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LIVIN' LARGE

Houston upstart Smooth Move Services is branching out and becoming the big company its leaders always envisioned it would be

Page 14

TAKE 5

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Page 22



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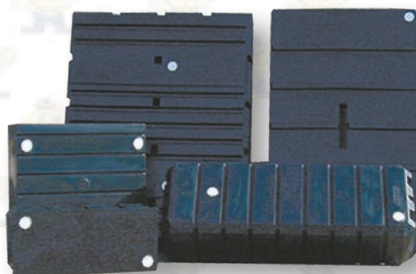
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8 From the Editor: Restroom Placement Is Like a Game of Chess
Follow these strategies to avoid user complaints, costly theft or vandalism, and drawn-out legal entanglements.

- Jim Kneiszal

10 @PROmonthly.com
Check out exclusive online content.

12 At Your Service: Follow These Steps to Choose a Winning Restroom Business Name
The goals for naming a new portable sanitation business: Convey professionalism, explain what you do, and make it memorable.

- Jeff and Terri Wigley

14 **Profile**



Livin' Large
Houston upstart Smooth Move Services is branching out and becoming the big company its leaders always envisioned it would be.

- Kyle Rogers

LEFT: Erin Rogers, Doug Card and Sunny Haines were thinking big when they expanded a roll-off container business into portable sanitation service, Smooth Move Services, in Houston. Rogers and Card are shown in the company yard with a fleet of trucks built out by American Tank and carrying National Vacuum Equipment pumps. (Photo by Jon Shapley)

22 Take 5: The Family Plan
Building a portable restroom specialty was a way for Alabama's Cindy and Mark Geiger to spend more quality time working together.

- Ken Wysocky

30 PSAI News:
Partnership With The Water Expo Announced

- Veronica Crosier

32 Product Focus:
Holding Tanks and Transport Trailers

- Craig Mandli

36 Product News - Product Spotlight:
Porta-Pak MAX attacks restroom odors in extreme conditions

- Tim Dobbins

COMING NEXT MONTH — JANUARY 2023

- **PROfile:** Working California's wine region
- **On Location:** Fiddlin' Around in Alabama



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ADVERTISER INDEX

AirVote	27
ALLIED GRAPHICS	
Allied Graphics, Inc.	17
American Tank Company LLC.....	23
Armal, Inc.	11
CENTURY Paper	
Century Paper Products	9
CRO Software Solutions	
CRO Software Solutions	33
DAVIDSON TANK DI	
Davidson Tank	26
FLOWMARK VACUUM TRUCKS	
FlowMark Vacuum Trucks	17
FMC Advisors.....	23, 35
FRUITLAND	
Fruitland Manufacturing.....	7
IMPERIAL INDUSTRIES	
Imperial Industries, Inc.....	39
J&J	
J&J Portable Sanitation Products.....	3
KeeVac	
KeeVac Industries	10
LWI	
Liquid Waste Industries, Inc.....	35
EXPLORER	
McKee Technologies/Explorer Trailers ..	38
MRP	
Milwaukee Rubber Products, Inc.....	33
NVE National Vacuum Equipment	
National Vacuum Equipment, Inc.....	13



Navitas Credit Corp. 27



PolyJohn Enterprises Corp. 40

Portable Sanitation Association Intl..... 31



PortaLogix

progress tank

Progress Tank..... 20



Robinson Vacuum Tanks



ROEDA..... 23



Sansom Industries LLC

Satellite

Satellite Industries



Screenco Systems LLC..... 17

Slate Pages



Surco® Portable Sanitation Products... 38



T.S.F. Company, Inc. 2



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By Jim Kneiszel

Restroom Placement Is Like a Game of Chess



Follow these strategies to avoid user complaints, costly theft or vandalism, and drawn-out legal entanglements

To the casual observer, dropping off portable restrooms at a job site may seem like an elementary part of the daily routine for your drivers. But nothing could be farther from the truth. The general public appreciates when service providers find just the right spot for a unit. But on the flip side, a drop-and-run scenario can lead to all sorts of problems. Fail to consider the best location for a restroom and you face the potential for costly callbacks, financial battles with customers and worse.

Take these recent situations, for example:

THEFT PREVENTION EFFORTS

In recent stories out of the Fort Myers/Cape Coral metro area of Florida, restrooms were reported stolen from construction sites. These incidents can be costly for portable sanitation companies who lose product and customers who are often responsible for replacement of stolen units.

According to NBC-2.com, restroom thefts are on the rise and a prominent PRO, Jennifer Corrigan, of JW Craft Portable Restrooms, told the news outlet it's probably because the units are rising in cost like everything else. "Someone must have gotten a wild hare and decided to get into the business or the manufacturers aren't manufacturing quick enough," Corrigan explained.

One theft from a home construction site was caught on a neighbor's doorbell camera, leading to recovery of the unit nearby. In the video shown on the television news, someone picks up the unit using a front-end loader and drives off. In an area busy with construction, moving a restroom to another location might not raise suspicion, one neighbor said.

That neighbor, Steve Mammen, tracked down the restroom on an empty lot a block away. He explained the theft this way: "They didn't have a port-a-potty, so they couldn't get an inspection without the port-a-potty. So they just come by and nab this one." In this instance, the service provider recovered the unit, but others are not always so lucky.

Here are a few ideas to reduce losses due to theft:

- **Add GPS trackers.** Corrigan said JW Craft is considering adding GPS tags to the restroom inventory. The cost of tracking technology has come down

Establish your logistics expertise when it comes to portable sanitation and confidently push back if you know their placement ideas are flawed. Remember that your reputation is on the line and your name is on the restroom door if something goes wrong.

over the years and would be considered minimal compared to the loss of stolen equipment. This goes for restrooms, hand-wash stations, trailers, vehicles, basically anything you take out in the field.

- **Take advantage of surveillance.** If a unit is stolen, keep in mind that many homes and businesses now use doorbell cameras or other security systems that might help you find out who stole your restroom. As a matter of routine, the police canvass neighborhoods to find video evidence when a crime is reported. You could also install your own trail cameras, particularly when placing expensive equipment in a remote location where theft and vandalism might be anticipated.

- **Consider other potential deterrents.** Place construction units away from the street (as long as you can still access them for service and pickup). In the Florida theft caught on camera, it took mere seconds for the thief to slip his pallet forks under the roadside unit's skids and take off. You could also stake down construction units, fence them in and lock them down when not in use. Motion sensor lights and alarms could also discourage would-be thieves in the middle of the night.

- **Stress the customer's responsibility.** A key way to protect your property on a work site is to hold the customer responsible for damage or theft that occurs when equipment is under their watch. That goes just as much for the construction worker who drills holes in the unit when he's taking a relief break or when vandals strike in the middle of the night. If they are reminded of the costs they will face, contractors will keep a closer eye on security and damage caused by their employees.



A portion of the general public irrationally hates the sight of a portable restroom, even when they are providing a valuable service in a downtown area, a park or other busy public area. Why make it worse by giving them another reason to complain? That's exactly what happened a few months back when restrooms were placed at Oak Street Beach in Chicago for the annual Air and Water Show.

According to a report by www.bookclubchicago.org, restrooms were placed along the bike lanes on the Lakefront Trail, posing a safety hazard for restroom users and passing cyclists. A local Segway tour guide, Mike Perrino, complained that the placement would lead to collisions between people exiting the restrooms and passing cyclists.

When he saw the row of restrooms, Perrino's first response was, "Wow, this is stupid, this is horrible. Why would they put a door zone in the only place that's supposed to be safe to ride a bike? You could easily put those in the grass between the trail and the drive."

Several park users were happy to see the restrooms that provide necessary relief to crowds that use the busy parkway. But they said more thought should have been given to where the units were dropped.

"Thank God I haven't seen anyone get doored, but it's just a matter of time. It's not a trail that's just for experienced riders," said cyclist Rick Rosales.

This is a good reminder to consider potential dangers at every new restroom location. And also to think about the convenience of users. Talk to your customers and carefully survey the areas where they want the restrooms placed. Establish your logistics expertise when it comes to portable sanitation and confidently push back if you know their placement ideas are flawed. Remember that your reputation is on the line and your name is on the restroom door if something goes wrong.

TRIPPING LAWSUIT

A nightmare for any PRO is the prospect of facing a lawsuit, and having to hire a lawyer and show up in court to defend your company against the claim. In today's society, many disputes quickly migrate down this costly and time-consuming path. Such is a recent case in which a Galveston, Texas, woman is suing a restroom contractor for negligence for allegedly creating a tripping hazard through its placement of a restroom at a construction site.

According to www.setexasrecord.com, Lashaila Benson was injured when she used a restroom at the Galveston Seawall. She claims that she fell while exiting the restroom. The lawsuit says the unit was placed in a way that created an uneven ledge and that the PRO involved failed to properly place and maintain the unit or adequately train or supervise its employees to avoid a hazardous situation. The claim says the PRO should have known the placement was dangerous and posed an unreasonable risk of harm.

Benson says she suffered impairment, disfigurement, lost wages and medical and pharmaceutical expenses due to the fall. She is seeking \$75,000 to \$250,000 in the lawsuit.

KEEP AN EAGLE EYE

The portable sanitation business isn't just about landing that next big client and providing superior service... though these are keys to a successful operation. You have to pay attention to the details to prevent theft or avoid catastrophe. Risks are waiting around every corner, so capable restroom contractors will pay close attention to how proper placement of units will ensure you have a good day, week and year on the job. ■

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BE THE SOLUTION

Portable Restroom Operators Play a Crucial Role in the Clean Water Crisis

This year's World Toilet Day theme was groundwater and sanitation, and it only underscored the role that PROs play in keeping our water resources clean and viable. In this online article, read what UN Water had to say about the role of portable sanitation and the state of our groundwater.

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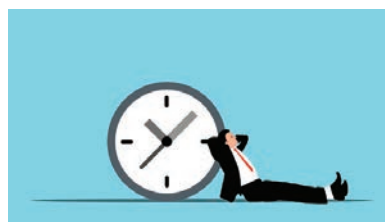


MILITARY MANEUVERS

Strategic Hiring Can Benefit Your Business and Local Veterans

With the labor market in flux, it's time to think smarter not harder, and consider hiring a veteran. Read this online article from columnist Ken Wysocky to explore the benefits of hiring and how to best recruit veterans to the water industry.

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QUIET RIOT

How to Head-Off the Quiet Quitting Phenomenon

In this online article, columnist Amanda Clark examines the current wave of quiet quitting and provides readers with commonsense steps to take to head it off among your employees. Hint: Quiet quitting starts at the top.

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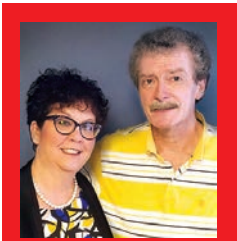


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By Jeff and Terri Wigley

Follow These Steps to Choose a Winning Restroom Business Name

The goals for naming a new portable sanitation business: Convey professionalism, explain what you do and make it memorable

QUESTION: We are starting a company. Thanks in part to *PRO Magazine*, we have researched the industry, attended the WWETT Show, done financial analysis, worked with our local bank and obtained legal counsel concerning state and local rules and regulations. Now all we need is a name. What are your thoughts and suggestions on naming a company?

ANSWER: To begin with, we commend you on your extensive research prior to entering the industry. Reading articles about PROs in our industry and attending WWETT is a huge advantage to you as opposed to merely doing the legal and financial basics of starting any type of business.

We will address ideas on selecting a name and then the process by which that name is then properly registered.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Your company name is the first thing that customers see and, over time, it will earn the reputation that your company works to project. Your company name is your invitation to the public to contact you for their portable sanitation needs.

CONSIDERATIONS

PROFESSIONAL – Particularly in our industry where public perception is a challenge, consider company names that do not disparage portable sanitation. A professional name that does not mimic public jokes or slang conveys professionalism in providing quality service and equipment. We have heard it said that “we don’t want our name to be a joke because we don’t want our service to be a joke.”

DESCRIBES YOUR BUSINESS – Many PROs will include in their full name words such as “portable sanitation,” “pumping,” “portables,” “portable restrooms” or “portable toilets” to sum up their business. Having these words in the full name is also valuable to the PRO in internet searches.

EASY TO REMEMBER – You eventually want the name of your business to become synonymous with a portable restroom. “We need an XYZ on this job site” needs to be the phrase used as opposed to “we need a portable restroom from XYZ on this job site.” A name that is easy to remember is easy to recall for your customers, and easy for them to refer your company to others.

You eventually want the name of your business to become synonymous with a portable restroom, ... a name that is easy to remember is easy to recall for your customers, and easy for them to refer your company to others.

EASY TO SPELL – Whether searching on the internet or entering your company’s name on checks, make this trouble free for your customers.

UNIQUE – If your name is similar in some ways to those of your competitors, you will lose business at some point. Similarity in names also infers “they are all the same” in terms of service and performance. You do not want your company to be considered the same as all of the rest in your market.

ADVERTISING – This is a topic unto itself but consider ideas as to how your company name could be prominently displayed on unit decals and service vehicles to promote the company.

WHAT ABOUT JOE'S JOHNS?

This idea should be evaluated and decided upon at the beginning of the naming process. There are advantages and disadvantages to using your family name in the company name.

Among the advantages are recognition in the community. If the family has been in another business for a number of years, or for several generations, or if the family has been active in the local community, consider using the name to identify your company. Keep in mind that the family name should be easily remembered and spelled. In the unlikely event that your family name is the same as another family in the area that has already used the name for their business, consider other options so as to avoid confusion.

While identification with your family can be an advantage, this idea can become a disadvantage if the company is sold. The new owner would have a difficult decision in keeping your family’s name or renaming the company while losing that recognition and thereby being thought of as a new, upstart company in the area. If your family name is highly recognized, there are instances where the name could be sold as an asset of the company if the new owner desired this long-established and esteemed name.

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Naming your company using your first name brings less familiarity to the customer. While the last name may be rather unique in the community, your first name could be shared by a large number of people in the area. If your business is sold, would the new owner find value in retaining the name?

Our research shows that, generally speaking, it is best to choose a name that indicates what you do over most owner names for marketing and advertising purposes. The uncertainty of continuing use of the name at the time of sale can also be a concern, as previously discussed.

GETTING STARTED

Creative ideas can come from multiple sources. Invite others to participate in this process as well.

- **IDENTIFY THE NAMES OF ALL COMPETITORS IN YOUR LOCAL AREA AS WELL AS YOUR STATE** – Your company name should be unique.
- **BRAINSTORM** – Write down names that immediately come to you without judging the quality or the validity of each name. Some names may spur other ideas as well.
- **CONSULT A THESAURUS** – An online tool that can add even more words with similar meaning to your list of possible names.
- **MAKE A LIST OF TOP CHOICES** – Review all of your possible names and make a list of your top choices. Solicit feedback from your top choices as well.

Next, examine trademark infringement issues.

With each possible company name you generate, consider if that name is identified with other companies, products or images that are trademarked. Company names or logos that either match or clearly reference established corporations or organizations should be avoided at all costs. Fortune 500 company names, popular advertising slogans, celebrity names, movie and

television show names, cartoon characters and sports teams and their mascots are examples of organizations that will take legal action against those who infringe on their trademarks. There are many more unique ideas to choose from as opposed to the risk of being sued for trademark infringement.

WE CHOSE 'PIT STOP'

Here are our thoughts and ideas concerning our company name which may help in generating ideas for your name.

Our company was named "Pit Stop Sanitation Services, Incorporated" and was in business from 1995-2017. Our name had dual meanings. Being a longtime race fan, "pit stop" is a term closely associated with racing and highly recognized. "Pit Stop" is also a phrase commonly used for needing to use the restroom. "Sanitation Services" referenced our industry so as not to be confused with convenience stores, tire shops and a pizza parlor that shared this name.

From an advertising perspective, we choose black and white checkerboard as a border for our logo. The checkered flag is waived for the winner of a race, and the inference was to select a winning company for your portable sanitation needs. Our unit decals, which we displayed on all three outside walls, had the checkered flag border around the Pit Stop name, phone number and website.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Your company's name is important. Through your hard work and dedication, this name will project the image of professionalism and represent outstanding customer service to customers in your market. Select a great name and have that name symbolize an extraordinary company.

Next month, we will address promotional taglines and the importance of using the correct corporate designation with your company name and marketing materials. ■



LIVIN' LARGE

Houston upstart Smooth Move Services is branching out and becoming the big company its leaders always envisioned it would be

By Kyle Rogers



Left: Erin Rogers and Douglas Card are shown in the company yard with a Hino service truck built out by American Tank and carrying National Vacuum Equipment pumps. (Photos by Jon Shapley)

Right: Erin Rogers, right, meets with account manager Gracie Flaherty at the Smooth Move Services office in Houston.

When Erin Rogers, Doug Card and Sunny Haines expanded their roll-off container business into the portable restroom arena six years ago, it was a small operation that didn't act like one. Immediately the new company made use of modern tools like GPS and routing software.

"Even when it was only one driver, we tried to set everything up as if we were a big company," says Rogers, who runs Smooth Move Services out of Houston with partners Card and Haines. "It was probably a more expensive way to start, but it's nice now with the size we are. If you start up like you're a big company from the beginning, you'll gradually grow into it."

That's exactly what has happened, as Smooth Move has experienced considerable growth of late, about a 150% increase in revenue since early 2020. Rogers says the goal is to continue that trend, and Smooth Move has been doing all that growing in a particularly competitive market. Rogers estimates there are about 60 restroom companies in the Houston area.

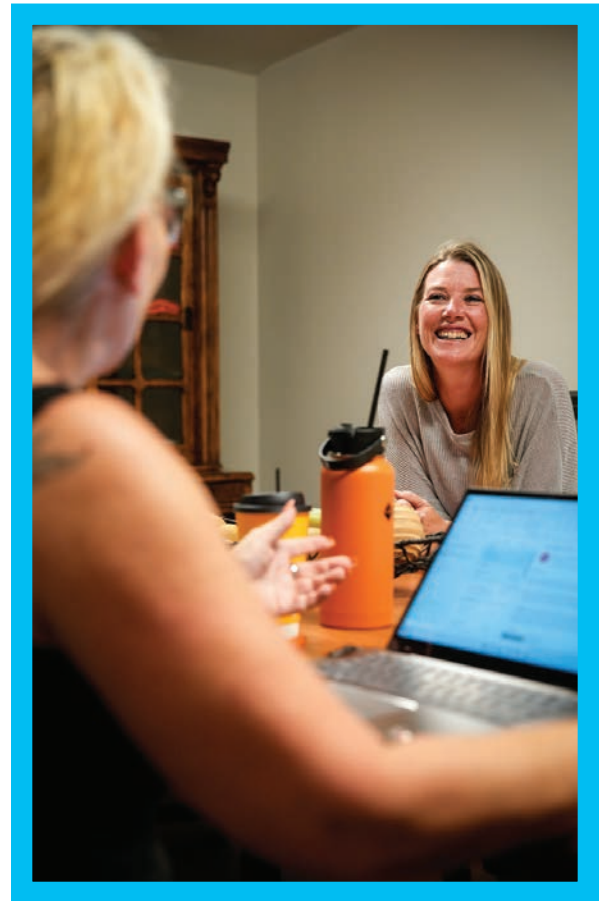
"We just want to continue to grow our presence in the area," Rogers says. "Our goal is that when you hear Smooth Move, you don't think of a moving company. You think of a portable restroom company."

LEARNING CURVE

Smooth Move's origins go back to 2012 when Rogers, Card and Haines joined forces to form a roll-off container business, Houston Waste Solutions, after a noncompete clause expired from the sale of a prior roll-off business Card had owned. Haines worked for that company in a sales capacity and just prior to the sale had introduced her friend Rogers to Card.

"After I interviewed with him he ended up selling that company, so I never officially worked with either of them, but that's how I got into this industry," Rogers says.

