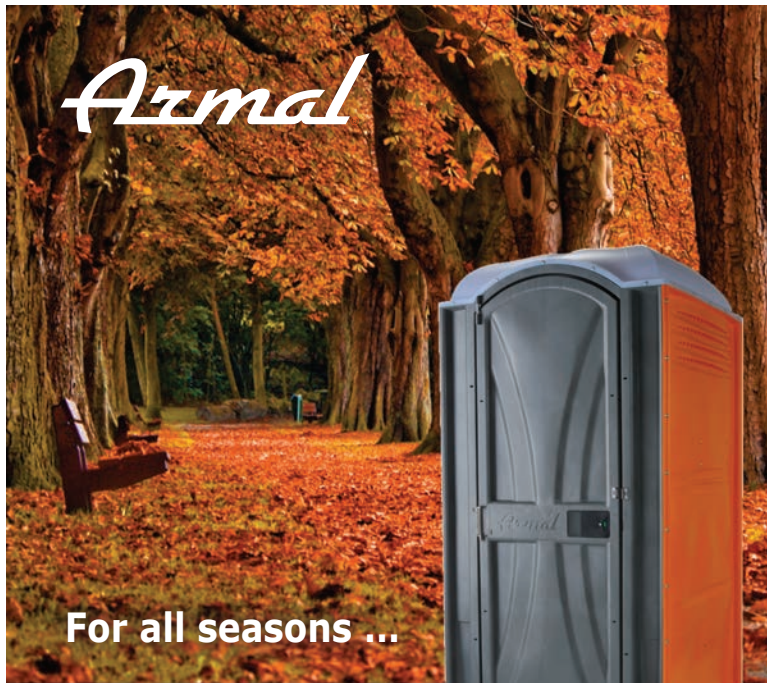
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Below: Jack Sage pulls a load of restrooms following an event setup.



Wilkes and Rick Arnold (portable restrooms) and Drew Burmania and Ray Fritz (septic pumping).

“They excel at taking care of our customers’ needs and each other, giving us confidence that the future for Security Sanitation and Belanger Septic is bright,” Rich says. “I spend about an hour every morning to have a quick talk with each guy, as they come in, to see what their needs are and give them their paperwork for the day.”

New employees ride with other team members for four to six weeks to learn both sides of the business and pick up best practices from others. The trucks they drive also make it easier for them to provide quality service to customers.

“We don’t want them wasting time and deodorizer [on site], so we do pre-mixed so it’s more consistent and they can get in and out quickly at events and construction sites,” Rich says.

To accommodate that he has had his last three pickup/delivery trucks

“Customers have no idea that he is our son when he’s on the job. When they call the office to say what a great young man he is and how professional he was, that makes me so proud.”

MANDY SOGGE

built with three-part compartments. The Ford F-550 trucks (2016, 2018 and 2021) built out by Marsh Industrial have 200-gallon pre-mix/100-gallon freshwater/400-gallon wastewater stainless steel tanks, NVE 304 pumps and can carry 6 to 8 units. The premix tank holds enough to fill about 50 units.

In addition to space for restrooms on the trucks, the Sogges own six locally made trailers that hold 8 to 16 restrooms for quicker delivery for events.

All service trucks are from Marsh Industrial. They include six Ford F-550s (2013-2021) with 600-gallon waste/350-gallon freshwater stainless steel tanks and one 2017 Ford F-350 with a 450-gallon waste/250-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank. All carry National Vacuum Equipment pumps. For the Belanger Septic side of the business, there are three Western Star trucks (two 2016 and a 2021) with 3,600- and 5,000-gallon stainless steel tanks, manufactured by Marsh Industrial and utilizing NVE pumps.

FAMILY AFFAIR

“The bigger we get, the less I’m in the field, so I change oils, run for parts, order supplies and deal with the day-to-day things. My wife and I deliver and set up the restroom trailers. That’s almost full time in the summer,” Rich says. The trailers require more time — finding the best site to setup, educating the customer and making sure everything is satisfactory.

The Sogges are grateful that their son, Brandon, mirrors their emphasis on quality. At 25, he’s worked with the business since he graduated from high school in 2014. He’s learned every part of the business by working at



Above: Following an event in Buckley, Michigan, technician Jack Sage loads restrooms on a trailer to return to the shop.



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events, running routes, pickup and deliveries, and septic pumping.

"It was really nice when Brandon started working here. I like having him here and being able to see him every day," Mandy says. "Customers have no idea that he is our son when he's on the job. When they call the office to say what a great young man he is and how professional he was, that makes me so proud."

