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He Has HIGH HOPES

Bucky Potter has built Potter's Potties, a 1,500-restroom business, in only six years. He credits his growth to positive thinking and concentrating on being clean and green.

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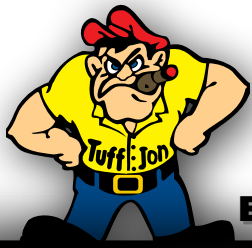
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These Pennsylvania PROs charted a long course toward success, eventually meeting their goals for a thriving business

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He Has High Hopes
Bucky Potter has built Potter's Potties, a 1,500-restroom business in only six years. He credits his growth to positive thinking and concentrating on being clean and green.
- Peter Kenter

LEFT: Bucky Potter credits a clean and green focus for growing Potter's Potties from 28 to 1,500 restrooms in only six years. Potter is shown with a Mack MD service truck built out by Robinson Vacuum Tanks and carrying a National Vacuum Equipment pump. (COLE Publishing photo)

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By Jim Kneiszel

Will People Pay to Poop?

One California city wants to start charging a fee for using public bathrooms. How could this impact portable sanitation providers?

Many environmental and regulatory trends in general have their genesis in the state of California, and that might be the case with a new proposal in San Diego that could have an impact on the portable sanitation industry.

Officials are proposing to reverse a 50-year-old rule that bans charging a fee to use a public restroom. In a recent story from www.cbs8.com, San Diego's city council president said money raised for public restroom usage — say \$0.25 per entry — could be used to improve restroom infrastructure in the underserved downtown area and beyond. Sunny San Diego, with a population of about 1.4 million, apparently only has two public bathrooms in the downtown area.

"The goal is to increase access to public restrooms and the charge would cover the costs to install additional restrooms," Sean Elo-Rivera, the council president, told a television news outlet. "It's about establishing a network, the need is more established downtown, but not exclusively just in that area."

It seems that Elo-Rivera is thinking about adding more brick-and-mortar bathrooms, but the idea of pay toilets could have a positive impact on portable sanitation in the city as well.

First off, the fees raised at the public bathrooms could be used to support strategic placement of portable restrooms on ocean piers, busy downtown streets, parks or even homeless encampments. Many California cities including San Diego, have large transient homeless populations because of the beautiful weather 365 days of the year.

And second, if paying for use of public bathrooms gains widespread acceptance, it's possible PROs could begin to charge small fees. That could go for standard units or restroom or shower trailers finding many new applications in urban settings. This could be a revenue stream for PROs, or fees could be an incentive for cities to lease more portable sanitation products and make them self-sufficient.

A HEALTH ISSUE

Too often we see that municipal customers are looking to cut their budgets for portable sanitation, which flies in the face of growing demand for these services. Consider another recent story out of San Diego, which addressed a spike in hepatitis A cases that are traced to inadequate numbers of portable restrooms and hand-wash stations.

Too often we see that municipal customers are looking to cut their budgets for portable sanitation, which flies in the face of growing demand for these services.

According to a report from www.thevoiceofsandiego.org, the city is planning to add restrooms in targeted areas in an effort to contain the illness spread by person-to-person contact with fecal matter. A local public health official, Dr. Ankita Kadakia, noted in a letter to the city that a hepatitis outbreak in 2017 resulted in 600 cases and 20 deaths, the majority of them among the homeless population.

"We know that adequate sanitation and access to restrooms and handwashing stations, in combination with homeless outreach efforts, is vitally important. Enhanced sanitation and education will minimize transmission and reduce the chance for an outbreak," Kadakia wrote.

San Diego has not met Mayor Todd Gloria's 2021 goal to have a restroom that could be reached within a 5-minute walk from any location downtown. The city has, however, stepped up its service of portable restrooms to create more sanitary conditions. All units are serviced at least three times a day, according to a spokesperson. And like other cities have started to do, San Diego now routinely sanitizes sidewalks that could be littered with human waste.

Local municipal budgets are constantly squeezed in an effort to control property taxes and provide adequate services at a time when infrastructure improvements have long been pushed off to the future. The potholes that bounce your cars and trucks around on city streets are the only reminder you need of how tight funds are. Faced with so little money and so many desperately needed projects, I argue that most cities will not see major spending on permanent bathroom facilities.

This is where portable sanitation can offer a smart solution to fill in the restroom gaps. PROs offer a great value to these strapped cities. You can place restrooms where they are needed most, move them quickly as the demand changes, and service them more efficiently than city workers could clean permanent bathrooms. And the cost differential between deploying several portable restrooms and building one permanent facility would be thousands compared to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

COST OF DOING BUSINESS

So that brings us back to the pay-to-poop concept. There are many examples where people are willing to pay for needed services. When truckers park at a truck stop, they pay a fee to take a shower or wash their clothes. When you head downtown for a concert or sports event, you don't think twice about paying to park your car in a lot. Why do people expect taking advantage of a safe, clean place to relieve yourself should be any different?

Over the years I've seen PROs place shower trailers at big camping music events and hire attendants and charge a fee for a hot shower. And a few months ago I wrote about a New York contractor who took it upon himself to place units at the entrance to the Brooklyn Bridge for passersby to use. He didn't charge, but accepted free-will donations to cover his costs. Who's to say that the public wouldn't welcome such a convenient service even if it came with a small cost?

I think officials in San Diego might be onto something. