

▶ A TRIPLE THREAT

DTG Recycle adds portable sanitation and street sweeping to serve its core materials-handling business and build smart diversification

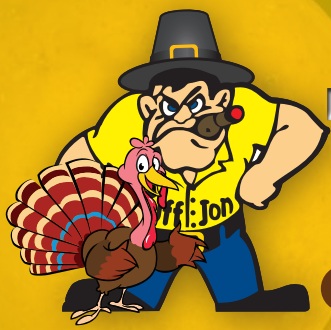
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ON LOCATION

Nomad RVers, rugged individualists, loners trying to get off the grid are common customers for the team at Cyclone Septic

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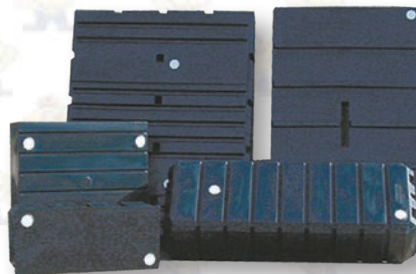
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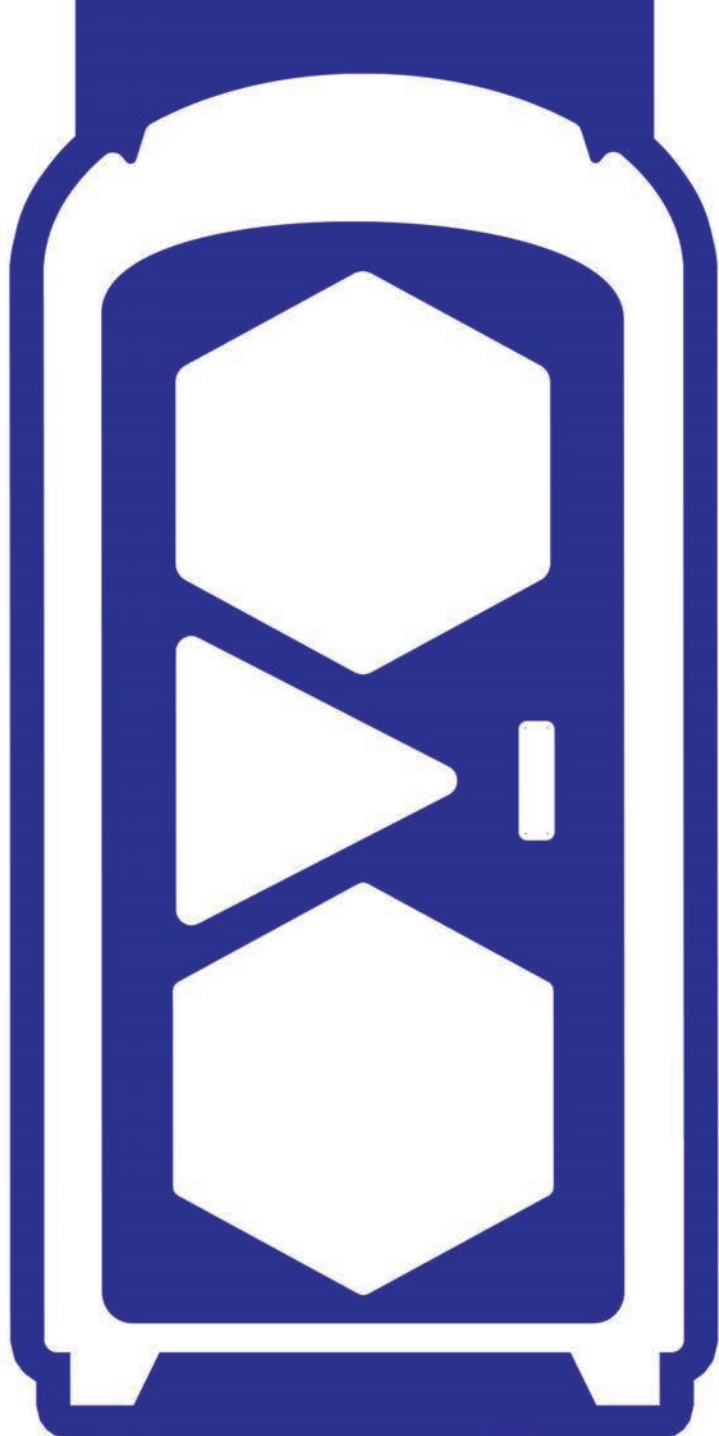


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- Ken Wysocky

LEFT: Manager Kristina Joseph has been integral to the success of the portable sanitation side of DTG Recycle in Bothell, Washington. She is shown with a row of Armal restrooms placed in the Seattle area. (Photo by Stephen Brashear)

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By Jim Kneiszel

Restroom Transport Security, Vandalism Issues Make Headlines



Portable sanitation is more vital for the public every day, so it's no surprise that the industry is constantly represented in the news

SECURE RESTROOMS ON TRANSPORT TRAILERS

A bizarre incident a few months ago along a Wisconsin expressway underscores the importance of load securement for portable restroom operators. A dramatic Wisconsin Department of Transportation video showed seven units sliding off the back of a transport trailer in the early morning hours, sending commuter traffic swerving wildly to avoid colliding with the restrooms.

In the end, all but one of the errant restrooms was smashed to bits, damaging four cars and obviously making for a bad day for the restroom company driver. It's not clear to me why, but news accounts said the driver was not cited in the incident. But even without a ticket, this failure to tie down restrooms was certainly going to involve the PRO's insurance company and cost the provider dearly down the line in increased premiums.

If you Google port-a-potty crash, I'm sure the first link to pop up will be the traffic video that shows the units hitting the pavement still standing tall and being hit by surprised motorists.

"I was so shook. I was beyond shook. I was like, 'Is that a port-a-potty?' Where did it even come from? Did they set it there? Because it was standing but rolling. So I was, like, there is no way this is possible," driver Alex Hilario recalled to a TV news reporter.

Luckily, nobody was hurt in the incident. Restrooms can be replaced; not so for the motoring public.

So before your next load of restrooms heads out for special event service, take some time to make sure your trailer and tow vehicle are operating safely. Here are few quick tips for transporting restrooms safely:

1. Check the condition of your straps, ratchets or bars used to secure restrooms and skids to the frame of your trailer. Straps are significant wear items you should put on a regular replacement schedule. Look for fraying material or worn-out mechanicals on the ratchets.
2. Check the trailer frequently for wear and tear. Make sure the frame is welded securely, tires are in good shape, there are no loose fenders or other metal parts that could break away over bumpy roads.

Work with local boards and law enforcement and suggest ways to better place and patrol your units to discourage vandals. Streamline insurance agreements and clean-up processes to reduce costs and lingering impacts of vandalism in your community.

3. Check your ball and hitch and security chains every time you hook up the trailer. Do a walk-around the truck and trailer and ensure all lighting works correctly.
4. Don't rely on one worker's observations. Have a second member of your team inspect the truck and trailer and unit security before anyone leaves the yard.

ALBANY, OREGON, PUNTS ON PORTABLE RESTROOM RESTRICTIONS

A few months ago, I told you about a church in Albany, Oregon, that was having trouble renewing a temporary permit to provide a portable restroom to serve homeless people in the area. The restroom was placed near Albany First Christian Church for a year and was prompting complaints from neighbors who didn't want to look at it. Consequently officials were looking for ways to restrict long-term use of portable restrooms.

Several months later, the issue remains unresolved. A proposal was brought forward to limit restroom placements to 90 days with an option to renew for another 90 days. Two local PROs appeared before the City Council to complain that the permitting process is expensive and difficult to keep up with. You can imagine the confusion more regulations and shorter timeframes for placing restrooms would cause among restroom customers.

The city administrator's answer was that any complexity of new rules wouldn't be the problem of the restroom companies, but something the customers would have to deal with. You know better than that. Any problem

encountered by a customer comes firmly back to the provider to research and explain to the customer. When someone complains about a restroom being on a construction site past the allowable 90 days, for instance, the first call will go to the number on the restroom itself. That's you, the PRO. PROs are still grappling with the issue of limits on temporary placement of restrooms. I'll agree with the response of one city councilor, Ray Kopcznski, when he said the new rules were like using "a sledgehammer to swat a fly."

On behalf of PROs everywhere, I'll say one thing for certain: Try to choose less regulation over more regulation. If a group like the church sees a need for portable sanitation in the community, let them provide it on an uninterrupted basis and end the contract when the problem goes away. They are providing a necessary service and not placing the cost on the backs of the taxpayers.

And always err on the side of having more restroom availability than less. Our city centers, particularly, are facing an extreme shortage in bathroom facilities, and PROs offer a cost-effective solution to the problem. Let them do their jobs.

TOO MUCH VANDALISM ... SO DON'T USE PORTABLE RESTROOMS?

Frustrated by portable restroom vandalism, Mount Union Borough Council members in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, said the solution might be no longer providing restrooms in parks. *The Huntingdon Daily News* reported that council member Alec Brindle was fed up with extra charges for restroom damage and cleanup and suggested pulling the units.

"Someone's been going around the parks, must think it's funny and is tipping all the port-a-potties over. I can drive by four out of seven nights a week and it's tipped over," he said. "Our officers can't be at our parks 24/7. I don't foresee it being a good idea to pay for facilities at the playground. It's disgusting."

As all PROs know, vandalism is an expensive and ever-growing problem. Tip-overs, fires and stolen units are regularly reported in communities large and small. That doesn't mean municipalities should stop providing restrooms when and where they are needed. I don't have a surefire solution to this issue that plagues restroom contractors, but we can all work together — PROs and their customers — to reduce the financial impact of vandalism.

It's time PROs bring their expertise to the table in places like Mount Union. You know a lot about safe and secure placement of restrooms, and your municipal customers can and should take advantage of your knowledge. Work with local boards and law enforcement and suggest ways to better place and patrol your units to discourage vandals. Streamline insurance agreements and cleanup processes to reduce costs and lingering impacts of vandalism in your community.

Vandalism is one of the biggest threats to your profitability. Speak up and take charge of the issue that is causing so much frustration for your customers. And doggedly pursue charges and convictions when vandals are identified to send a message that this will not be tolerated.

HOURLY POOL RENTALS ARE A PORTABLE SANITATION OPPORTUNITY

You can use Airbnb to rent out your house. And Turo to rent your wheels for the day. And a new online service for backyard pool rentals, swimply.com, is creating another interesting market niche for portable restroom operators.

The website newsbreak.com wrote about a Pennsylvania woman who was looking to earn a few extra bucks so she decided to rent out her swimming pool by the hour. Groups of up to 10 adults could use the pool for \$100 per hour and included in that fee was use of a portable restroom, apparently to keep visitors from dripping all over the floors in her house on the way to the bathroom.

Pool rentals follow a growing trend of homeowners leasing out bedrooms, or whole houses to visitors to offer an alternative to hotels and motels. They are also renting out their cars by the hour or day as an option to costly auto rental businesses. Starting last summer, visitors to swimply.com could search for nearby pools.

If this trend takes off like Airbnb, restroom providers could start monitoring the website for potential summer-long customers up north or perhaps 12-month service in the warm southern regions. ■



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 and I will share them with readers in a future issue.



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ON THE RECORD

Vehicle Monitoring Improves Safety for Texas PROs

With an eye toward improving safety and liability, David and Tanis Jamar, the owners of J Bar Enterprises in Burnet, Texas, installed onboard monitoring of all service trucks in 2020. The road- and driver-facing systems cost a pretty penny to install, but the couple believes the investment is a crucial one. Find out why, in this online article.

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OVERHEARD ONLINE

“With diesel prices over \$5 per gallon in the United States, you might be wondering if an electric-powered machine could reduce your operating costs. Or you may be wanting to take the first steps towards reducing your company's carbon footprint. Whatever your reasons for investigating ... electric machines are going to be a big part of the future.”

5 Considerations if You're on
the Fence About Electric Equipment
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TIME IS MONEY

Curb Service Technician Downtime This Winter

In this online article, columnist Amanda Clark lays out four commonsense steps portable restroom operators can take to keep employees productive when business slows. Don't waste any extra downtime you have this winter, shore up your portable restroom business before the spring thaw.

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THE DATA MINE

Modern Tools Allow You to Target Your Portable Sanitation Market

Data analytics opens up door after door of marketing opportunities; knowing what to do with that potential is another thing. Read this online article from columnists Carter Harkins and Taylor Hill to learn how PROs can use data analytics to fine-tune their marketing and cultivate better leads.

