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PORTABLE RESTROOM OPERATOR

March 2022

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# GAME OVER!

Badgerland Portables provides lights-out service for University of Wisconsin football fans

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Covering 26 lightly populated counties, this North Dakota husband-and-wife team is used to watching the odometer spin

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# TUFF-JON

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Tuff-Jon



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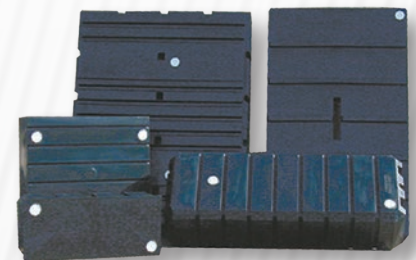
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**On Location: Game Over!**  
Badgerland Portables provides lights-out service for University of Wisconsin football fans.

- Ken Wysocky

**ON THE COVER:** Badgerland Portables has been providing portable sanitation services for Camp Randall Stadium and the Wisconsin Badgers football team for three years. Thomas Ward, the company's operations manager, is shown with a bank of Satellite Industries restrooms on game day. (Photo by John Maniaci)

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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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Office hours 7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Central Time, Monday - Friday

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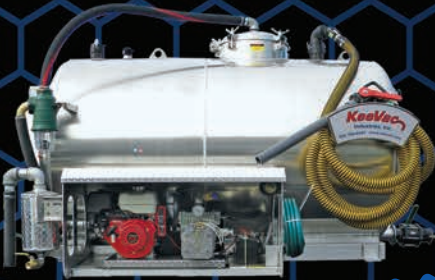
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**Purpose: Urinal Cleaner**

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By Jim Kneiszel

# The Good, Bad and Ugly of Portable Sanitation in the News



Restroom permit fees, overused event units, and a PRO-turned-NHL-executive all make recent headlines

I'd like to share some commentary about recent news stories involving the portable sanitation industry. As always, I welcome your thoughts on each of these stories. Drop me a line at [editor@promonthly.com](mailto:editor@promonthly.com).

## Fight the permit fees

A seemingly inconsequential government regulation proposed recently in an Ohio city could have a great impact on the portable sanitation industry — that is, if other communities jump on the bandwagon.

In Parma, a Cleveland suburb, officials received complaints about local residents renting their swimming pools out by the hour or day, similar to how homeowners rent out rooms for lodgers on the website Airbnb. And some of the complaints were triggered by the pool owners placing a portable restroom in their yards to serve the visiting swimmers.

A member of the city council objected to the pool rentals.

"The councilman wanted to regulate in residential neighborhoods the use of portable restrooms for these short-term rentals, and also wanted to clarify Parma's short-term rental ordinance to disallow the short-term rental of swimming pools," Tim Dobeck, Parma law director, told the news outlet [Cleveland.com](http://Cleveland.com).

Part of an effort to discourage short-term rentals is a proposal to add a hefty \$35 portable restroom permit fee to be paid by the homeowner. In the news story, city officials skirted the question about how broadly this fee should be applied to portable sanitation customers in general. However, they said response to the proposed fee has been positive.

Neighbor objections to the sight of portable restrooms, regrettably, is quite common for any number of uses, especially construction and remodeling or parties where residents want to provide extra facilities for visitors. I have to admit I've never understood those cases where restrooms — including those stationed in neighborhood parks — are called unsightly. They are typically clean, serviced regularly and placed only temporarily or seasonally. They are placed on site for a reason and provide an important sanitary service.

In this case, raising the specter of a restroom fee is a concern. It's difficult enough as it is to convince customers of the importance of providing portable sanitation services. PROs tell me it's challenging to sustain prices for their products and services that will ensure profitability and fair wages

**I've never understood those cases where restrooms — including those stationed in neighborhood parks — are called unsightly. They are typically clean, serviced regularly and placed only temporarily or seasonally.**

and benefits for their employees.

What impact will adding a \$35 permit fee have on the industry encouraging adequate use of portable sanitation to protect public safety and the environment? It won't make it any easier, I can assure you of that. Rather than throwing up financial roadblocks, local governments should be encouraging greater use of portable restrooms for the safety and comfort of the public.

## Illegal dumping in Florida

We don't need this kind of lawlessness in the portable sanitation industry. Reported recently by [FirstCoastNews.com](http://FirstCoastNews.com), a route driver for a portable restroom company dumped 700 gallons of wastewater in an environmentally sensitive area. And the illegal dumping was captured on surveillance video during a government sting operation.

According to the news account, the restroom company involved fired the driver immediately, condemned his actions, and spent \$100,000 in fines and cleaning up the site, near protected wetlands in the Timucuan Preserve and the Clapboard Creek. It was good to see these steps were taken, but no amount of positive action will make up for the ill will this situation created.

"Too many polluters just consider these fines and penalties as a cost of doing business instead of a deterrent to prevent the pollution, which is the intent," said Lisa Rinaman, the St. Johns Riverkeeper.

I believe Rinaman is wrong where it concerns the portable sanitation industry. By and large, restroom companies respect the laws and want to be good stewards of land and water. In fact they play an important role in promoting a cleaner environment in Florida and worldwide. Let's not allow this egregious headline color the public perception of our industry.

## Deer District disaster

The Milwaukee Bucks winning the NBA title was a cause for celebration in my home state in 2021. But one fan on hand for the festivities wasn't applauding the portable sanitation efforts put forth in the Deer District, a public space outside the Bucks' arena where throngs of fans gathered during games. Devin Willems' account of the scene was published at the WFRV-TV website.

"I cannot stress this enough, the bathrooms were a disaster," Willems explained. "However, when you have 65,000 people in a confined space and what seemed like 30 (at most) port-a-potties, there are bound to be issues. We initially waited in line for about 45 minutes and barely moved at all. Sometimes there would even be three to four people using the port-a-potty together." Willems said the area emanated a "putrid" odor and that some of the units overflowed onto the pavement.

PROs don't want or need to hear about nightmare service scenarios like this. Someone clearly dropped the ball, and the result is that more people will criticize the restroom contractor rather than place blame where it belongs, with event planners. I'm sorry that something like this in my backyard gave a black eye to the portable sanitation industry and I hope it never happens again.