Rogers worked for the purchasing company for a while, but



Smooth Move Services

Houston, Texas

Owners: Erin Rogers, Sunny Haines, Doug Card

Founded: 2016

Employees: 19

Service Area: Greater Houston

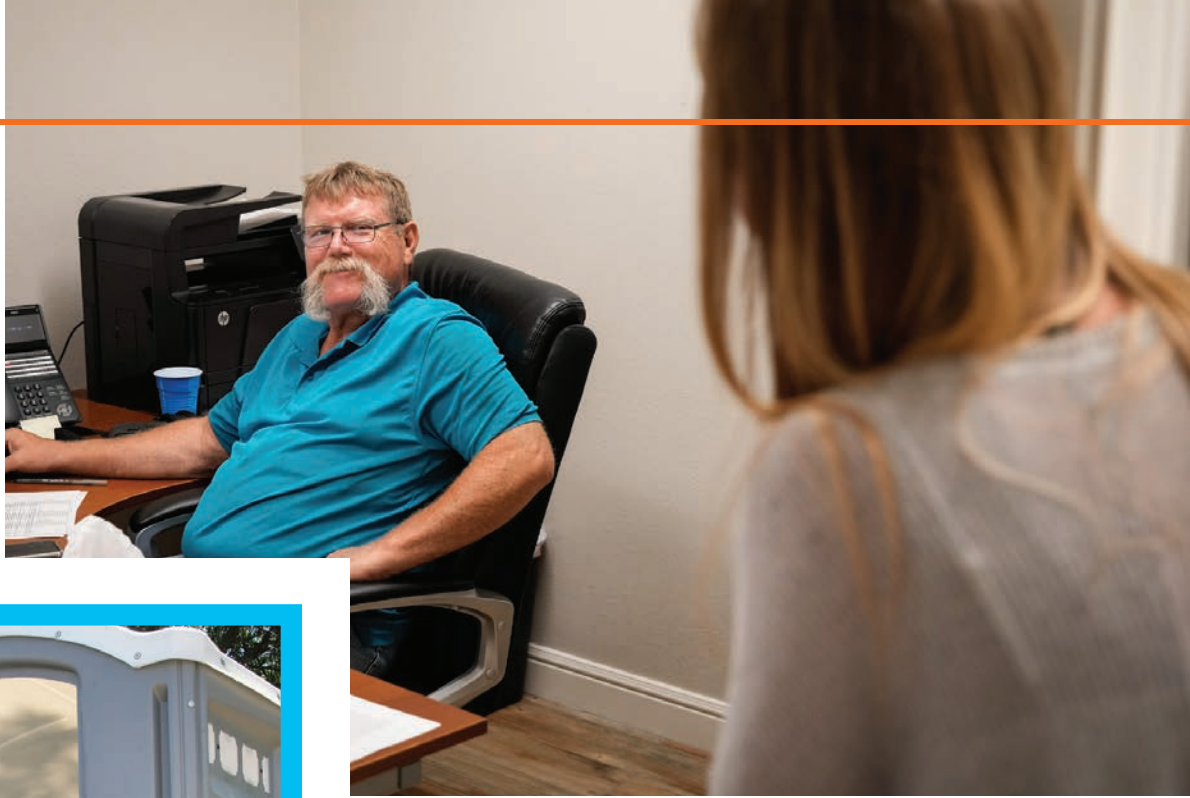
Website: smoothmoveservices.com

"We just want to continue to grow and build on the great team we already have and add more trucks and restroom units. ... We want to see our portable restrooms everywhere."

ERIN ROGERS

Right: Operations manager Shane Linnell (talking with Erin Rogers) has made significant contributions to efficiency since joining the company a short time ago. His first move was organizing a full reroute to improve service.

Below: Technician Thomas Martin pressure-washes a Satellite Industries portable restroom in the Smooth Move Services yard, getting it ready to return to service.



after Card's noncompete clause ended, the three decided that they wanted to team up to start their own venture. As they started to grow Houston Waste Solutions, it quickly became apparent that it would be wise to get into the portable restroom business as well.

"We were constantly getting asked by customers if we had portable toilets," Rogers recalls. "We realized that portable toilets were like your marker on a job site because they're the very first thing that gets put on a site. We had competitors who had both roll-off containers and portable restrooms and started noticing when we'd go out to different sites that they'd already have a portable restroom there. It was a foregone conclusion that they were going to get the trash side of the business too."

In May 2016, the three partners decided to officially launch the portable

sanitation subsidiary Smooth Move Services. With no prior portable sanitation experience, they studied competitors to figure out the necessary details — what manufacturer to use for the restrooms, what kind of service trucks were most common. Through a sales rep from Satellite Industries, Rogers coordinated a ride-along with an Austin-based restroom company.

"I went out on a full route with one of their drivers, just so I could see what they did and how the whole business worked," Rogers says. "I came away with a binder full of information — all the good and the bad, what to do and what not to do. It was kind of a starter pack for starting a portable restroom company."

The company name, Smooth Move, was inspired by a brand of tea, and Rogers says they thought it provided a good balance of being funny and catchy, but in a tasteful way that didn't undercut professionalism. Early on though, they didn't do a lot to build up Smooth Move's own identity.

"Everything was attached to Houston Waste Solutions. Most of our customers would even get their invoices from Houston Waste Solutions," Rogers says.

But that began to change a couple of years ago.

SALES SPECIALIST

One of the biggest changes that led to Smooth Move's strong recent growth was bringing on a dedicated sales rep for the company.

"We've been in business for six years, but until two years ago, we didn't have a sales rep focusing only on portable restrooms," Rogers says. "We've had incredible growth since that point."

Smooth Move is now up to two sales reps, with another coming on about a year ago. They maintain different focuses. One targets the construction market. The other's focus is event work and bringing on new industrial/municipal customers. Rogers says there is a lot of opportunity in Houston with event work and industrial customers, but it would be difficult to access without a dedicated sales rep.

"There's a lot of cold calling; seeing which companies are using portable restrooms and figuring out how we can get through the door," Rogers says. "And with events, this is a giant city. There are so many diverse things happening. Any given week during event season, you might have 40 differ-

(continued)



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Above: Toren Broussard, operating a Hyster forklift, organizes restroom inventory in the Smooth Move Services Yard.

ent things going on. It's hard to find all of them and figure out who is the right person to talk to."

Plus, the pandemic created a unique situation when it came to events. After shutting down operations for a year or two, many events had new people in charge once they returned, Rogers says. It was the right time to be bringing sales reps on board.

"A particular event may have had a 20-year relationship with a restroom company. But over the course of the pandemic a lot of people with event companies have moved on to other things," Rogers says. "There are new people in charge and previous relationships are not necessarily still around. It's a nice time for our sales reps to get in and build relationships from scratch; get some opportunities that may have not been there prior to COVID."