Brandon is being groomed to eventually take over the business when his parents retire. He is already changing how they do marketing. Brandon adds social media to the radio, online and the phone book ads the business runs. He is moving more towards digital since it seems to have good results.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

While about half of the restrooms are used for construction, demand for events, weddings and residential gatherings continues to grow. After being canceled in 2020 due to COVID, most large events were expected to be back in 2021.

"Typically, it starts getting busy about the beginning of April and goes to the end of November," Rich says. Some events require many restrooms: 190 units for two days for a Memorial Day marathon and 180 units for Bell's Iceman Cometh Challenge bike race (in November), for example. About 300 units are needed for Traverse City's National Cherry Festival (every July). In addition, ongoing events with horse arenas that are part of the Great Lakes Equestrian Festival from June-September keep Security Sanitation staff busy servicing up to 30 units, nine restroom trailers (owned by Great Lakes) and as many as 20 campers a day. There are also winery- and beer taproom-related events.

TEAMWORK IN THE OFFICE

As her son, husband and other employees take care of day-to-day service routes, Mandy Sogge ensures their services for events like the weeklong National Cherry Festival run smoothly. Her job experience working as office manager for a construction company for 10 years has been helpful.

The Sogges appreciate a good staff. The newest office team member is Amy Fritz, who answers the phone and does the billing for the portable restrooms. While Mandy takes care of the septic side of the business, Naomi Eickenroth, handles the portable restroom schedules, answers the phone, works with Brandon Sogge on social media and fields calls from the crew.

"She is my right-hand person; it's a team effort for sure," Mandy says, adding that Naomi handles the office when she is not there. Mandy is trying to give up more and more responsibilities to make the transition smooth when the time come for her to step aside one day.

"We've gotten real organized over the years," Mandy notes about the cherry festival event. "We make maps and spreadsheets and give the drivers packets of where every single unit is." Every year changes are made after meeting with cherry festival organizers in May.

"It's a hectic week, but so well worth it to be part of a nationally known event. When people stop our guys and tell them that our units are the cleanest portable toilets they've ever been in, it makes it all worth it," she says. "And it's fun. I go there to hear the concerts, every night in usual years. There is always one or two big names."



Above: At the company shop, technician Nate Wilkes washes a service truck from Marsh Industrial and carrying a National Vacuum Equipment pump.

By working side by side with their team and employing occasional spot checks, Rich and Brandon maintain quality of service and units to keep customers happy, which, in turn, keeps employees happy. "Every unit that comes back to the yard is power washed and sanitized. We can tell if they are not maintained," Rich says. If they see any issues, they talk to the employee in a way that makes it a learning experience.

It's also a priority with the business owners to support their community. "We purchase locally and in Michigan as much as possible," Brandon says. "They support us, so we want to support them." Local causes are also important.

"We really pride ourselves in helping out our community. We give a \$10 discount for veterans, donate to our local 4-H, among quite a few charity events in the area," Mandy says. For example, they purchase cattle and hogs at the 4-H auction at the county fair, have them processed and give the meat to their employees as a bonus for their hard work and long days during the hectic summer months.

"This is the greatest area to live and work," Rich concludes. "We have the best, dedicated employees and a lot of great customers." ■