## Bring your own power supply?

A recent story out of Dewitt, New York, offers a good reminder about planning for your electricity needs before setting up your restroom trailers or other equipment for an outdoor event. According to the Syracuse.com website, the technician servicing a restroom trailer rented for a wedding used multiple extension cords running into a former factory building. He experienced several tripped circuit breakers, the last one igniting a fire inside the building. Firefighters put out the blaze in 30 minutes and the restroom trailer was moved out of harm's way.

The lesson is that you don't just need to provide adequate restroom stalls for the number of people attending an event. You also must ensure the grid-connected power supply is adequate for safe use of your equipment or bring generators. I'm curious to learn if PROs are hesitant to rely on their customers' power grid and typically bid on jobs with the understanding they will supply generators when restroom trailers are requested.

## From portable restrooms to professional Hockey

I think hockey players and portable restroom operators have a lot of common traits. Both are unafraid of hard work. They're willing to fight to reach their goals. And they bring a no-nonsense, blue-collar approach to getting their jobs done. So it's really no surprise that a scrappy former player and current successful general manager of the National Hockey League's Carolina Hurricanes, Don Waddell, previously owned a portable sanitation business.

If you run a restroom route in Toledo, Ohio, you might remember Waddell, who in a break between playing minor league hockey and becoming an NHL front office star owned a portable restroom business there. Waddell's connection between restrooms and professional hockey was part of a recent feature story posted on the league's NHL.com website.

Waddell toiled away in the minor leagues of hockey for a few years until, in the mid-1980s, he started the restroom business. It was while he was running a restroom route that a friend summoned him to return to the game as a player/coach, and one thing led to another until Waddell worked his way into the high-profile position with the Carolina team.

"Come Wednesday, I'm out doing my toilet business. I show up in Fort Wayne at the arena in my rubber boots. I got my jeans on with my truck with the big tank on it. I drove that to the rink," Waddell told NHL.com. After his first game, other players noticed his vacuum truck parked next to the team bus. "The boys were just dying, dying laughing."

According to the story, the restroom industry's loss was professional hockey's gain. I know I'll think about former PRO Don Waddell the next time I see an NHL game on television. ■



PROs are always on the lookout for new techniques or new ways to build revenue. What sort of nontraditional pumping work do you perform? Or tell us about a unique way you got a job done. Send me the details at [editor@promonthly.com](mailto:editor@promonthly.com) and I will share them with readers in a future issue.

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By Jeff and Terri Wigley

# Spring Cleaning for Special Event Equipment

Get your units, trailers and sinks in shipshape condition for when your most discerning customers come calling

**QUESTION:** Having started our business in the fall of 2019, we have yet to experience a “true” event season. How should we get our equipment ready?

**ANSWER:** Hopefully, this year will see a traditional spring special event season followed by the summer season and ending with fall events. Given that, let us discuss preparations for your event equipment and supplies.

## RESTROOM UNITS

Event units are typically new or almost new and it is important to keep them in that condition. Here are some useful tips to accomplish this objective:

**THOROUGH CLEANING AND HARDWARE INSPECTION** — Event units can accumulate dirt, dried leaves and even insects during the months where there are no events.

1. Clean each unit with either a hose or preferably a pressure washer. That’s a good first step while at the same time inspecting the entire unit for any damage or defect.
2. Pay particular attention to the areas between the tank and the walls as dirt can build up in these areas over the winter.
3. Inspect the urinal and make sure it has no calcium buildup on the trough area or the drain tube. If you find a buildup, clean appropriately with a urine cleaner or the traditional method of using oven cleaner. Ensure the urinal is securely riveted to the wall.
4. Clean the tank and inspect for holes. Inspect the toilet seat for cracks and make sure bolts are tight and secure.
5. Clean toilet paper holders if needed and properly secured to the wall just as with the urinal. Toilet paper locks should also be inspected so they lock properly and securely.
6. Clean hand sanitizer dispensers, if applicable, and properly secure them to the wall. If your company policy is to store them with the dispenser bags inside, make sure that they are full and that the dispensing nozzle is open and ready to use.
7. Inspect the door, door lock and door springs for damage or defect and repair as needed.
8. Clean the outside, paying particular attention to the roofs, which may not be the shiny white color that was evident at those fall events.

Have large quantities of supplies on hand before the event season begins. With supply chain issues we have been experiencing, PROs should have more than adequate supplies of toilet paper, paper towels, hand sanitizer liquid and cleaning supplies.

9. A common area overlooked for a good cleaning is the skid. Tilt the unit back and spray the underside of the skid to eliminate dirt, mud and possible odors.
10. Replace rivets on the unit that are either damaged or missing.

**UNIT TRACKING NUMBERS OR TAGS** — If you want to establish a system to track each event unit, this is a suitable time to install the appropriate tag, decal or barcode since all of the event units are in the yard for the off-season.

**CREATING “SPECIALTY UNITS”** — Some PROs assemble units that offer different amenities for events. Spring is an ideal time to do these modifications.

1. Installing interior lights — battery operated or solar — are a great option for customers who have nighttime events in unlight areas.
2. Removing the urinal, plugging the drainage hole in the tank and creating “female only” units. This may help distinguish your company from your competitors.
3. Removing the tank, the urinal, installing a solid floor and adding a baby changing station securely attached to the back wall. Baby changing stations can also be installed in ADA units.

## PORTABLE SINKS AND HAND SANITIZER STANDS

1. Thoroughly clean and scrub sinks, giving particular attention to ensuring the drainage plugs have a tight fit. The interior water tubes should be inspected for accumulation of mold. Using 10% bleach solution to clean these tubes is wise.

2. Clean the freshwater tank with disinfectant soap and inspect for leakage.
3. Some PROs will seal the water faucets with tape or other material so that the hoses stay capped while not in use. This further prevents mold in the water lines.
4. Check the foot pumps for ease of use. Make adjustments, repair or replacement as needed.
5. Make sure the “non-potable water” decal is securely attached to the sink and replace if needed. Without such a decal, PROs are potentially liable if the water is used for drinking.
6. Clean and inspect hand sanitizer stands by ensuring each dispenser is properly secured and that the dispensers themselves are in working order. Clean the area under the base as well.

## RESTROOM TRAILERS

Trailers are expensive investments and should be treated accordingly.