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A decorative border of autumn leaves and grape clusters surrounds the central text. The leaves are in shades of yellow, orange, and purple, while the grapes are dark purple. The background is a solid yellow-orange color.

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By Jeff and Terri Wigley

ZZ Top Had It Right: Customers Go Crazy For a Sharp Dressed Employee!

Snappy uniforms, email and social media promotions are good ways to build your company's reputation and generate new business

Employee training is not only important to build an outstanding company, but some states also have training requirements for employees. Whether it is route service technician certification, continuing education credits for a representative of the company, or company certification, PROs should be aware of these requirements for the states where they operate. We have two questions this month that pertain to training and requirements for training.

QUESTION: What are your thoughts about company uniforms? We have considered this in the past, but we have not decided up to this point.

ANSWER: Company uniforms can be beneficial to PROs in many ways. From professionalism to safety to company branding, we will discuss the advantages of investing in a company uniform program:

PROMOTING A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE TO CUSTOMERS

Employees with uniforms give the customer a sense of confidence they will receive a high level of service from a reputable and established company. Having the employee's name on their uniform also invites the customer to establish an effective working relationship with your employee.

CREATING BRAND AWARENESS

Our units, other rental equipment and service vehicles should be considered billboards in the field with our company name, phone number and website easily visible to the public. In the same way, uniforms can provide this brand awareness apart from our equipment. Whether the service technician is talking with the customer in their jobsite trailer, or the salesperson is making a cold call, the company name is always visible and present in any interaction in the field.

REINFORCING THE TEAM CONCEPT TO EMPLOYEES

Just as sports teams wear uniforms, PROs who invest in a uniform program further reinforce the concept of "team" to employees. The company uniform is an outward symbol of the shared objectives and individual responsibilities of each employee.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

In recent years, company uniforms also incorporate safeguards for the employee. For example, uniform shirts now have reflective bands for

On crowded work sites or at large events, the company uniform allows the customer to more easily identify and communicate with the employee, saving valuable time.

improved visibility in the dark as well as high-traffic areas. Some companies have chosen the entire shirt to be either fluorescent yellow-green or orange in color with the company logo and employee name added. In this way, employee safety is enhanced while Occupational Safety and Health Administration, OSHA, regulations concerning the wearing of reflective vests are also achieved. (As an aside, OSHA regulations state workers must wear an "orange, yellow, or bright yellow-green vest, shirt or jacket during the day." Further, those working at night must wear a "retro-reflective" vest, shirt or jacket to reflect headlight beams.)

EMPLOYEE BENEFIT

Company uniforms prevent employees from having to purchase, clean and eventually replace their own wardrobe. Most uniform services have weekly pickup of dirty uniforms, while delivering clean sets for the week ahead. Another benefit is that employees can change from their used uniform to their clean street clothes for the commute home.

PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY

From our experience, employees often develop a more professional attitude and mindset when wearing uniforms. On crowded work sites or at large events, the company uniform allows the customer to more easily identify and communicate with the employee, saving valuable time. Access to certain areas that may be restricted or are posted as "employee only" can be more easily entered by a route service technician in uniform.

SUGGESTIONS

With many uniform types and styles, as well as whether the PRO will employ a uniform company or purchase uniforms for the employees to wear and launder themselves, here are some considerations:

ROUTE SERVICE TECHNICIANS: Depending on your location, will you institute a year-round uniform or seasonal uniforms? In moderate climates, short-sleeved shirts and long pants could be worn for a majority of the year. A uniform jacket or coat will be needed in many locations for winter use. In cold weather areas, some companies opt for heavy overalls and a company logoed winter coat. Some PROs issue rain jackets as well. Hats and hard hats with company logos are also standard at some companies.

PICKUP AND DELIVERY PERSONNEL: Most PROs have similar uniform requirements as that of route service technicians since they are often backup route service techs.

SPECIAL EVENT PERSONNEL: Depending on the company policy, some PROs will have short pants for event personnel when they are delivering and picking up large numbers of empty units in hot summer temperatures.

RESTROOM TRAILER ATTENDANTS: Company shirts worn by attendants provide the attendees with an easy to identify contact for assistance as well as promoting professionalism for the company.

SALES TEAM: This is another area where company logoed shirts would add to both promotion and the professionalism of your company.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE STAFF: Company shirts inspire teamwork and also prevent instances of inappropriate attire.

Uniforms are an excellent way to promote your company and to also promote uniformity within your company.

* * *

QUESTION: Besides the traditional promotional giveaway items such as pens, hats, shirts, etc., do you have a “unique” promotional idea?

ANSWER: As we know, there are multitudes of items to which company logo can be affixed. One issue we always struggled with was the rhetorical question of how many people can we reach with these physical items? If we order 500 pens, we can only reach 500 people.

Consider promoting your company electronically. In addition to your company website, why not create a monthly, quarterly or seasonal newsletter? We know of several PROs who create and email newsletters to current, past and potential customers on a regular basis.

Perhaps start with a short seasonal newsletter — maybe spring and summer issues — that personalizes your company with an employee of the quarter, several jobs or events that were of interest, information about the industry, and, of course, reference to your company website or Facebook or Instagram page. This idea promotes your company on a more personal level and reaches a much wider audience than a fixed number of promotional items. Email distribution is suggested for more targeted contacts but also consider posting on social media for more widespread distribution.

In terms of actual promotional items, while we would recommend keeping a supply of pens, magnets, etc., consider more widespread distribution via more personalized company information sent via email and social media. ■



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Below: Members of the DTG Recycle portable sanitation team include, from left, technician Destiny Knowles, operations manager Kristina Joseph, route supervisor Joe Elwood and technician Abraham Lopez. (Photos by Stephen Brashear)



DTG Recycle adds portable sanitation and street sweeping to serve its core materials-handling business and build smart diversification

By Ken Wysocky



DTG Recycle Bothell, Washington

Owner: Multiple, plus a private-equity firm

Founded: 1999

Employees: 400 (16 in restroom and street-sweeping divisions)

Services: Commercial and industrial recycling, restroom rentals/service, street sweeping

Service Area: Western Washington

Website: www.dtgrecycle.com

Many portable restroom operators have one thing on their mind when they see construction sites: restroom rentals.

But if they're interested in creating new revenue streams and diversifying their companies, they might want to rip a page from the DTG Recycle playbook and make complementary services top-of-mind, too — create a business that's a one-stop-shop for construction contractors.