Rogers says the goal is to find consistent balance in Smooth Move's workload, and not have construction make up such a large portion of it. Depending on the time of year, construction can be as much as 90% of the business. The efforts of the sales reps are gradually paying off though, and Smooth Move has been gaining new municipal/industrial customers and event work.

"Customers need to have a contact person they can call and depend on. Giving us a shot is hard because they may not have heard of us before, but a sales rep can give them face-to-face contact and convince them that we're good and capable of handling their job," Rogers explains. "Once you get a few of those, you're able to offer them to others as a reference and it kind of snowballs."

In addition to sales reps, Smooth Move now has 17 other employees including route drivers, delivery drivers, yard workers and office staff. All of the companies under the Houston Waste Solutions umbrella share a management team.

The equipment fleet includes nine Hino and two Mack vacuum trucks, covering 10 service routes. All the trucks have 1,100-gallon waste/450-gallon freshwater steel tanks, National Vacuum Equipment 304 pumps and Burks DC-10 water pumps from American Tank. The restroom inventory includes 2,300 standard units and 40 ADA units, largely from Satellite Industries, and 100 hand-wash stations from Satellite.

GETTING EFFICIENT

While growing the company by finding new business and diversifying the customer base, Smooth Move has also increased focus of late on streamlining and fine-tuning the operational side. Despite largely sticking to the greater Houston area, Smooth Move still maintains a large footprint, which has been challenging over the years.

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INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT

Prior to starting Smooth Move Services, Erin Rogers and one of her business partners, Sunny Haines, attended the 2016 Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport Show. They haven't been back since, but Rogers says she's looking forward to finally getting more involved in such industry activities in the future.

"It was so foreign to us," Rogers says of the WWETT Show she attended. "We didn't get a whole lot out of it at that time."

Rogers was planning to go to the 2022 show, but it ended up coinciding with the Montgomery County Fair, a new event customer for Smooth Move, so she had to cancel those plans. Instead she sent two employees, a sales rep and a dispatcher who typically handles the company's supply orders.

"They had a great time and learned a lot," Rogers says. "They hung out with the Satellite folks one night and found some new vendors to try. They were able to get a Wesco 20-unit delivery trailer from Lane's Vacuum Tank I had been trying to find in stock somewhere, so it was worth it just for that."

Rogers says the hope is to make WWETT Show attendance a regular occurrence for Smooth Move from now on.

"I look forward to going next year and probably doing some of the education classes. That was one thing the employees who attended this year didn't really get a chance to do, but they recognized that there was a lot there. We'll definitely get more involved in the future."



Above: Driver Harry Wallace helps guide coworker Toren Broussard to park a vacuum truck at Smooth Move Services. The company fleet include Hino and Mack chassis built out by American Tank with National Vacuum Equipment pumps.

“We have routes that are 250 miles in a day, and 50 restrooms get cleaned during that time,” Rogers says. “Maybe it’s the burden of having three owners who come from a sales background. We’re always like, ‘Sure, we can do it,’ even if it doesn’t make logistical sense. It’s not ideal, but it at least has helped us build strong relationships with customers.”

“We’ve had tremendous growth in recent years and it doesn’t happen in only one area at a time,” she continues. “If you want to be that company that is growing with the city and getting recognized everywhere, you just have to expand with it.”

One thing recently done to build efficiency while serving a large area was hiring Shane Linnell as operations manager. He started last spring and immediately had ideas for changes. One of the first tasks was doing a full reroute to help with the large service footprint.

“A lot of it was just condensing areas, making the routes denser. Like if someone wanted one restroom serviced two times a week, we instead maybe changed it to two restrooms serviced once a week,” Rogers explains. “We used to look at logistical things like that every now and then, but it was great having someone actually sit there for two weeks and really dig into every route and make sure everything was being done in the right order and grouped together correctly.”

“In the end we only ended up not servicing one customer who was just really far out. It was one restroom, and it was 45 minutes to go out and do it once a week,” she says.

Beyond handling Smooth Move’s reroute, Rogers says Linnell has brought up the company’s standard of service and made it more consistent across the board.

“Just quality control, making sure the units going out look perfect. Stickers are on, inventory is done correctly. Checking all the boxes,” Rogers says. “You have to make sure things go perfect when you set up new deliveries or do events. That first impression is important because it’s such a personal experience with a restroom. You don’t want to go out and something goes wrong right off the bat.”

A SOLID FOUNDATION

Successful implementation of the changes of the past couple of years has been the solid business framework Smooth Move aimed to establish from the get-go.

“As we’ve grown and brought in new people, we always had the technology and policies we needed already in place,” Rogers says.

GPS on trucks, routing software (TRUX) and drivers regularly using tablets for a variety of tasks have been standard practice for the company from the beginning. “It allows us to stay skinny from an office standpoint,” Rogers says. “We try to use that technology where we can to make things efficient and easier.”

For example, say a driver can’t access a restroom because the job site is locked. They immediately take a photo on the tablet. It goes back to the office, which can then quickly alert the customer. Many times, the customer can pass along the security code or go to the site, Rogers says, but in the event a restroom service doesn’t work out that day, there’s at least photographic evidence.

“It’s time and date stamped with the GPS coordinates, which can help from a cost standpoint,” Rogers says. “We don’t have people arguing, saying, ‘Hey, you didn’t show up this week.’ It’s less time for our accounting people, trying to track down a driver to see if they remember what happened at a particular job. We have that information right there on the tablet.”

MOVING FORWARD

Going forward, Rogers says the plan is to continue to pursue what the past couple of years have brought — a larger presence in the industrial and municipal markets, more events work. Essentially to become the kind of bigger restroom company it has always aspired to.

“We just want to continue to grow and build on the great team we already have and add more trucks and restroom units,” Rogers says. “We’re going to keep getting our name out there. We want to see our portable restrooms everywhere.” ■

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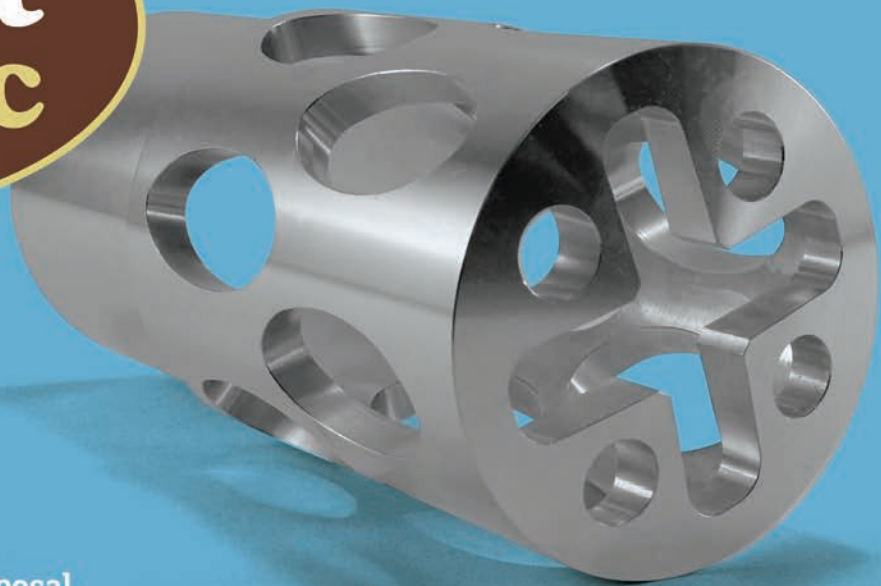
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Right: Mark Geiger is shown with a pair of Satellite restrooms ready for delivery. (Photos by Matt Odom)