### INTERIOR:

1. Using a mild disinfectant cleaner, thoroughly clean and inspect the sinks. Check the water pipe under the cabinet for leaks. Use the disinfectant cleaner in the drain to further clean the pipes.
2. Clean the mirrors with a mild disinfectant and soft, lint-free cloth. Do not spray the cleaner directly onto the mirror, spray on the cloth and then apply to the mirror.
3. Clean and inspect each toilet bowl, checking for cracks or leakage areas. Inspect the foot pumps for proper use. Some PROs will partially fill each bowl with a mild, fragrant disinfectant and leave for some time to leave behind a pleasant scent inside the unit. Upon flushing this product, the holding tank will also benefit from this disinfectant.
4. Inspect the lights, light fixtures and thermostat for proper operation.
5. Inspect the stall doors for hardware issues.
6. Clean the floor and check for cracks or damage.
7. Inspect the entry door hardware and for ease of use. The door should lock properly and easily.
8. The utility closet should be thoroughly inspected. Electric wires, cords and fuses should be in ideal working order. The freshwater storage tank should be cleaned and water lines inspected for leakage or mold.

### TRAILER EXTERIOR:

1. Steps are sturdy and secure.
2. Exterior sheet metal is secured to the frame.
3. All signal lights are in proper working order.
4. Tires are in good condition and properly inflated.
5. The tongue of the trailer and the support jacks are sturdy and secure.
6. Spring is a good time to thoroughly clean and inspect the roof. If the trailer is stored outside, the accumulation of dirt and debris can be extensive after winter.
7. Check and clean the waste disposal cap. Depending on the design, the cap can show degradation over time. You need a solid, tight fit to avoid drips or leaks while at an event.

### SPECIALTY TRAILERS:

1. Shower trailers should be cleaned and inspected similarly to a standard trailer. Clean shower areas and preventing water leaks are the key objectives here. The outside of the trailer should be cleaned and inspected as described above.
2. Laundry trailers should have thorough cleaning inside the washers and dryers. Electrical inspections are crucial with these trailers.

### OTHER EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES:

1. Unit-hauling trailers should have tires, brakes and lights inspected in a similar fashion to that of restroom trailers.
2. Ratchet straps for securing units and other rental equipment should be inspected and replaced as needed. Don't overlook these crucial pieces of safety equipment.
3. Have large quantities of supplies on hand before the event season begins. With supply chain issues we have been experiencing, PROs should have more than adequate supplies of toilet paper, paper towels, hand sanitizer liquid and cleaning supplies.

### FINAL THOUGHTS:

By considering these various tips for spring cleaning of your event equipment, the only remaining task is to start making those calls and booking those events! ■



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**Below Left:** A group of young Wisconsin Badgers fans poses in front of a bank of restrooms. Badgerland Portables places about 120 restrooms in 40 locations around and inside the stadium. The units stay in place for the duration of the football season. (Photos by John Maniaci)

**Below:** Bucky Badger, the mascot of the Wisconsin football team, does a little pregame partying with restrooms from Satellite Industries in the background.

# GAME OVER!

Badgerland Portables provides lights-out service for University of Wisconsin football fans

By Ken Wysocky



## ON LOCATION

- » **THE JOB:**  
University of Wisconsin Football
- » **LOCATION:**  
Madison, Wisconsin
- » **THE PRO:**  
Badgerland Portables

### THE TEAM

To service portable restrooms at football games at the University of Wisconsin, Thomas Ward and employees at Badgerland Portables must execute a precision game plan with the same kind of teamwork the Badgers display on the field at Camp Randall Stadium. Ward is the operations manager at Badgerland Portables, located in a suburb of the state capital, Madison. (The company is a division of Illinois-based Lakeshore Recycling Systems). For three years, Ward and four to five employees have worked amid the festive party atmosphere of Camp Randall on seven Saturdays in fall. The technicians for the 2021 season were Austin Dobron, Dylan Cleaveland, Troy Tischler, Josh Messinger and Buddy Bills.

### COMPANY HISTORY

Badgerland is four years old. It rents and services portable restrooms throughout southern Wisconsin. The company was started by Dustin Reynolds, who's the vice president of business development at Lakeshore Recycling. The company primarily serves the construction industry as well as special events. It employs seven people and operates out of headquarters in Monona, Wisconsin, and a facility in Janesville, about 45 miles to the southeast. "We've grown quickly, primarily by acquiring seven or eight companies," Ward says. "It's very exciting. We're a company on the move."

(continued)

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**Right:** Thomas Ward meets with crew members Dan Ogle and Austin Dobron in the upper deck of Camp Randall Stadium, where Badgerland Portables services 14 Satellite Industries restroom that augment permanent bathrooms.

**Below:** Badgerland uses this Toro golf cart as a mini-vacuum truck to service restrooms in the upper level of Camp Randall Stadium. It features a 200-gallon waste/100-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank made by Brenner (owned by Wabash National) and a small self-fabricated hoist that raises the tank about 30 degrees for easier dumping.



## EQUIPMENT MATTERS

Badgerland owns approximately 1,400 standard restrooms and roughly 40 ADA-compliant restrooms, all from Satellite Industries. In addition, the company has four luxury restroom trailers (one with 10 stalls, two with eight and one with four), 75 hand-wash stations and about 75 sanitizer stations, all from Satellite and Satellite Suites.

The company runs five service vehicles in Monona, built on Freightliner, Kenworth, Hino and Dodge chassis. They're equipped with stainless-steel tanks that range in size from 650 to 750 gallons for waste and 350 to 400 gallons for freshwater tanks, all from Satellite Vacuum Trucks. The Janesville facility relies on three Ford F-450s equipped with aluminum and stainless steel tanks ranging from 650 to 750 gallons for waste and 350 to 400 gallons for freshwater, also from Satellite Vacuum Trucks. Trucks utilize Masport and National Vacuum Equipment pumps.

## FORE!

To service restrooms located on the hard-to-access upper level of the stadium, Scott Crawford, the company's maintenance manager, and his team converted a Toro golf cart into a mini-vacuum truck about two years ago. It features a 200-gallon waste/100-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank made by Brenner (owned by Wabash National) and a small self-

**"I'm always amazed at how well-organized everything is. And there's no restroom abuse or graffiti. I figured the restrooms would be damaged during games, but they never are. It's just a great overall experience."**

**THOMAS WARD**

fabricated hoist that raises the tank about 30 degrees for easier dumping, Ward says. "It's a neat little invention," he says. "It works very well."