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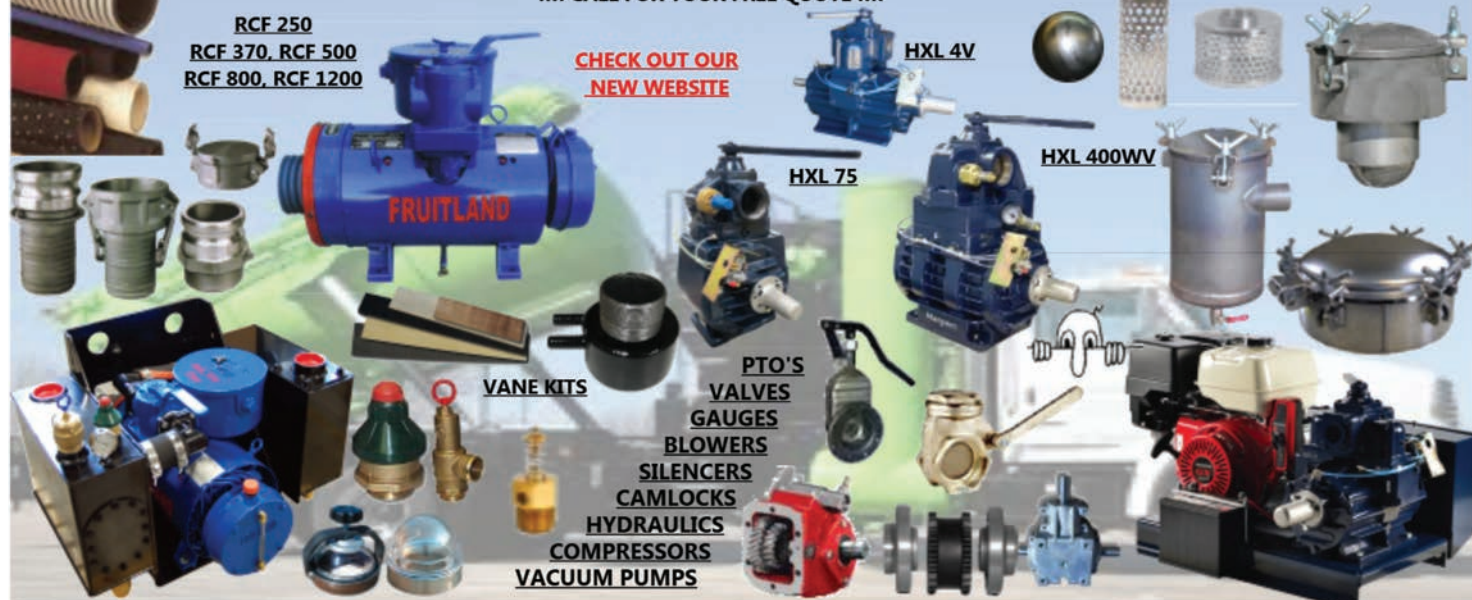


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Learn the Secret to Selling Real Value Over Low Price

The key to more effective sales is learning about your customer's needs and then practicing your approach over and over again

By Nathan Jamail

How many times do you hear, "The customer only cares about the price?" Many small-business owners say they hear it all the time. Price is only an issue when it is presented as the only benefit (or primary benefit). Regardless of industry, product and economy, a company does not need salespeople to sell *price*. For that, all they need is a website or catalog and a payment processor.

If your small business wants to increase sales and margin, you need to learn how to establish "real value," share the information with your team, practice doing it over and over again. The difference between an amateur and a professional is that professionals practice their skills. The key to overcoming price is not a scripted, catchy phrase. Rather it is learning how to create a real value partnership, and in order to do that, you must practice.

FIND THE VALUE YOU OFFER

Selling value is more than making statements like, "We offer great customer service," "We have experience and expertise" or "Our people make the difference." When asked about the value offered, these are the most common answers given by folks trying to make sales.

But this is no different than a person going on a job interview and telling the interviewer they should be hired because they are a self-starter, team player, people person, motivated and loyal. All of these answers are generic and do not differentiate you from the next person.

Rather, value is determined by the prospect. "What value do you add?" is a trick question because it can only be answered after you understand what the prospect or client defines they believe is value. To determine what the customer perceives as value, you must ask the prospective customer purposeful questions and a lot of them. The more you learn and understand, the more likely you will establish value according to the prospect.

Too many times, businesses flood a prospect with information on what they have to offer without knowing whether or not these factors will be a value to a client. It cannot be stressed enough; ask questions before explaining the value you bring!

WHAT TO ASK?

The sales call should be about more than just asking open-ended or leading questions. Most salespeople ask questions like, "Would it be a benefit to you if we could give you more of this for less money?" In most cases it is a rhetorical question that the customer has no choice but to respond to

affirmatively. That is like asking a child if they'd like to have more candy, play all day and not do homework. Asking purposeful questions allows you to truly understand the prospect, and not just their service needs to push for the sale.

Here are three easy steps to make sure you're able to sell on true value and not price:

WRITE DOWN YOUR QUESTIONS AND TAKE THEM WITH YOU. This does not make you less of a professional or less of an expert. In fact, this will allow you to show a client or prospect how important it is to fully understand their needs and desires. In order to do this correctly, the order of your questions is important as well. Start your questions broadly: industry-company-person-current vendor and then finally about the product or service.

HELP THE PROSPECT UNDERSTAND WHAT MAKES YOUR COMPANY SUCCESSFUL.

A partnership is a two-way street. Share what makes you successful without making it difficult or inconvenient for a prospective client, but shows the why and value for both sides.