"We want to get our arms around the entire construction site ecosystem," says Ryan Jackman, chief growth officer at DTG, based in Bothell, a northeast suburb of Seattle. "We want to offer as many services as possible to those construction sites."

DTG's core services are waste collection and recycling of construction, demolition, commercial and industrial materials. But about a year ago, the company diversified by entering two new markets: portable restroom rentals and street-sweeping service.

"We've also talked about fencing, which we currently don't offer," Jackman says. "But right now, we want to focus on markets that either are underserved or where customers think they just have to live with poor service."

"We like to take those markets and go the extra mile by providing top-notch service, clean gear and trucks and uniformed technicians with good attitudes," he continues. "Our motto is, 'Customer-focused, planet obsessed,' and we want to do more than just pay lip service to that."

CROSS-MARKETING

There's another benefit to multiple services: effective and inexpensive cross-marketing. Any one of the three services can open a door to the others, Jackman notes.

"We realized that any one of these services can get us in the door at any construction com-



"I believe portable sanitation is seriously undervalued, considering the amount of work it takes to get the jobs done. Customers haven't been negative about our prices. I think they recognize that we provide a needed service."

KRISTINA JOSEPH

pany," he explains. "For example, we ask people who use our (containers) if they know we also offer restrooms and street sweepers, and they sign on as an account.

"It can work the other way around, too, if they need restrooms or street sweeping," he adds. "We're finding that we're developing relationships with lots of new customers that maybe wouldn't have given us the time of day before.

Of course, adding services is one thing. Performing them well is another. To boost the odds of success, DTG invests in good equipment, including restrooms from Armal and Satellite Industries and street sweepers from Elgin Sweeper.

The company also made key hires, including Kristina Joseph to manage the portable restroom division and Sheldon Barnes to manage the street-sweeping division, Jackman says.

The company also continually emphasizes customer service.

"We tell our employees all the time that they have to take care of cus-



Below: Kristina Joseph



Above: Joseph and Joe Elwood review orders using AMCS waste management software while working a service route.



Above: Maintenance technician Thomas Maele preps a restroom in the company yard. DTG Recycle has an inventory of restrooms from Armal and Satellite Industries.

tomers, no matter what,” he says. “I like to say that we don’t want to turn today’s customers into tomorrow’s competitors.”

A FAMILIAR ORIGIN STORY

Jackman knows about that firsthand. DTG now rents restrooms and sweeps streets not only to diversify its business base, but also because it used to hire out for those services — and found the customer service lacking.

DTG used to rent restrooms for employees at its roughly one dozen recycling drop-off sites, as well as for truck drivers from companies that drop off recyclables. And DTG is required by local and state regulations to keep the streets around those facilities clear of dust, dirt and other materials that might get washed into storm sewers.

“You have trucks coming in and out of those materials recovery facilities, so the yards and nearby streets would get dusty and messy,” Jackman

“We try to keep our routes to 50 restrooms a day so drivers can maximize their time with their families. ... They shouldn’t need to work six or seven days a week to make a livable wage.”

KRISTINA JOSEPH

explains. “So we had to hire street sweepers to come by three days a week to stay on top of that

“But we weren’t happy with the restroom or street-sweeping services, much less the pricing,” he says. “So we saw an opportunity and ran with it.”

THE RIGHT STUFF

To service restroom customers, DTG has invested in nearly 700 restrooms from Armal and around 300 pieces of equipment from Satellite, including Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant restrooms and “flyer” restrooms for use in high-rise construction projects.

To service restrooms, the company relies on a 2021 Ford F-350 with a slide-in unit from KeeVac Industries that features a 300-gallon waste/150-gallon freshwater aluminum tank and a Masport vacuum pump; and a 2021 Ford F-550 outfitted by Vacuum Sales with a 680-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater steel tank built by Imperial Industries and a Masport pump.

The company also owns two 2022 Peterbilt 337s built out by Satellite Vacuum Trucks with 625-gallon waste/275-gallon freshwater aluminum tanks and Masport pumps; and a 2021 Ford F-550 with a 600-gallon waste/350-gallon freshwater steel tank built by Satellite with a Conde pump (Westmoor Ltd.).

Other investments include Satellite holding and water tanks and two eight-unit restroom transport trailers made by Eagle Mfg.

(continued)

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Above: Technician Abraham Lopez hits a construction site to service an Armal restroom.

REMEMBER THE CUSTOMER

Joseph, 35, was hired about a year ago as operations supervisor of DTG's portable restroom division. She previously worked for another restroom contractor as an inside salesperson; DTG was one of her accounts.

"DTG called me and wanted to meet to talk about starting a restroom division," Joseph says. "I was extremely surprised, even shocked."

Joseph says her previous experience informs how the division operates, as well as her expectations for customer service.

"I had different ideas about customer service — not necessarily reinventing the wheel, but just ensuring customers are taken care of on time," she explains. "Too many companies worry more about hitting financial goals and milestones than actually providing customer service. Then technicians get too much work put on them, so they can't always finish on time."

"We emphasize running smaller routes so technicians can complete service when they're supposed to."

ROSY OUTLOOK

Starting from scratch was an inviting prospect for Joseph.

"It was exciting and daunting at the same time," she says. "There were plenty of times when I was awake at nights, wondering if I could do this. But one way or another, we seem to figure it out."

The numbers back that up. She and Jackman developed a three-year revenue goal, which included hitting \$63,000 in gross revenue per month. The division, which started operating in January, hit that benchmark in May, she says. Furthermore, in June, 425 of the company's 680 restrooms were rented out.

"We're growing steadily," she reports.

A CLEAN SWEEP

Street-sweeping may not be the first ancillary service that comes to mind for diversification-minded portable sanitation companies.

But it made perfect sense for DTG Recycle in suburban Seattle. And that company's success story could serve as a blueprint for restroom companies that cater to construction sites — and want to create new revenue streams by adding complementary "bolt-on" services.

DTG, a company that recycles commercial, industrial and construction materials, bought its first street sweeper in October 2021, primarily because the company it hired to clean streets around its dozen recycling drop-off stations (as required by law), wasn't getting the job done, says Ryan Jackman, chief growth officer.

The company now owns eight machines, six from Elgin Sweeper Co. and two from Schwarze Industries. The Elgin units include one Broom Bear and one Broom Eagle rear-broom units; two RegenX vacuum models; and two Crosswind vacuum models. The Schwarze units are M-6000 rear-broom models.