The benefits of portable sanitation and septic pumping companies offering customers “bolt-on” complementary services are on display at Geiger Septic & Portable Toilet Service in Valley, about 25 miles northeast of Auburn in east-central Alabama.

Owners Cindy and Mark Geiger decided to add portable sanitation services to their septic pumping business in 2009. Steady growth followed; employment on the restroom side grew to five workers from one, service trucks expanded to three from one, restrooms jumped to more than 300 from 10 and revenue increased by 70 to 80%, says Cindy.

At the time of the acquisition, Mark, 60, was pumping septic tanks and installing septic systems while Cindy, 57, worked in a plant where she’d been employed for 17 years. (The company no longer pumps septic tanks.)

“We got to talking and I told Mark that I wished there was something I could do that would benefit what you do, so we could work together, yet apart,” she explains. “Then a local operator went out of business and said he’d sell me his 10 restrooms.

“I delivered them on my days off,” she adds. “But soon it got so busy that I couldn’t do both jobs, so I took an early retirement.”

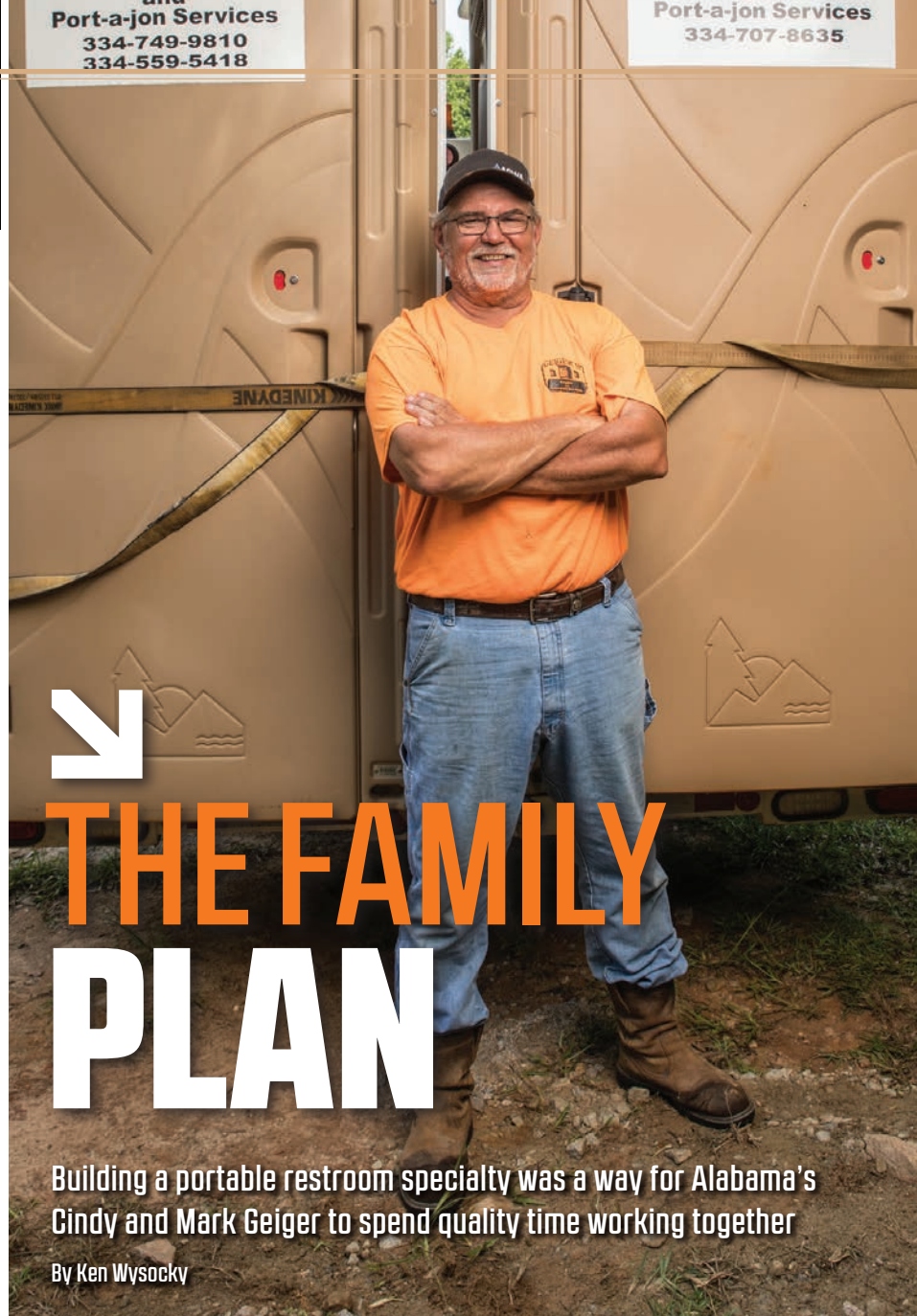
After renting out those first 10 units, Cindy ordered a truckload of 28 more restrooms from Satellite Industries — and rented out all of them the following week.

“Business just kept booming and booming,” she says.

Today the company owns mostly Satellite restrooms as well as 10 Satellite hand-wash stations, plus the three trucks, all equipped with slide-in units: a 2019 Ford F-550 with a 600-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater steel tank built by Pac-Mac (built by Keith Huber) with a Masport pump; a 2016 Ford F-550 with a 500-gallon waste/275-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank from Robinson Vacuum Tanks and a Conde pump (a brand owned by Westmoor Ltd.); and a 2009 Isuzu HD 3500 with a 400-gallon waste/200-gallon freshwater stainless steel tank from Progress Tank and a Conde pump.

“We like slide-ins because if we have truck issues, it’s so easy to slide the unit onto another truck and keep on working,” says Mark. “Plus it’s so hard to find help these days that we try to stay away from larger trucks that would require a commercial driver’s license.”

The restroom division primarily serves construction customers within about a 30-mile radius of Valley. Auburn University is one of the larger clients, she says.