PRACTICE YOUR SALES CALLS EVERY DAY. Do this before you call or visit prospective clients, not making the sales calls a practice run. Practice, practice, practice. This goes for anyone on your team who could be making valuable sales contacts, from your office staff to your route drivers. This is just like a professional sports team that will not practice if the coach does not require it and work on the field with the team.

FIND THE RIGHT PROSPECTS

If the prospect cannot truly afford the product or service you are offering, then do not lower the price and the perceived value. Instead, find a new prospect. By admitting that your product is not a fit, you will gain more clients in the long run than force-feeding a product or service and losing value along the way.

Lastly, every customer wants the most for the lowest price. This is not a bad thing once you learn how to help the prospect understand they really want success for the best price.

Success cannot be provided by just a vendor. Rather, it can only be provided by a true partner. You need to prepare and practice so the next time a prospective client says, "I want the cheapest price," you are ready to take control of the sales call and never sell (or lose) on price again. ■



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SLIDE-IN UNITS

By Craig Mandli

SLIDE-IN UNITS

AMERICAN TANK 400-GALLON SERVICE UNIT

The **400-Gallon Service Unit** from **American Tank** has a 300-gallon waste/100-gallon freshwater tank designed to back up to the headache rack on a flatbed truck, fitting in the center of the bed allowing easy access and workability. The unit is available in aluminum or steel and fits on any type of chassis and can be mounted on a smaller truck such as a Ford F-350. It weighs approximately 1,150 pounds empty. The engine/pump package can be installed in several locations, including on the driver's side on the end of the tank so that the driver/operator can access it when they step out of the cab. The tank/pump package can be any combination, including Masport, Jurop, Fruitland, National Vacuum or Conde. It comes with 30 feet of suction hose and wand and a 15-foot section of discharge hose. Various water pump options are available, and the unit comes in a variety of colors. **254-938-2564; www.atcvacuumtruck.com**



CRESCENT TANK VACUUM TANK

The **Crescent Tank** vacuum tank is flat inside and out. It has no baffles, allowing it to be emptied completely to avoid internal corrosion. With the included pump at specified CFM, 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 soundness. The workstation is designed for the portable restroom industry. Freshwater is held inside the external 1/2-inch-thick poly tank. The slide-in is low profile for better weight distribution and is barely visible in the bed of a pickup truck. The chassis required is a 1-ton or greater, 8-foot bed pickup or flatbed truck, based on maximum load capacity. **585-657-4104; www.crescenttank.com**

FMI TRUCK SALES & SERVICE WORKMATE THREE-COMPARTMENT SLIDE-IN UNIT

The **WorkMate Three-Compartment Slide-In Unit** from **FMI Truck Sales & Service** is suitable for the operator just getting started in the portable sanitation business. It fits easily into the back of a 1-ton pickup truck and is easy to operate. It also works efficiently across a flatbed truck or special event truck. The unit has a steel 325-gallon waste compartment and twin 75-gallon poly water tanks. The water tanks can be isolated for a three-compartment system or flow together



for a two-compartment system. Standard options include a primary and secondary shut-off, 12-volt freshwater delivery, an oil catch muffler, and an easy-drain manifold system. It comes ready to work with hoses, wand, bucket, straps and an ergonomic workstation. Options include a stainless steel supply storage box on the passenger side and tool storage on the driver's side. **800-927-8750; www.fmitrucks.com**



IMPERIAL INDUSTRIES SELF-CONTAINED SLIDE-IN UNIT

The **Self-Contained Slide-In Unit** from **Imperial Industries** allows for the equalized weight distribution of water and waste levels and offers versatility. It is frequently used for portable restroom maintenance, grease

service, oil spill clean-up and other applications for specialized industries. Optional freshwater compartments or waste-only units are available with a choice of vacuum pump and engine package. It is available in steel, aluminum or stainless steel, and stock sizes of 300-, 450-, 550- and 650-gallon capacities. **715-348-8751; www.imperialind.com**

KEEVAC INDUSTRIES FD-950-2C-SE

The **FD-950-2C-SE** from **KeeVac Industries** offers a flanged and dished tank built for both on- and off-road service. Customers can add this work-ready unit with a powerful pumping system and optional power-twin washdown pump. With a smaller footprint than larger tanks, slide-in units can service hard-to-reach locations for increased service area growth with reduced downtime. Each unit is made from all aluminum or stainless steel. All units come fully equipped and ready to work, complete with pump, motor, Tiger Tail suction hose and washdown hose with spray nozzle. **866-789-9440; www.keevac.com**