"We wanted a mix of equipment because each model has its strong suits," he explains. "Rear-broom units are better at picking up bigger pieces of debris and the vacuum units are better for collecting dust,

dirt, leaves and other light debris — getting all of it out of cracks and crannies."

The machines cost more than \$300,000 each, he says, and require a commercial driver's license to operate. But he expects them to pay for themselves in two to three years.

How? By charging prices high enough to cover the cost of the equipment and pay operators well, even if that means charging more than competitors.

"We're actually more expensive than our competitors," he says. "But that's how we're able to invest in good people and good equipment. If that's important to customers, they'll choose us."

"You need to be firm on price and defend your position — explain why you charge more and how

that benefits the customer," Jackman continues. "In our case, we contend that we take care of our people, which makes them happier. So they take better care of our customers."

"Paying above-market wages are critical if you want to grow."

So is hiring the right people. At DTG, Jackman hired Sheldon Barnes to manage the new business unit. He has more than 12 years of street-sweeping experience.

The company didn't initially plan to provide street-sweeping services, but after three or four months of sweeping streets outside DTG drop-off facilities, it made more and more sense to market the service to other companies, Jackman says.

The company's primary customers are industrial facilities that must comply with stormwater management plans by minimizing dust and debris infiltration into sewers; construction customers that are required to minimize dirt "track out" and dust on streets around building sites; and paving companies that must remove asphalt grindings from streets, Jackman explains.

The first four machines were used units and the remaining four are new, he says.

"And we'll probably have to buy more before you know it," Jackman says. "Business is going gangbusters."





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Above: Lopez delivers a restroom to a work site in Sammamish, Washington.

Joseph says she did her own research regarding equipment, obtained all necessary permits, ordered chemicals and paper products, picked a uniform vendor and selected a business management software, AMCS, a platform for the waste collection industry that she tailored to suit the portable sanitation industry.

"I received a lot of helpful information last October when I attended the Satellite Women's Conference in Nashville," Joseph notes.

Monthly construction rentals generate most of the restroom rentals. To market the new service, Joseph put up a few "rent me" flags and banners on restrooms at the company's recycling yards.

"We have eight salespeople, too, and they're instructed to ask customers who call to rent (containers) if they'd also like to rent some portable restrooms," Joseph says. "We're also really big on social media, particularly LinkedIn."

In addition, the company selectively donates restrooms to local special events.

"It's a good way to help out the community and get the word out at the same time," Joseph says. "We just donated eight restrooms for the Kirkland Downtown Association Fireworks — and now a lot of people know we rent restrooms."

PRICING STRATEGY

The Seattle restroom market is competitive, so strategic pricing was important to a successful business launch. Joseph decided on what might be considered a counterintuitive approach; she opted to set prices higher than what most competitors charge.

The reason was twofold: From an ethics standpoint, she didn't want to undercut competitors. Furthermore, she also thinks portable sanitation services are underpriced, which further hurts the image of an industry that already doesn't garner enough respect.

"I believe portable sanitation is seriously undervalued, considering the amount of work it takes to get the jobs done," she says. "Customers haven't been negative about our prices. I think they recognize that we provide a needed service."

"Sure, there are some customers that only want the lowest price," she continues. "But other people just want a clean restroom. And as long as you provide that, they aren't as price-conscious, within reason."

Joseph also points out that new, well-maintained service vehicles and restrooms coupled with uniformed technicians helps to ease price objections. People also seem to treat new restrooms better, she adds.

In addition, higher prices allows DTG to pay technicians more, which improves employee retention in an industry — like many others — where turnover has been an issue.

"We want to be able to keep paying technicians a livable wage," she says.

ATTRACTING EMPLOYEES

All of the division's five route drivers came from other restroom companies. Joseph said she didn't "poach" them; they came to DTG unsolicited.

"It could be the wages we pay and our company culture — DTG has a nice family feel," she says. "Plus our work schedules are less daunting than most. We try to keep our routes to 50 restrooms a day so drivers can maximize their time with their families. ... They shouldn't need to work six or seven days a week to make a livable wage."

"Our key performance indicators (used to track drivers' performance) aren't time-based, either," she continues. "We just want clean units — that's the biggest thing."

Route drivers are taught to follow a strict cleaning regimen — a 10-point process that includes thoroughly cleaning walls, roofs, floors, tanks, ledges, plus removing any graffiti. The company performs random spot checks to ensure technicians follow the process.

"We swap out broken units right away," she notes. "We bring them back to the yard rather than just drilling another random hole into a restroom to make a repair."

MORE GROWTH EXPECTED

Joseph expects the business to keep growing. One of her goals is 12,000 services a week within three years, up from around 450 currently.

"I know that's a huge jump, but I have it mapped out," she says. "It's a big goal, but the market is there. I think western Washington is growing enough that there'll be even more need for portable sanitation — and we'll be here to meet that need." ■

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By Jennie Lyon

Life No Longer Runs on the Employer's Clock

In today's worker crisis, portable restroom operators must look for ways to attract new workers and keep them happy on the job

Work scheduling can be a formidable source of agency and freedom for you and your team or a constant source of dread and conflict. Mastering a schedule that works for your portable sanitation business in this day and age requires you to accommodate the valid individual needs of everyone who works for you. It can be challenging at times, but there are several handy tips for managing your workers' hours to take some of the stress out of scheduling in today's business climate.

TRUST YOUR TEAM TO HELP OUT WITH THE SCHEDULE

In this modern age, you cannot reasonably expect employees to devote time beyond their workday to your business for free. It wasn't fair in the 1980s, and it's not acceptable now. As an employer, you must ensure your team can focus on the task at hand during work hours. How can you do that? Flexing to the best of your ability, so the imminent needs of your team are met. And how can you possibly do that? By enabling your team's flexibility. They need to be able to organize daily schedules to suit their needs.

When you empower your teams to make the best decision on how to plan and carve out their workday, you're allowing them to flex their integrity. When you place that power and responsibility on your team, they will prioritize their workload beside their family and personal commitments and set themselves up for success. Don't be afraid to trust your team with that level of control. It's also a quick way to see which team members shine when weighted with real responsibility and which ones falter.

BE JUDICIOUS ABOUT SCHEDULING STAFF MEETINGS

Discussions and meetings are inevitable, but they're not the be-all-end-all for solid communication, team-building or task management. If your business requires a hands-on session regularly, it is essential not to confuse absence from those meetings with a lack of interest, integrity or competence. Life does not run on the employer's clock anymore.