THE FAMILY PLAN

Building a portable restroom specialty was a way for Alabama's Cindy and Mark Geiger to spend quality time working together

By Ken Wysocky

EXPLORE FIVE ISSUES THAT AFFECT GEIGER SEPTIC AND PORTABLE TOILET SERVICES:

1 MAKING HAPPY CUSTOMERS

Great customer service with a personal touch has contributed heavily to the division’s growth, Cindy says. “My daughter, Haley, and I get out there and talk to customers,” Cindy explains. “You have to have some personality and then talk to customers like you’d want to be talked to. You have to sell your services, like in any other business.

“You also must treat customers with respect,” she continues. “Customers want honesty and they want you to do what you say you’re going to do, as well as respond quickly to emergency cleaning requests. Sometimes that costs us extra fuel and we have to reroute our guys, but it keeps customers happy. And if you have happy customers, then you have repeat customers.”

(continued)



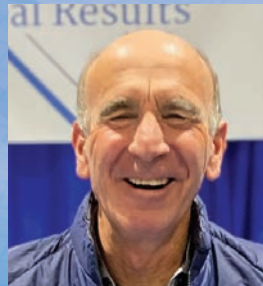
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Above: The portable sanitation crew at Geiger Septic & Portable Toilet Service includes, from left, Mason Barker, Kyle Smith, Haley Geiger, Cindy Geiger and Mark Geiger. They are shown with Satellite Industries restrooms ready for delivery.



Above: Danny Nesbitt washes a Satellite portable restroom.

2 TAKING A CONSERVATIVE APPROACH

When it comes to building the business, Cindy believes in small but steady growth as opposed to exponential growth that can compromise customer service, work quality and stress out route drivers. The company co-owner takes the same approach to finances. For example, Cindy says she always tries to pay off the balance due on new restrooms before she places an order for more. “We don’t want to stretch ourselves financially,” she says. “We take a very conservative financial approach.”

3 PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The long-term plan is to have Haley, 26, take over the business in a few years. Currently Haley — who earned a business degree from Troy State College in Troy — handles the books and customer inquiries.

“You want your kids to carry on a family business,” Cindy notes. “I’ve asked her many times if this really is what she wants to do. If it’s not, I’ve told her it’s not going to hurt our feelings. And if it turns out she doesn’t like it, she can sell the business. But whenever I tell her that, she gets mad and says, ‘We’re not selling anything.’”

What advice would Cindy give others about grooming children to take over a portable restroom business? Start them out with cleaning restrooms, she advises. “Portable restrooms aren’t for everyone,” she says. “If they can clean restrooms and clean them good, they’re good to go. I’d make them do it for a month without any complaints from customers.”

Below: Huell Bowen loads a Satellite restroom onto the carrier of a Pac-Mac service truck for delivery.



“Customers want honesty and they want you to do what you say you’re going to do, as well as respond quickly to emergency cleaning requests. Sometimes that costs us extra fuel and we have to reroute our guys, but it keeps customers happy.” – Cindy Geiger

4 EMBRACING CHANGE

Cindy says she has no problem with Haley making operational changes — often a flashpoint within family-owned businesses — when she takes the reins. “If she has new ideas and wants to make changes, that’s her business,” Cindy says. “I’ll back her 100% – as long as we don’t lose customers. She has a good head on her shoulders and she can multitask, speak with employees and customers, not to mention go and pump restrooms.”

In fact, Haley has already implemented a big technological change by subscribing to ServiceCore, a cloud-based software platform. Drivers use iPad tablets to access the platform, which handles everything from invoicing and service-route optimization to GPS and asset management (such as tracking restroom locations), she says.

“ServiceCore helps us stay on top of things and keep organized,” Haley says. “For example, I can pinpoint on a map exactly where customers want their restrooms located. And drivers can pull up their jobs on a GPS map.”

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Above: Huell Bowen and Danny Nesbitt service Satellite restrooms. The truck is from Pac-Mac and carries a Masport pump.

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5 FINDING SUCCESS THROUGH MENTORSHIP

Cindy also credits a fellow portable restroom operator — Rhonda McMichael, the owner of Wise Environmental Solutions in Oxford, Alabama — for helping her and Haley grow the business.

“I met her at a trade show in Gulf Shores and we struck up a friendship,” Cindy says. “She’s helped us a lot. For instance, she suggested we bill customers every 28 days instead of once a month, which results in losing several weeks of revenue a year.”

McMichael also was instrumental in helping Cindy select effective cleaning products and chemicals. She’s also helping Haley, who’s considering selling cleaning products to generate another revenue stream, she says. ■

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Partnership With The Water Expo Announced

By Veronica Grosier



The Portable Sanitation Association International is thrilled to share a new partnership with The Water Expo, the water and wastewater trade show that unites the Americas. In the coming year, these two organizations will combine strengths to increase the presence of portable sanitation in the wastewater sector by providing greater access to industry-specific education and best practices. The 2023 Water Expo will be held August 22-24 in Miami.

The Water Expo brings industry professionals together from more than 45 countries to connect with distributors and manufacturers worldwide. As of 2022, The Water Expo also offers a University Day to integrate an educational component to the show.

The PSAI has been a hub for innovation and education around portable sanitation for 50 years. Today we boast leading-edge training courses, bringing service technicians to the highest standards of customer service and safety. To date, though, these courses have only been offered in English. The PSAI and The Water Expo will collaborate to bring this same quality of education to the portable sanitation's Latin American and Spanish-speaking communities.

The Water Expo and PSAI hope to pilot the first of these courses at each organization's educational events in 2023 while exploring avenues to increase their availability in the future. PSAI will be modifying our most popular Basic Service Technician Training Series to be applicable to countries outside the U.S. With The Water Expo's support, those materials will further be translated into Spanish. Together, PSAI and The Water Expo will identify subject matter experts to deliver the trainings.