Because there aren't enough permanent bathroom facilities on the upper level, stadium officials asked Badgerland to station seven restrooms on the north end and seven more on the south end. But that area is accessible only via a long, multi-tiered ramp with just 7 feet of clearance. To transport the restrooms to the upper level at the start of the season

and remove them when the season concludes, Badgerland employees use a Mongo Mover from Deal Assoc.

## THE MAIN EVENT

The Badgers have been playing games at Camp Randall since 1917. With a seating capacity of 80,321, the double-deck stadium is one of the largest school-owned college stadiums in the country. It's named after a Union army camp that used to occupy the site where the stadium now stands. The camp was named after Alexander W. Randall, who was the state's governor at the start of the Civil War. The Badgers play seven homes games a year, usually on Saturdays.

"I'm always amazed at how well-organized everything is," Ward says. "And there's no restroom abuse or graffiti. I figured the restrooms would be damaged during games, but they never are. It's just a great overall experience."

*(continued)*



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**Right:** Thomas Ward and his son, Ethan, posing for a photo on a Wisconsin Badgers game day.

**Below:** Technicians Dan Ogle, left, and Austin Dobron check on restrooms inside Camp Randall Stadium, which has a capacity of 80,321 screaming Big Ten fans.



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Ward says the event runs so smoothly because of great communication with Shane Burgess, director of events for the UW-Madison Athletic Department. “Shane and I are on the phone every game day to be sure everything is good,” he says.

## BY THE NUMBERS

To service the games, Badgerland deploys four vacuum trucks and six employees (including Ward) to service 120 standard restrooms and three ADA units. All the restrooms are delivered before the start of the season and placed in roughly 40 different locations in parking

lots and within the stadium, where they remain for the entire season. The largest cluster consists of about 10 restrooms, Ward says.

## EXECUTING THE GAME PLAN

Game-day preparations begin between 4 and 5 a.m. because the crew has to be finished by 7 a.m. Job one is unlocking all the restrooms, adding deodorizer to the tanks and making sure each unit is fully stocked with hand sanitizer, toilet paper and so forth. “With four guys, it usually doesn’t take that long,” Ward says.

Then the employees go home. But two employees return around kickoff time, which usually is 11 a.m., to be sure the restrooms are sufficiently stocked and there’s no emergency maintenance or repairs required. The two employees follow the same routine around the third quarter before leaving for the day, he explains.

Between 5 or 6 a.m. on Sunday, the crew returns and spends two or three hours pumping out the restroom tanks and cleaning the units. “With four guys, four trucks and the golf cart, they make pretty short work of it,” Ward says.

## GREAT ATMOSPHERE

While servicing the event is hard work, Ward says employees enjoy the game-day experience, which is like a giant block party, featuring a sea of fans sporting the school’s red and white colors. “There’s a great sense of camaraderie,” Ward says. “While we’re working, fans at tailgate parties offer us free beers and brats. While we have to decline, it makes us feel very appreciated. We have a couple of younger drivers this year who had never experienced a Badgers football game before and really enjoyed the experience,” he adds. “They said, ‘Wow, this is really great!’ And it is.” ■



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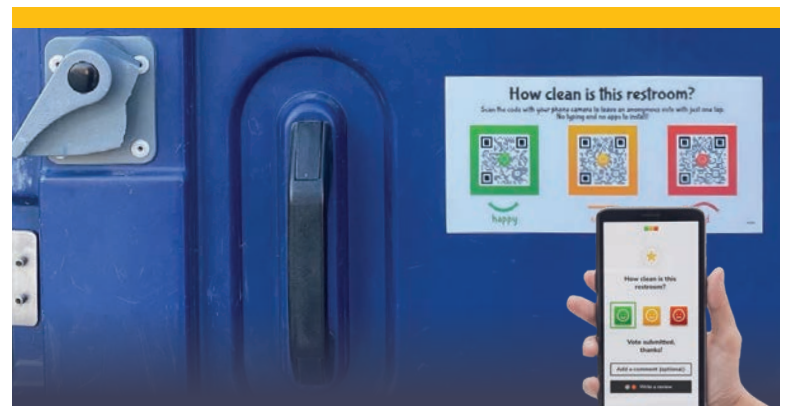
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**Below:** Don and Bonnie Larson started D&B Portables in 2014 near Sanborn, North Dakota.  
(Photos by Eric Hylden)

# WINDSHIELD TIME



Covering 26 lightly populated counties, this North Dakota husband-and-wife team is used to watching the odometer spin

By Dee Goerge

**F**rom the cab of her 2020 Ram 5500 vacuum truck, Bonnie Larson is doing triple duty. With the truck's hands-free phone, she can take customer calls (office work) as she drives the 200-mile round trip to Mandan, North Dakota, to set up and service portable restrooms that tipped over in a storm the day before. At the same time, she stays in touch with her husband and employees about their routes.

Though the distance and work involved with owning and operating D&B Portables in Sanborn, North Dakota, can be daunting, Bonnie and her husband, Don, are up to the challenge and grateful to own the business. Now their work focuses on 26 counties in the eastern half of North Dakota, traveling longer distances for some customers. In their prior jobs with the wind power industry, they traveled all over the state and could be away from home months at a time.

"Our kids were teens, and we wanted to be around home and be our own bosses," Larson explains as reasons they started D&B Portables in 2014.

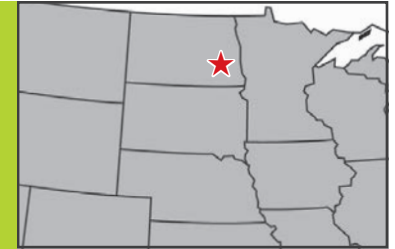
## STARTING THE DAY RIGHT

As safety managers in the wind power industry in North Dakota, Bonnie and Don earned respect and networked with businesses and workers throughout the state. Often as the only female among 250 workers, Bonnie noticed one thing male workers may not have appreciated.

"The guy who cleaned our port-a-potties made them nice, and it started my day off right," she says, noting the couple recognized that portable sanitation is an industry that will always be needed.

Don researched how to build inventory, while Bonnie checked into regulations and licensing requirements. In November 2014, the Larsons started a business that had 200 restrooms and two trucks with a leased building in Jamestown in the southeast quadrant of the state. The couple adapted their past experience to learn new skills for running a portable restroom business.