Families are working multiple jobs to make the same money (counting for inflation) that a single breadwinner used to supply for their families 30 years ago. The more accommodating you are to your workforce, the more present they can be when they're in the trenches with you.

Hounding people after they've clocked out is the quickest way to lose talent to competitors with a culture of respecting their employees' downtime.

EVERYONE ON YOUR TEAM WANTS TO WORK DIFFERENT HOURS, AND THAT'S OK.

Let your night-owls work late and sleep in, and the parents of sports kids flex their days off around their kids' games. Let your office staff who would prefer not to commute work from home. There's no valid reason to keep up the appearance of a functioning workplace by forcing

everyone to their desks. We waste a national average of an hour daily just getting to and from work.

What difference does it make to productivity in your workplace, whether someone would instead work five eight-hour shifts or four 10-hour shifts? What does it matter if they split their workday into four two-hour chunks between personal errands and responsibilities as long as you can find ways to cover the phones and service routes?

RESPECT WORKERS' TIME AWAY FROM THE JOB

When you chase team members with questions that can wait until tomorrow, you're wasting their time and stunting their recovery from the workday. By showing your workers their time is sacred and respected, you can expect the same respect during the workday. People with integrity naturally want to bring their best to their work and deserve the chance to recoup free from work stress during their off-hours. Hounding people after they've clocked out is the quickest way to lose talent to competitors with a culture of respecting their employees' downtime.

CONSIDER OUTSOURCING TASKS THAT ARE MUNDANE, UNPOPULAR OR DON'T FIT THE CREW'S SKILL SET

Sometimes it's challenging to accommodate flexible scheduling when too many tedious, repetitive-yet-necessary tasks fill the workday. It might be time to consider outsourcing some of those tasks — such as social media marketing or truck-washing, for example — to free up time within your schedules and help you build flexibility.



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CHANGE YOUR APPROACH

Take a look at your workday. Whether you are the sole employee in your restroom business or you have a dozen people working under you, take a look at how you structure your typical work week and use the “magic wand” approach: If you could wave a magic wand, what would your ideal work week look like?

Are there personal joys, errands or relationships that you constantly push to the side to accommodate your work schedule? What would your schedule look like if you allowed yourself to work around the events and people you are so used to pushing aside?

What are the takeaways?

- Setting rigid schedules is a source of unnecessary workforce stress.
- Empowering your team to make their own schedules improves productivity during the workday.
- Taking advantage of digital connectivity is useful, but only when team members are “on the clock.”
- Scheduling in-person meetings are rarely for the benefit of team members.
- Outsourcing repetitive tasks sometimes allows for flexible scheduling. ■



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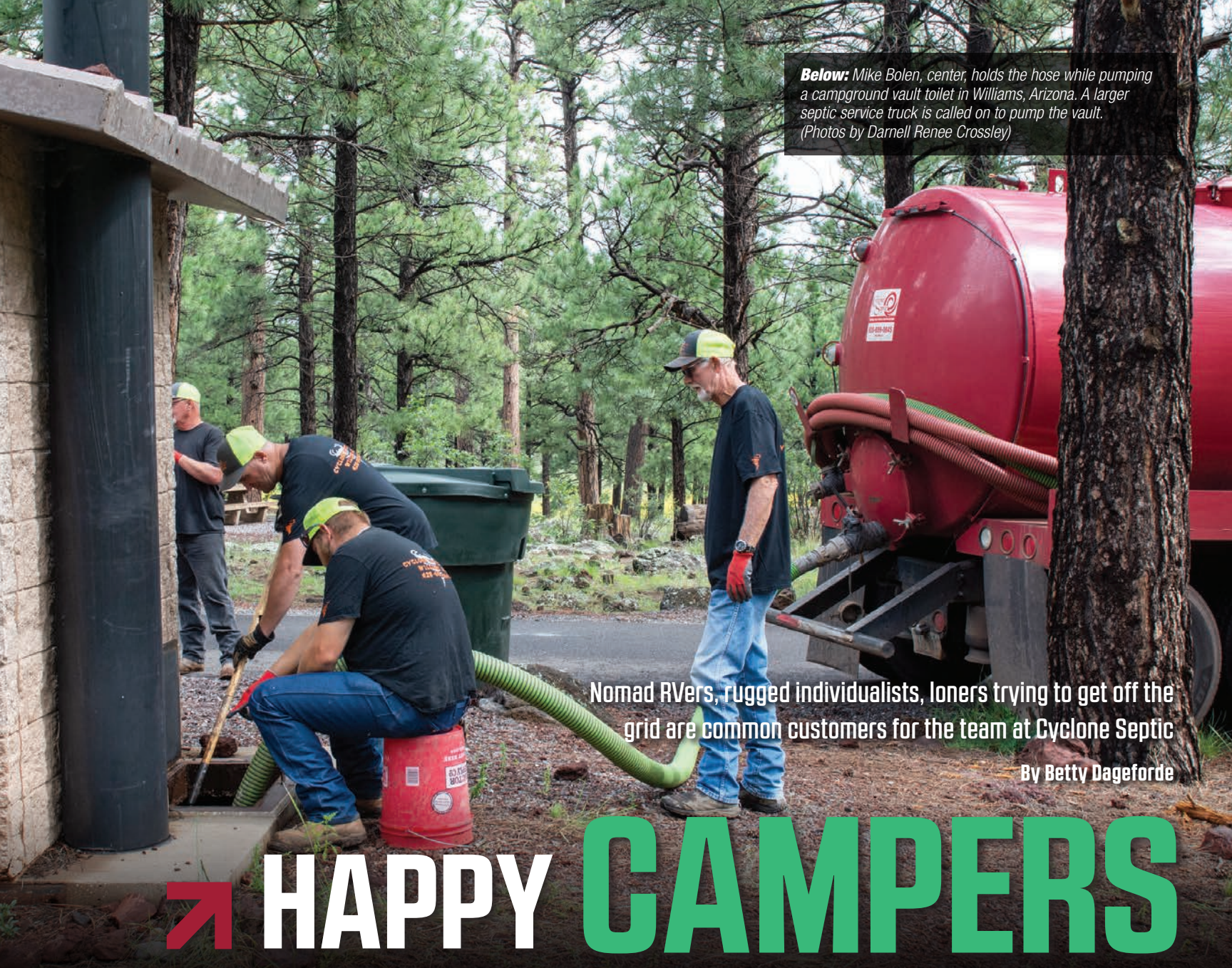