PSAI is excited to be growing our international offerings, but also to recognize and honor the diversity in our home base in the U.S. We believe this is another big step in following the association vision: a world in which clean and safe sanitation is available to everyone. ■

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DECALS



ALLIED GRAPHICS DECALS

Decals from **Allied Graphics** are designed to stick and stay on portable restrooms in tough environments. The vinyl decals use ultraviolet inks to look good for years, according

to the maker. The decals can also be applied to sinks and trailers. **763-428-8365; www.allied-graphics.com**

ROEDA DECALS

Roeda decals utilize 4 mil permanent adhesive vinyl and UV fade-resistant inks for applications such as portable restrooms, restroom trailers, hand sanitizer stands and outdoor sinks. They come in a variety of stock UV inks, but can also be printed with any custom Pantone match. Decals can be cut to any size or shape. A UV clearcoat or lamination adds extra protection against the elements. Options and adhesives are available using existing logos or having new designs made. **800-829-3021; www.roeda.com**



HOLDING TANK



POLYJOHN ENTERPRISES HOLDING TANK

PolyJohn Enterprises holding tanks are suitable for collecting waste from portable restrooms and may be a necessity for long-term restroom placements where indoor plumbing

is not an option. Made from durable plastic, the design is functional and discreet. It's also compatible with other PolyJohn restrooms and sinks, and it can be easily configured with most types of plumbing, according to the manufacturer. It can be used for outdoor work sites or special events to complete a portable restroom area. Tanks are available in 250- and 300-gallon capacities. **800-292-1305; www.polyjohn.com**

LIGHTING

J&J CHEMICAL J-LIGHT

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



LUNARGLO SOLAR LIGHTS

LunarGlo solar lights are designed to improve the user experience and make units easier to clean after dark. Life expectancy is 3-5 years. Lights provide consistent brightness from dusk to dawn and the ability to take pressure washing day after day with no impact on performance. **574-294-2624; www.lunarglo.com**



SOLAR LED INNOVATIONS SOLAR POD LIGHTS

Solar Pod Lights from **Solar LED Innovations** are available in three versions providing 30, 50 and 65 lumens to illuminate portable restrooms for special events and nighttime use. Low-profile units install in minutes and double-lock securely through the roof. Automatic darkness and motion sensors control lighting as well as a manual on/off option. Up to 30 hours of light are provided from a single day charge in the sun. **484-639-4833; www.solargoose.com**



PORTABLE RESTROOM MOVERS

DEAL ASSOC. SUPER MONGO MOVER



The **Super Mongo Mover** hand truck from **Deal Assoc.** easily tips back and carries portable restrooms and full-size ADA handicap units. The restroom is picked up from the bottom like a forklift so there is no stress on the restroom. Its forks are removable and do not fold. This allows the unit to stand upright without falling over, making it much easier to push under a restroom. There are no hinges at ground level to get jammed with rocks

and dirt. Everything that touches the upper restroom is anodized aluminum, so there can be no rust stains on the restrooms. It is available with a variety of wheel options and is UPS shippable. **866-599-3325; www.dealassoc.com**

TRANSPORT TRUCKS/TRAILERS

CRESCENT TANK VACUUM TANK

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



(continued)



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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. Fresh water 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**



**F.M. MANUFACTURING
30-FOOT TRAILER**

The 30-foot flatbed trailer from **F.M. Manufacturing** has three 3,700-pound torsion bar axles, side roller for easy loading, low-profile tires, solid front header and tie-downs on both sides. The customizable trailer has electric brakes on all axles and LED lights. **877-889-2246; www.fmmfg.com**

IMPERIAL INDUSTRIES FLATVAC

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



**JOHNNY MOVER TRAILER
SALES TRAILER**

Portable restroom transport trailers from **Johnny Mover Trailer Sales** have skid-locking, using an iron bar with a chain-binding system to secure multiple units. Models are available to handle six to 20

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

**LIQUID WASTE
INDUSTRIES TRAILER**

Custom-built portable restroom delivery trailers from **Liquid Waste Industries** carry six to 24 restrooms and come with or without sides. They are built with heavy-duty steel and come standard with torsion axles, electric brakes, flush-mounted lights, and 10- or 13-inch wheels and tires. Custom upgrades include gates, leaf spring axles, fold-down ramps, LED lights and choice of hitch. **877-445-5511; www.lwiinc.com**



**MCKEE TECHNOLOGIES
- EXPLORER TRAILERS
TRANSPORTER**

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

**PIK RITE FLATBED
RESTROOM HAULER**

The **Flatbed Restroom Hauler** from **Pik Rite** has a 650-gallon tank, flatbed and liftgate. The tank has a 400-gallon waste compartment and internal 250-gallon freshwater compartment for even weight distribution. The truck includes a National Vacuum Equipment 304 vacuum pump, dual 2-inch fill hoses, 20 gpm washdown system, dual-spring return freshwater hose reels and dual 2-inch bucket fills. A 20-inch top manway, 5-inch sight eyes and clear-hose sight tube are included. The truck is 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**



SATELLITE MD995

Satellite's MD995 truck is designed for servicing full routes or events with extra capacity for transporting restrooms. Its 8-by-16-foot bed allows transporting eight to 10 portable restroom depending on the state's regulations, and it has a nonstick surface designed with enhanced drainage for easy cleaning. The truck has removable aluminum side rails to load and unload units from either side. Each side rail has an E-Track system for precision when securing restrooms. It comes with the choice of grated or solid liftgate, in aluminum or steel, that can lift 1,600 pounds. The MD995 comes outfitted with stainless steel cabinets on both sides for increased storage. It can tow an additional 7,500 pounds with a receiver hitch. A rear backup camera helps with driving assistance. This unit-hauler truck is designed for servicing an entire route or mid-size to large events. **800-883-1123; www.satelliteindustries.com** ■

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▶ **PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT**

Porta-Pak MAX attacks restroom odors in extreme conditions

By Tim Dobbins

Serious odors call for serious solutions. Walex has long offered a full line of products designed to keep portable restrooms smelling fresh no matter the scenario, and for the toughest jobs, they offer the Porta-Pak MAX.

“The Porta-Pak MAX was designed to treat the waste in units with high heat and high traffic with just a single packet,” says Corey Morton, director of sales and business development for Walex. “Walex introduced the Porta-Pak over 25 years ago, and since then we were able to maximize the space in the packet to increase the concentration of the powder.”

According to the company, Porta-Pak MAX provides week-long odor management for heavily trafficked restrooms by offering 50% more color, 50% more odor control and double the fragrance of their standard Porta-Pak.

The Porta-Pak MAX is the result of continuous effort to improve deodorizing products. “Walex has two PhD chemists heading up our lab and research and development department,” Morton says. “They are constantly working on new products to introduce to the market and frequently reviewing current formulas.”

Walex takes that research out of the lab as well, putting their product to the test before presenting to the public. “Our lab is constantly testing the performance of our product line in controlled settings as well as field testing with local operators,” Morton says. “The response has been very well received.”

Porta-Pak MAX are a nonstaining EVERBLUE color, formaldehyde free and biodegradable. Each bag comes with 50 packets, and the concentrated formula means only one sachet is needed at a time, according to Morton. “Unfortunately, our industry sees many units that are overused, and the operator may need two standard packets for these units,” Morton says. “The Porta-Pak MAX reduces the need for an extra Pak.”

Users drop one Pak into the tank or bucket and add 5 to 7 gallons of water. The water-soluble Paks quickly dissolve to break down paper and waste. Porta-Pak MAX deodorizers are available in three fragrances — sunglow, mulberry and mint. **800-338-3155; www.walex.com** ■

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