Don looked for ways to make the job easier. He designed a double pallet fork for the skid-steer to move two restrooms at a time, set up a 1,000-gallon



## D&B Portables Sanborn, North Dakota

**Owners:** Don and Bonnie Larson

**Founded:** 2014

**Employees:** 4

**Services:** Portable restrooms, septic tanks, water tanks

**Service Area:** 26 counties in eastern half of the state

**Website:** [www.dbportables.com](http://www.dbportables.com)

"I couldn't be more proud to do what we do. I love to travel and what a perfect job to get to see the state. We are both very social people and have met many new people because of the job that have become friends. We are truly blessed."

**BONNIE LARSON**



**Right:** Don and Bonnie Larson, center, are shown with crew members Mark Roones, left, and Steve Berntson, right. Their restroom service fleet includes two 2020 Ram 5500 vacuum trucks built out by Imperial Industries and carrying NVE pumps.



**Above:** Don Larson moves a pair of Sansom Industries restroom units to a transport trailer for delivery.

**Below:** Larson services Sansom Industries restrooms at a North Dakota rodeo.



water tank with a pump to fill trucks and prepared tool bags for each truck to do repairs in the field.

With Bonnie's aptitude for paperwork, they made D&B Portables a woman-owned portable restroom business. Her experience in construction helped make the difference.

Starting their business in the winter was challenging but by the spring Bonnie's marketing, advertising and contacts started to pay off.

## TEAM EFFORT

Bonnie holds 51% of the business, and she and Don share the workload. Bonnie takes care of contracts, scheduling, the books and payroll, and handles routes and deliveries as necessary in the western half of their territory. Don takes care of maintenance and the eastern half of their territory. Employees, Mark Roones and Steve "Bernie" Berntson, are cross-trained, though Roones typically handles the septic side of the business,

"We are very involved with our community, gotten to know businesses and have grown every year. We're very social and make a point to talk to them and keep the lines of communications open. When you do that face-to-face it makes more of an impact."

**BONNIE LARSON**

while Berntson runs portable restroom routes.

The Larsons added septic service in 2015 when they purchased another business. All together they have added two septic businesses and one septic and portable restroom business.

In the beginning they had restrooms in the oil patch around Williston, five hours away, which made long workdays for them and their employees. As word spread about their business they had more local opportunities and they backed off the long-distance work.

"We are very involved with our community, gotten to know businesses and have grown every year. We're very social and make a point to talk to them and keep the lines of communications open. When you do that face-to-face it makes more of an impact," Bonnie Larson says.

## WELL EQUIPPED

Driving long distances means the Larsons need to be prepared and efficient. They appreciate two 2020 Ram 5500 service trucks with aluminum 800-gallon wastewater and 400-gallon freshwater tanks and National Vacuum Equipment pumps from Imperial Industries. One truck carries a

(continued)



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**Left:** Don Larson and Steve Berntson load a pair of Sansom Industries restrooms onto a transport trailer from Stardusk Truck & Equipment at a rodeo event.

## SAFETY ON THE JOB

As safety supervisors for two years for North Dakota's wind power industry, Don and Bonnie Larson were prepared for the safety aspect of the portable sanitation business.

"When I worked with wind towers, I wrote the safety plans, and we implemented those in our business," Bonnie Larson says.

The owners of D&B Portables include safety guidelines in their employee orientation packets. Included are hazards to watch for, procedures in case of an emergency, ergonomics, driving etiquette, personal protective equipment requirements, procedures on construction and highway sites, as well as general orientation procedures.

Safety issues come up at the many DOT road project contracts they handle, and it's important that the Larsons and their drivers pay special attention to construction site rules. "There's just one lane and you need to know where to be out of their way," she notes. "They (construction workers) are usually helpful and great to work with because they want a clean port-a-potty."

When possible the Larsons try to work during less busy hours.

"We like to do services on Sundays as they often are not working and we're not fighting traffic," she says.

Another way they keep safe is having good equipment to prevent injuries. For example, instead of manually filling restrooms with clean water, they fill them with water through the wand, which saves time and adds safety for the operator.

But perhaps the Larsons' biggest safety practice occurs during daily before-and after-work discussions where they and employees can learn about different situations from each other. "We all sit around the table and talk every day before and after work about things that happened. It's good to have that line of communication open so you can address issues," she says

water tank under the bed so it can haul six portable restrooms. The trucks have dual-side service, comfortable cabs and hands-free communication technology, Larson says.

Because they travel through remote areas, they carry a full set of Milwaukee tools. For example, they use an impact wrench to anchor the restrooms to the ground with 18-inch lag bolts. If they can't remove the bolts, they can use a cutoff blade to cut the bolts at ground level.

"When you are so far from home, you have to be able to troubleshoot for minor problems or breakdowns," Larson says. "The other day in Bismarck a water hose blew. I dug in the tool bag, grabbed a hose clamp and fixed it."

With demand increasing for more restrooms at events — 50 or more was typical in 2021 — they purchased another 20-place trailer from Stardusk Truck & Equipment to add to their fleet of 8-, 12- and 20-unit trailers built by H&H and Johnny Mover.

The Larsons are upgrading their restroom inventory (350) to Sansom Zenith units for construction and events.

(continued)



**Above:** Technician Berntson services a restroom along his daily route.



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"We love the Sansoms. They are built well, and I like them because the toilets are at an angle. When you're sitting your face isn't near the urinal. The hands-free door opening is a great selling point during these times. Many customers are amazed at the toe kick opening of the door," she says.

Their hand-wash stations are Tuff-Jons on wheels for easier moving.

On the septic side of the business, they have two trucks, a 2006 GMC Kodiak with a 2,000-gallon aluminum tank and Masport pump and a 2016 Peterbilt with a 1,500-gallon steel tank with an NVE pump. With heated valves, pumping can be done year-round, though that work typically slows down December through February.

Finally, a 1972 Ford fire truck they purchased recently, has turned out to be a great investment.

"We were driving through a town and saw it for sale," Larson says. With its 3,000-gallon water tank and pressure hoses it saves time and labor cleaning out tanks on the septic trucks, she explains.

## BUSINESS RELOCATION

Another recent purchase in 2019 was new property for their business.

"We had been looking for a farmstead and we found one with 14 acres and seven outbuildings, a house and garage," Larson says. It's centrally located to their coverage area and helps them stay on top of business and vehicle maintenance. It also provides an opportunity for the future to land-apply waste and save treatment plant fees.