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Below: Mike Bolen, center, holds the hose while pumping a campground vault toilet in Williams, Arizona. A larger septic service truck is called on to pump the vault. (Photos by Darnell Renee Crossley)

Nomad RVers, rugged individualists, loners trying to get off the grid are common customers for the team at Cyclone Septic

By Betty Dageforde

HAPPY CAMPERS

ON LOCATION

» THE JOB:

Portable sanitation and pumping services for off-grid and RV customers

» LOCATION:

Williams, Arizona

» THE PRO:

Cyclone Septic

THE TEAM

Mark Chase and his wife Trenna are the owners of Cyclone Septic, a septic service and portable sanitation company in Williams, Arizona (population 3,200), a town 60 miles south of the Grand Canyon and located on historic Route 66. Trenna handles the book work; her father, Perry Brown, runs the portable restroom route; and technician Mike Bolen works on the septic side.

COMPANY HISTORY

When Chase retired from a 32-year career as a sanitation worker in Phoenix, he and Trenna moved to Williams to be near family. Anxious to be productive and a contributing member of the

community, Chase looked around for something to do and soon found a septic pumping company for sale. In 2020 he bought the company and within a short time gained the confidence of the customers. Then he started growing the business and adding services including portable restrooms. They now have 100 units, many with hand-wash stations. Equipment was bought used and includes various brands.

UNCONVENTIONAL CLIENTELE

While most of Cyclone's portable sanitation work is for construction projects and special events, the company also has a substantial number of individuals who either need a unit at home as

(continued)



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Right: The Cyclone Septic team includes, from left, Matt Hoskinds, owners Mark and Trenna Chase, Perry Brown and Mike Bolen.

Below: Crew chief Bolen replaces a 3-inch male coupler with a 2-inch coupler on a new wand used to clean RV holding tanks.



their sole sanitation device or require RV pumping services.

When he started out, Chase hadn't thought about pumping RVs, but when a guy called and asked about it, he figured it couldn't be too hard. "So it started with this customer and then just blossomed," he says. "It just became common knowledge that you call Cyclone Septic if you need your RV pumped. Everything I do is word of mouth; we don't really advertise."

Summer is the busy season for RV campers. Some stay in private campgrounds or RV parks that may not have enough sewer hookups. There are also four U.S. Forest Service campgrounds near area lakes. And some RVers camp for free on Forest Service land where there are no facilities. Hunting season is also busy. "We're in one of the best areas for deer, elk and bear hunting," Chase says. "Our woods are full of people from all around the United States. A lot of hunters ask us about pumping their RVs. And when they find out we have portable restrooms, they tell us to bring that, too."

Chase also has a few dozen customers living in a house or RV on a small piece of land they own in the woods. Some are full-time residents, others are vacationers. There are no city services so they have water delivered, get their electricity from a propane generator or solar energy, and use a portable restroom.

"These are usually young entrepreneurs and they love to send money through Zelle and Venmo. I'm not Mr. Computer but my wife said we've got to take it because that's how people pay these days."

MARK CHASE

"There's several reasons people do it," Chase says. "They want the freedom; they want to be away from people; sometimes they're economically challenged. And sometimes it's out of necessity because there's nothing in town to rent and it's very costly. In Williams we don't have many rentals. If a house comes up for sale, it's usually bought by an investor and used as an Airbnb."

On the other end of the off-grid spectrum are a few entrepreneurs who bought a piece of property, put a prefab tiny home and portable restroom on it, and rent it out to adventure enthusiasts through Airbnb or Vrbo. "They stay busy," Chase says. "It's for people who want the wild west experience or people going up to the Grand Canyon."

KEEPIN' IT CLEAN

Brown's service route covers a 45-mile radius on mostly dirt roads and mountainous terrain. Conditions are often windy and, at an elevation of 6,800 feet, winters are cold and snowy. He divides the territory into four sections and does one a day, pumping both portable restrooms and RVs. The service truck is a 2003 Ford F-650 with a 300-gallon waste/150-gallon freshwater Brenner Tank stainless steel slide-in tank and Masport pump. The company uses Walex deodorant products and disposes of waste at the local treatment plant.

(continued)



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Right: Perry Brown, left, and Matt Hoskinds load restrooms after a wedding service in Williams, Arizona.

Below: Hoskinds, left, and Brown pump an RV holding tank at a campground.

MORE INFO

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www.masportpump.com

Walex Products Company
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See ad, page 7



Chase had to improvise a procedure for pumping out his first RV and continues to use the same technique. "I told the guy I couldn't connect to the RV but if he had a five-gallon bucket I could drain it into there, then pump out of the bucket. I could probably get an attachment but this works so well for us that all our trucks carry at least two buckets, even the big septic trucks just in case someone comes out and asks me to pump out their RV. We don't have to worry about damaging their tanks or their plumbing that way."

RVers are typically not on a schedule but call for service as needed. Off-grid customers are on a regular schedule, weekly or biweekly. Chase says he tries to keep it affordable but has to consider the high cost of gas. But if money's tight for someone, he works with them.

"They pay me when they can," he says. Some pay at the time of service by check or credit card, some are billed. But the Vrbo/Airbnb owners have pushed Chase into the modern era. "These are usually young entrepreneurs and they love to send money through Zelle and Venmo," he says. "I'm not Mr. Computer but my wife said we've got to take it because that's how people pay these days."

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT PUMPING

Although the company is profitable, Chase says he just enjoys being an asset to the community and helping people out. "When somebody's having a problem, I love being the guy that comes out and fixes it for them," he says. He recently serviced an RV for a veteran in his late 80s and the man's wife who had early-stage dementia. He did not charge them. "I said, 'You're a veteran, you deserve a break. If it hadn't been for you and other veterans I probably wouldn't be able to do what I'm doing today.' They both cried — and then I started crying."

Brown also enjoys helping out his customers. "They love him," Chase says. "They enjoy seeing a friendly face. Customers tell me he's always smiling, willing to help. That's just the kind of guy he is, very good-natured. He knows which customers are struggling. He always has a good word and enjoys talking to them. I think that's important." It's not unusual for a customer to offer him cold water, a cup of coffee or other goodies.