SATELLITE VACUUM TRUCKS 900-GALLON SLIDE-IN VACUUM TANK

Satellite Vacuum Trucks offers slide-in units in three materials with three pump systems and sizes ranging from 300 to 900 gallons. The 900-Gallon Slide-In Vacuum

Tank has a 650-gallon waste capacity, and 250 gallons of freshwater. It is offered with Conde 6SS, Conde 6SDS or Masport HXL3V pumps. Satellite technicians custom-build each tank to match operators' needs, creating an ergonomically friendly design to reduce driver fatigue. **800-883-1123; www.satelliteindustries.com**

HOSE REELS

HANNAY REELS H16-14-16 PORTABLE HOSE REEL

The **H16-14-16 Portable Hose Reel** from **Hannay Reels** is lightweight and suitable for use in pipe cleaning, drain cleaning and high-pressure applications in residential and light commercial environments. Its easy-to-use carry handle and manual rewind make it suitable for use in hard-to-reach areas. Designed with a quality swivel joint, the reel can accommodate pressures up to 5,000 psi. It includes a tension brake, one twist tie to hold hose and all-steel construction. **877-467-3357; www.hannay.com**



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Series PW7000 hose reels from **Reelcraft Industries** are fitted with a nickel-plated, carbon steel AFLAS-sealed swivel specifically for pressure-wash applications. The reel holds up to 50 feet of 3/8-inch I.D. hose. Its rigidity, compact design and powder-coat finish make it suitable for outdoor, all-weather and truck-mount applications. The guide arm adjusts to seven positions for ceiling, wall, truck, bench or pit mounting. The reel comes in standard red, but other colors are available. **800-444-3134; www.reelcraft.com**

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The **MCB3040** skid-mount, hot-water pressure washer from **Cam Spray** is designed to move easily from truck to van to trailer. It offers 4 gpm at 3,000 psi from a Honda GX390 industrial gas engine and triplex plunger pump with ceramic plungers and stainless steel valves. It is equipped with low-pressure chemical injection and is protected by an unloader valve and secondary pressure pop off. The burner system includes a rust-free fuel tank, Schedule 80 coil with stainless steel wrap, is controlled by an adjustable thermostat and temperature limit switch for a maximum temperature of 195 degrees F. The frame is constructed using industrial coated 2-inch tubing and comes equipped with a wand/hose rack. A heavy-duty trigger gun with a dual wand and side handle valve allows switching from high pressure cleaning to detergent application and is equipped with quick change 0-, 15-, 25- and 40-degree nozzles. **800-648-5011; www.camspray.com**



VACUUM HOSE



KURIYAMA OF AMERICA KING BEE KBEE SERIES

King Bee KBEE Series polyethylene liquid suction hose from **Kuriyama of America** provides flexibility for maneuvering in tight areas such as portable restrooms. The hose remains flexible in subzero temperatures, is crush resistant and will not kink. The easy-slide helix protects the hose tube from cover wear and moves easily over rough surfaces. Overmolded cuffs help prevent leaking. It is available in 2- and 3-inch I.D. sizes in multiple lengths. The 3-inch I.D. hose is also available as a 3-foot hose guard. **847-755-0360; www.kuriyama.com**

VACUUM PUMPS

FRUITLAND ELIM A344 SERIES

The **ELIM A344 Series** from **Fruitland** is a compact, low-weight pump offering 218 cfm of airflow and low oil consumption. It has an automated oil delivery system through the rotor shaft, along with level sight gauges, vane gauging ports and an anti-shock design. The package includes an oil-catch muffler and secondary shut-off, which eliminates plumbing issues and eases installation. This package comes in both gearbox and hydraulic drive options with integrated mounts. **800-663-9003; www.fruitlandmanufacturing.com**



MASPORT HXL4V AND HXL5V



HXL4V and **HXL5V** vacuum systems from **Masport** have a compact, low-profile design that incorporates an integrated scrubber, oil separator and inlet filter. The systems are fully integrated so they can slot into place for easy installation. They are available with plastic, steel or combination oil/flushing reservoir; and self-aligning gearbox and hydraulic drive options are also available. An optional extended self-aligning gearbox is available for direct alignment to the PTO on all truck models. **800-228-4510; www.masportpump.com**