Knowing exactly where restrooms are located can be a challenge. For example, one of D&B's contracts is to service restrooms on railroad cars when crews are making repairs and that can mean meeting the train somewhere at 6 a.m. Another time a storm picked up a restroom and set it in the middle of a field a mile away. It was after a trailer with restrooms was stolen that the Larsons solved the problem of finding restrooms by putting trackers on everything. Since cellular didn't work well in their region, they use satellite-based trackers. The discreet trackers are riveted to the restrooms and trailers. "(Tracking) comes in handy if Don does my route to help him find the restrooms," she adds.

The tracking devices also help employees. The business typically has two employees, who the Larsons treat as well as they can with above average wages, housing in some circumstances, Christmas bonuses and "we feed them like crazy," Larson says. "Don likes to grill when he is home."

To comply with COVID regulations, twice as many units were often needed and they were spaced out for social distancing and more services were required. D&B has always had hand sanitizers in its restrooms, which was a great selling point, and customers also like the hands-free doors. Hand-wash stations were in big demand, and the Larsons used their entire inventory. Septic pumping was up too, as more people were working from home or staying in second homes.

## ROSY OUTLOOK

Opportunities are plentiful for D&B Portables as a woman-owned small business, but quality service also drives contracts. They pride themselves in being "a clean and green company." That includes providing quality, thorough pumping and cleaning and using environmentally friendly products from J&J Chemical, Walex and Sunrise Environmental.

Besides the work in the field, Larson is comfortable handling government paperwork and marketing the business through radio and newspaper advertising and dropping off cards at construction sites. She uses QuickBooks for accounting and creates route maps with Google. The trucks have GPS, but it's not always accurate in North Dakota.

## MORE INFO

### J&J Portable Sanitation Products

800-345-3303  
www.jjchem.com  
See ad, page 3

### Imperial Industries, Inc.

800-558-2945  
www.imperialind.com  
See ad, page 39

### Masport, Inc.

800-228-4510  
www.masportpump.com

### Milwaukee Tool

800-729-3878  
www.milwaukee tool.com

### National Vacuum Equipment, Inc.

800-253-5500  
www.natvac.com  
See ad, page 33

### Sansom Industries

844-972-6766  
www.sansomindustries.com  
See ad, page 19

### Sunrise Environmental Scientific

800-648-1153  
www.sunrisenv.com

### The Johnny Mover Trailer Sales

800-498-3000  
www.cesspoolcleaners.com

### T.S.F. Company, Inc.

800-843-9286  
www.tuff-jon.com  
See ad, page 2

### Walex Products Company

800-338-3155  
www.walex.com  
See ad, page 7



**Above:** Steve Berntson services restrooms at a local festival. D&B Portables covers a huge territory of 26 counties in North Dakota.

Despite the distances and challenges, the state is full of opportunity.

As grandparents and parents of adult children, the Larsons juggle work and family, especially in the summer. Spending time with grandchildren often includes them riding along and helping clean restrooms.

"I couldn't be more proud to do what we do. I love to travel and what a perfect job to get to see the state. We are both very social people and have met many new people because of the job that have become friends. We are truly blessed," Larson says. ■

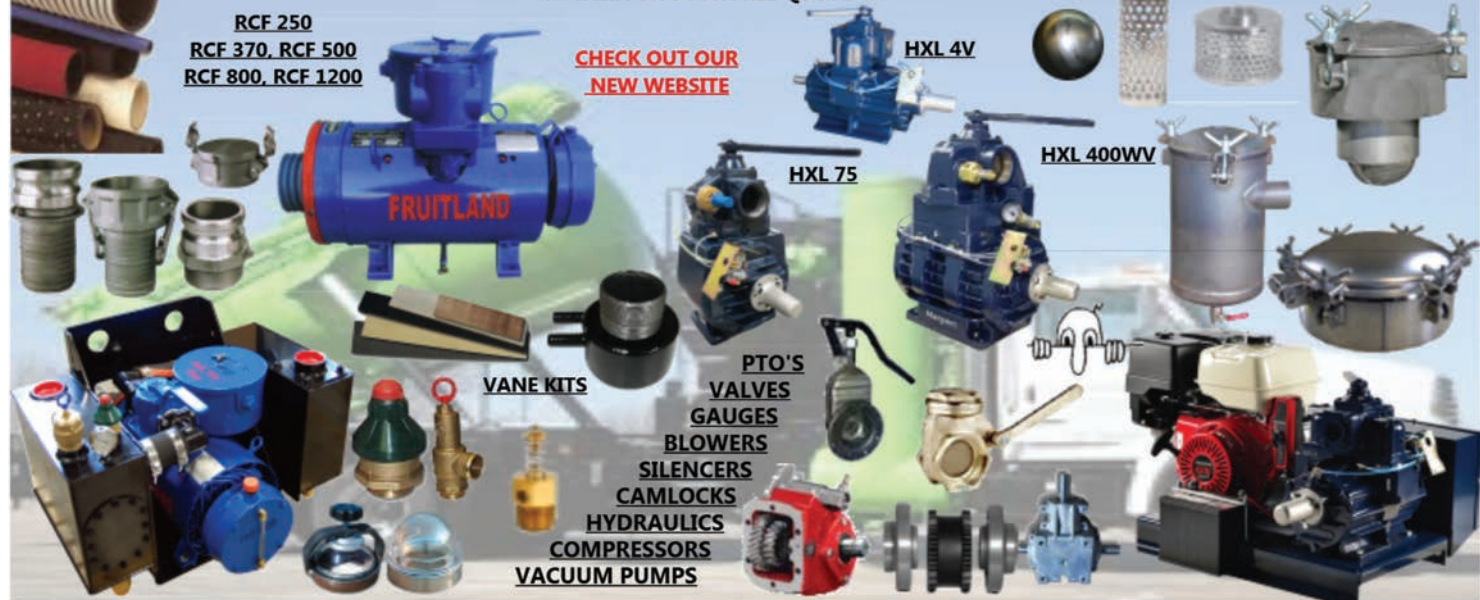


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## About the Author

Kate Zabriskie is president of Business Training Works, Inc., a Maryland-based talent development firm. Reach her at [www.businesstrainingworks.com](http://www.businesstrainingworks.com).