Chase says they run into a wide variety of people on the job. "We've got some very colorful people we service," he says. "You've got to be, to live off-grid. It's a tough way to go but some of these people are just pros at it." ■



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The versatile **Self-Contained Slide-In Unit** from **Imperial Industries** allows for the equalized weight distribution of water and waste. It is frequently used for portable sanitation, grease service, oil spill cleanup 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. **800-558-2945; 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 the 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**

ROBINSON VACUUM TANKS FD SERIES

The **FD Series** from **Robinson Vacuum Tanks** is available in single- and multiple-compartment models. The aluminum tank offers two configurations: RE with the pump located on the rear side of the tank, and SE with the pump located on the side of the tank and set up for conventional mounting. The FD Series includes larger-capacity tanks than the company's more compact SC design. **814-933-0927; www.robinsontanks.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. Tanks can be custom-built to match operators' needs, creating an ergonomically friendly design to reduce driver fatigue. **800-883-1123; www.satelliteindustries.com**



TANKTEC SLIDE-IN TANK

Slide-in tanks from **TankTec** range from 100 to 995 gallons. The tanks are available in single-compartment for grease trap and septic service or two-compartment for portable restroom service. **888-428-6422; www.tanktec.biz**



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The **Heavy-Duty 1500 Series** from **Hannay Reels** delivers a durable, reliable pressure washing solution for portable restroom and other pumper and cleaner applications. With 3/16-inch-thick discs, a reinforced frame and an 8-inch-diameter steel 14 gauge drum, this reel counters high-pressure hose expansion concerns, provides stability and accommodates hoses with a higher bend radius. Single 3/8- through 5/8-inch I.D. hose and pressures up to 3,000 psi are supported, with optional pressures of 5,000 or 10,000 psi available upon request. With either a manual direct crank rewind or a chain and sprocket drive powered by an electric, hydraulic or air motor, the reels ensure simple, swift hose deployment and retraction while keeping lengthy hose organized. **877-467-3357; www.hannay.com**

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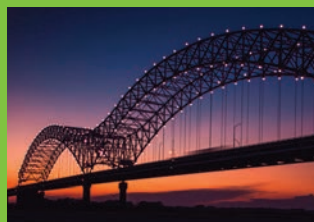
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areas such as portable restrooms. The hose remains flexible in subzero temperatures, is crush resistant and will not kink. The easy-slide helix protects the hose tube from cover wear and moves easily over rough surfaces. Over-molded cuffs help prevent 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 MANUFACTURING ELIM G-172

The **ELIM G-172** gas engine-driven system from **Fruitland Manufacturing** is the most compact option in the Eliminator slide-in engine-driven line. It is suitable for portable restroom and septic vacuum truck applications, especially where space and efficiency are required. This package comes with a 14 hp Briggs and Stratton Vanguard engine, a 127 cfm free airflow Fruitland RCF172 vacuum pump, a standard bolt-in truck mount, and is available in left-hand or right-hand orientation. Packages are also available with various pump models and types and in many different configurations. **800-663-9003; www.fruitlandmanufacturing.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 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**

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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 throttling down the engine and disengaging 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**

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MORO USA DC WASHDOWN PUMPS

Moro USA DC Washdown Pumps have a maximum delivery rate of 20 gpm, 42 psi and are primarily utilized for filling sinks and cleaning portable restrooms. The centrifugal pumps are designed with corrosion-resistant materials for operating in wet conditions, and can be used in other applications such as industrial, marine and water circulation. They have an epoxy-coated 12V DC motor, stainless steel impeller, four front drain plugs, and a carbon/ceramic/Viton mechanical seal. They require the installation of an in-line circuit breaker and a 12V solenoid. Models include the DCC cast iron washdown pump with stainless impeller, DCSC cast iron washdown pump with stainless steel impeller kit, DCS stainless steel washdown pump, and the DCSS stainless steel washdown pump kit. **866-383-6304; www.morousa.com**



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PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Reel keeps vacuum hose tidy on your truck

By Tim Dobbins

Keeping vacuum hoses organized in the shop or on the truck not only fashions a professional look, but untamed hoses lying around can also be a safety hazard if ignored.

The COXREELS V-100 series of hose reels is engineered for any application where vacuum hoses are frequently used, whether it be clean up or dust collection in the shop or storing hoses on trucks going to and from pumping jobs.

"Vacuum hoses tend to want to coil in large loops and make a big mess if not managed. The V-100 series keeps the hose neatly wound," says John Kucera, director of engineering for COXREELS.

COXREELS builds the V-100 series with a sturdy, one piece A-frame base that is CNC robotically welded. It features a double supported axle and mounting holes positioned for easy installation and detachment. The manual crank handle is mounted directly to the base with integral bearings for ease of use.

Each hose reel features ribbed disc sides with rolled edges, providing strength and safety while protecting the coiled hose and securely holding it in place. A low-profile outlet riser and open drum slot design provides a non-crimping smooth surface for the hose to wrap on.

"The V-100 series offers an O-ring sealed swivel for complete vacuum containment and 100% full-flow air path," Kucera says. "It is available in two sizes for both 1 1/2- or 1 1/4-inch hose. It also includes a special inlet design that allows the use of 1 1/2- or 2-inch inlet hoses on both models."

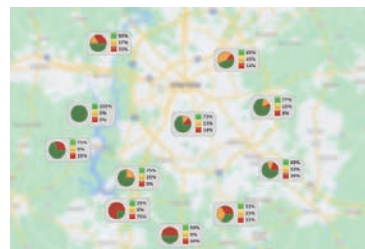
The steel used is CPC powder coated to extend the life of the V-100 series. Built-in drag breaking and available accessories such as pin locks, swivel bases and roller brackets are also options, and all V-100 series reels come standard with direct connect ports for vacuum hose with bullet buffs.

COXREELS will also fill the reel according to customer need. "We offer the product with a commercial grade vacuum hose in both hose sizes," Kucera says.

"This has been our fastest growing product line in the past few years," he says. "And we are working on expanding the swivel base options by popular demand." 800-269-7335; www.coxreels.com ■

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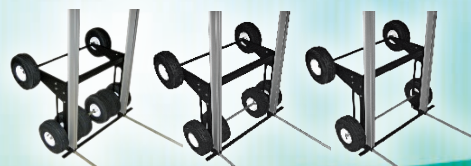
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