NATIONAL VACUUM EQUIPMENT B250 MAX PAK

The **National Vacuum Equipment B250 Max Pak** is designed for the portable restroom market, using a hybrid tri-lobe blower with an integral four-way motor for vacuum/pressure use and inlet filter to provide protection. It is oil free, and its airflow is 270 cfm. It is capable of running continuously at 15 inches Hg. It comes ready to mount and includes an exhaust silencer. The 1-to-1.5 ratio gearbox makes it easy to provide the optimum revolutions per minute to the blower, while keeping truck revolutions per minute in check. While designed to fit on a Ford F-550 and Ram 5500, it can mount on any truck with ample ground clearance. It is also available in hydraulic drive to accommodate four-wheel-drive. **800-253-5500; www.natvac.com**



WALLENSTEIN VACUUM MODEL 151



The **Model 151** from **Wallenstein Vacuum** can be used with portable sanitation tanks and slide-in units and at campgrounds and marinas that require a compact package. It offers 80 cfm at 15 inches Hg, with a 2-inch vacuum/pressure valve, swivel elbows for easy hookup, air pressure or mechanical lubrication, and clockwise or counterclockwise operation. It can be direct-, hydraulic-, pulley- or clutch-driven. **800-801-6663; www.wallenstein.com**

WESTMOOR CONDE POWERPAKS

Conde PowerPak units from **Westmoor** are suitable for slide-in tank sizes from 50 to 2,000 gallons. They are compact and available in either belt- or direct-drive configurations. Direct-drive units



(continued)



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incorporate a centrifugal clutch that allows the user to throttle down the engine and disengage the vacuum pump. Throttle up and the pump is in action. Specify either vacuum and pressure, or vacuum-only pump choice. Diesel-powered units are also available for applications where non-sparking engines are required. **800-367-0972; www.westmoorltd.com**

WASHDOWN PUMPS

MORO USA DC

Heavy-duty **Moro USA DC** water pumps offer 20 gpm maximum flow for quick restroom fills, while 42 psi maximum pressure provides quick high-pressure cleaning. Available with cast iron or stainless steel pump body, both models offer a stainless steel impeller and Viton elastomers. Fan-cooled, 12-volt (83-amp maximum draw) motors are epoxy-coated for durability. These continuous-duty pumps come solenoid- and pressure-switch standard for easy installation. They have 1.25-inch suction and 1-inch discharge ports. The discharge can be mounted in four positions. **800-383-6304; www.moroussa.com** ■



PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

AssetCommand Base aims to improve PRO logistics

By Tim Dobbins

No matter the size of your fleet, better organization, accurate records and control of service vehicles will lead to improved efficiency for your portable restroom business.

DPL Telematics developed the AssetCommand Base as a solution to provide companies with a remote way to increase safety and productivity for service vehicles. The system is capable of tracking runtime, speed, trips, driver ID, idling, geofences, curfews, driver behavior and service schedules through an internet-based software package and mobile app.

"The market has been seeking an affordable, quick installing vehicle telematics solution with an intuitive user interface," says Tony Nicoletti, vice president of business development at DPL Telematics. "In the AssetCommand Base, we have introduced Driver ID options along with an easy-to-use service scheduling platform to reduce potential safety hazards, accurately log usage and reduce unnecessary vehicle wear."

With countless hours on the road as an operator, safety should always be a concern for you and your crew. Among the many safety features the AssetCommand Base can provide, the software has a disable function enabling users to immobilize specific vehicles on demand to stop theft, unsanctioned use or in other emergencies. It is also able to detect accidents giving real time notifications of vehicle abuse while tracking driver behavior, monitoring speed, acceleration and braking among other actions to keep employees safe and reduce the wear and tear on company vehicles.

AssetCommand can help with scheduling efficiency, according to the maker. "Using a GPS tracking system such as the asset command base, now managers and dispatchers have real-time visibility into the location and trip history of all their vehicles," Nicoletti says. "When dispatching a truck for pickup or delivery, the dispatcher now can see which are closest to the pickup location and then contact the appropriate driver for the fastest response, rather than calling around to see who is where."

He adds that it gives businesses accurate reports to defend or confirm claims. "An example many customers report is an angry caller stating that a driver was speeding through a neighborhood or something fell off the back of a company truck and hit their car," Nicoletti says. "Now the manager can turn back the clock to that exact point in time that the caller is referencing to see exactly where that truck number was and how fast it was going." **800-897-8093; www.dpltelematics.com**

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New Imperial 980 U.S. gallon, portable toilet service unit mounted on a 2022 Ford F550 cab and chassis with a Masport HXL4 pump package. (Stock #13988). **www.VacuumSalesInc.com. (888) VAC-UNIT (822-8648).** (TBM)

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