# When It's Time to Break Up With a Customer

Late payers, squeaky wheels, portable restroom clients that are more trouble than they're worth? Plan your business divorce carefully

By Kate Zabriskie

**M**ore than 100 clients only use her services once a year. They expect champagne service on a beer budget, and they pull her attention away from the people she works with more regularly. This group is weighing her down, and after some soul searching, she's decided they've got to go. Her business is running her, and it's not working.

*Plain and simple, he doesn't like working with them. They pay late, they always look for extras, and they're generally unpleasant. Life's too short, he doesn't need the work, and today is the day he's pulling the plug.*

*They pay their bills on time, they're as regular as clockwork, and they're no longer profitable. They've been great clients, and she dreads having to tell them they're no longer a fit. Nevertheless, due to resource constraints, it's got to be done.*

From time to time and for myriad reasons, service providers need to let a client or class of clients go. As with any other difficult conversation, there's a right way and a wrong way to make the decision and break the news.

## STEP ONE: BE METHODICAL WHEN MAKING THE DECISION.

Snap judgments can feel good in real time. Later, however, many people come to regret actions they've taken in the heat of the moment. So, when the thought of leaving a client enters your mind, take a step back and ask yourself why. Does the client not fit with your business model anymore? Does the person bring you down in some way? Does helping the client take away from more important work? If you answer "yes" to any of those questions, it's time to think about what you will accept, what you won't, and what types of clients make sense for where you are now and where you want to be in the next few years. Once you have clear criteria, you have something against which you can evaluate.

## STEP TWO: ASK YOURSELF IF THE RELATIONSHIP IS TRULY FINISHED.

After you're clear about what you want and the kind of client that fits the bill, you must decide if the relationship is finished or if it has rehab potential. For example, if a client is always late and that is what's making the relationship unpleasant, a frank conversation may solve the problem.

If the client doesn't value you or his or her business is no longer part of your core service, you may want to say goodbye. Alternatively, if it's about ensuring a profitable arrangement, take a look at your fees.

On the other hand, if the client doesn't value you or his or her business is no longer part of your core service, you may want to say goodbye. Alternatively, if it's about ensuring a profitable arrangement, take a look at your fees. Some people may be perfectly happy to pay to stay.

## STEP THREE: DETERMINE WHETHER YOU WILL MAKE A CLEAN BREAK OR RECOMMEND AN ALTERNATIVE.

When a client's behavior is perfectly fine but the client no longer a fit, sending them in another direction may make a lot of sense. When you do, however, you need to be clear that you are out of the picture and not a go-between for managing the new relationship. In other words, if something goes wrong, you're not involved.

At the other end of the spectrum, if the person or people you need to break up with are abusive, it hardly makes sense to recommend another company you are familiar with. After all, would you want people sending toxic clients your way? Probably not.

## STEP FOUR: CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME.

When you make a split can be as important as how. For instance, if you're an accountant and just before tax time you make a break with clients who only use you at tax time, you're going to make a lot of people angrier than they need to be. When possible, provide ample warning.

## STEP FIVE: KEEP YOUR MESSAGE SHORT AND DIRECT.

When you break the news, keep your explanation brief.

*"Karen, I have some updates about my business and where my focus is for the coming year. We've been shifting our attention to full-service clients for quite some time. Full-service clients are people who need us*

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*every month and not just once a year. You should know this is the last year I'm going to be handling clients who do not need our full services. Based on what I understand from working with you, I don't think full service is something you need. Am I correct?"*

If the breakup is a result of a client's behavior, the message may be a little different.

*"Roger, for our services to work, we need clients who respond when we ask for their feedback. We don't have the resources to manage the follow up required when we don't hear anything. Because feedback isn't happening and it's been an ongoing issue, we're going to step away from the relationship."*

### STEP SIX: STAND FIRM AND STAY CALM

Some people take a split well, and others don't. No matter the reaction, you should stay calm stick by your carefully reasoned decision.

No matter the reason, splits are rarely fun when they're happening. Once they're over, however, they can free you to tackle new challenges and do the work that makes you happy. ■

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By Craig Mandli

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hose and all-steel construction. **877-467-3357; www.hannay.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**

### PRESVAC SYSTEMS PV750

The **Presvac Systems PV750** rotary vane pump is designed for continuous full-vacuum operation in extreme conditions. It offers 400 cfm at free air, 350 cfm at 15 inches Hg, a maximum vacuum of 27 inches Hg and maximum pressure of 35 psi. Dual fans and twin ballast ports efficiently cool the pump. The solid housing with deep cooling ribs allows for greater heat transfer from the vacuum chamber. Aluminum fans and shrouding work like a heat exchanger to aid in heat reduction. Multiple manifold and drive options are available for truck, trailer or stationary applications. **800-387-7763; www.presvac.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**



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### 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

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 nonsparking engines are required. **800-367-0972; www.westmoorltd.com**

## VACUUM TRUCKS

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The **Crescent Tank** vacuum tank is flat inside and out. It can carry up to 10 portable restrooms, and the weight capacity is the same as a flatbed truck.

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



### FMI TRUCK SALES & SERVICE WORKMATE

The **WorkMate** service truck from **FMI Truck Sales & Service** has equal weight distribution of the sidewinder tank designed

to extend brake life and improve handling. The two food-grade poly water tanks are plumbed to carry brine, freshwater, premix or any combination of fluids. The ergonomically designed workstation with more than 60 cubic feet of storage space saves time and effort during the workday, minimizing restocking and driver movement. It carries up to four restrooms. An E-track load securement system eliminates the need for ropes. Its modular design allows components to be easily replaced or transferred if damaged. The entire vacuum system is plumbed using hot-tar hose and Masport components. Marine-style wiring is used, and all of the electrical systems are contained in a watertight panel with automatic reset circuit breakers. **800-927-8750; www.fmitrucks.com**



### IMPERIAL INDUSTRIES FLATVAC

The 1,000-gallon stainless steel **Flatvac** from **Imperial Industries** can carry up to six portable restroom units. The baffled, internally divided tank offers 700 gallons of waste capacity and 300 gallons of freshwater capacity. In addition, the unit offers dual-sided bucket fill, dual Hannay

hose reels with 50 feet of hose, a Pumptec X-5 washdown pump, Masport HXL4 plug-and-play vacuum pump system, Thieman liftgate and a 3-inch stainless steel boom with 30 feet of 2-inch intake hose and a suction nozzle. **800-558-2945; www.imperialind.com**

### KEEVAC INDUSTRIES KV999

The **KV999** from **KeeVac Industries** carries a 999-gallon portable restroom vacuum tank for operators who want to stay under the U.S. Department of Transportation tanker endorsement requirement. It is available in steel, stainless steel and aluminum, with single- or dual-side service, holds 699 gallons of waste and 300 gallons of freshwater, and includes a two-unit fold-down restroom carrier with trailer hitch. The tank can be mounted on a variety of chassis and with a variety of pumps. Each unit comes with an upgraded DC-10 washdown pump and hose reel from Hannay Reels. Exterior controls and dual cabinets are designed for operator safety and convenience. An arctic package and safety lighting are available. **866-789-9440; www.keevac.com**



### PIK RITE FLATBED RESTROOM HAULER

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

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

### ROBINSON VACUUM TANKS PR1200A

The **PR1200A** truck from **Robinson Vacuum Tanks** carries a 900-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater aluminum portable restroom service tank. This model is set up standard with dual-side service including toolbox, suction hose and bucket fill. The unit comes with a bumper capable of towing a trailer, and it has a folding platform to haul two portable restrooms. Chassis options include choice of manufacturer, two-wheel or four-wheel drive, and gas or diesel. There are also multiple options for vacuum and water pumps. **814-933-0927; www.robinsontanks.com**



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### SATELLITE INDUSTRIES MD1250

Satellite Industries' MD1250 is a medium-sized vehicle able to maneuver in tight spaces and carries an 850-gallon waste, 400-gallon freshwater steel tank.

It comes with a lowered workstation to make servicing easy, even for a smaller-stature driver. Popular features include a galvanized unit hauler, stainless steel catwalk, and a stainless steel cabinet on the passenger side. It is now available with a F-600 chassis, with a heavier GVWR allowing a larger tank while maintaining the same footprint as its counterpart F-550. **800-883-1123; [www.satelliteindustries.com](http://www.satelliteindustries.com)**

### WATER PUMPS

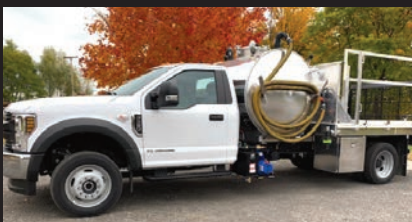
#### MORO USA DC

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.morousa.com](http://www.morousa.com)**



### CASE STUDY

#### PRO increases efficiency with flatbed service truck



**PROBLEM:** Galaxy Restroom of Syracuse, New York, had a problem: It had a limited amount of capital for its annual operational growth and replacement fleet expenditures. This was due to a recent acquisition that depleted most of its capital. Meanwhile, much of the fleet it acquired was tired and outdated. The company needed to buy at least two trucks — one for service since they almost doubled in size overnight with the acquisition, and a second one to help with pickup and deliveries, as they had picked up business in the event area.

**SOLUTION:** The business chose a PortaLogix flatbed unit designed to service more than 65 restrooms on a route with an 800-gallon waste tank and 350-gallon freshwater tank in the flat bed. The same truck carries up to six units on the bed to do pickups and deliveries at the same time.

**RESULT:** Not only did Galaxy Restroom stay within its fleet budget, but it also benefited from higher profits year over year as it invested in more PortaLogix trucks. The company then did 80% of its pickups and deliveries on routes with PortaLogix trucks, which allows for a smaller fleet and reduced expense for fuel and labor. **585-484-7009; [www.portalogix.com](http://www.portalogix.com)** ■

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## PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

### Super Mongo Mover makes moving portables a breeze

By Tim Dobbins

The Mongo Mover from Deal Assoc. was first used to move chairs and folding tables for party rentals, but eventually found its way into the portable sanitation industry when an operator saw the device and realized its potential usefulness moving restrooms.

"The portable restroom customer contacted us and said how well the Mongo moved his restrooms, but it would be great if it were bigger," says Dane Deal, owner of Deal Assoc. "The Super Mongo Mover for portable restrooms was born soon after."

The Super Mongo Mover uses a four-wheel platform to balance large loads and make it easier to move bulky restrooms. "The operator is not carrying any weight and can even walk away when the restroom is tipped back, which we later learned is great for washing the roof," Deal says.

"It was designed by starting with operators and what they needed," Deal says. "Not everyone is big and strong, so we designed it to provide a lot of leverage so smaller people can tip back and move restrooms without help."

The removeable alloy spring steel forks on the Super Mongo Mover are spaced 24 inches apart and are 48 inches long. The wheelbase is 35 inches wide, and the mover stands 82 inches tall when upright. It is designed to hold a maximum of 500 pounds.

"We know that hand trucks get abused," Deal says. "Steel parts on the Super Mongo Mover are powder-coated and we made sure that only anodized aluminum touches the restroom to remove any chance of rust stains on restrooms." The frame of the mover is made from aluminum with an open design, so when stored on a pumping truck it doesn't get in the way of valves or hoses.

Models can be purchased with four, six or eight wheels and customers can choose air-filled or solid urethane foam tires. "The four-wheel model works great, but if an operator had to move a half-full restroom across a muddy lawn it could sink in and make ruts," Deal says. "So, we redesigned the Super Mongo to accommodate more wheels to better distribute the weight over the ground if needed."

"We get pictures of operators wheeling restrooms up mountains in national forests to serve firefighters, and most often we get letters from family run operations where a 74-year-old grandpa, or 13-year-old was helping with the business and able to move restrooms by themselves," Deal says. **336-599-3325; www.dealassoc.com** ■

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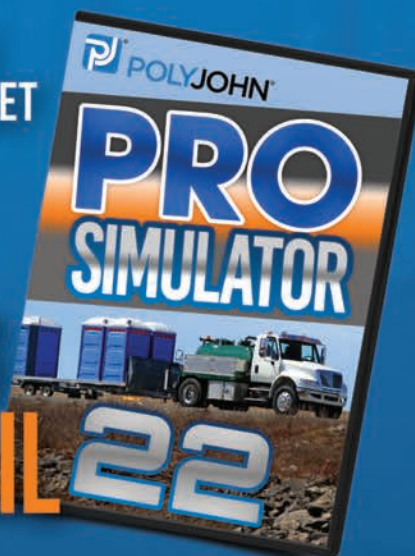
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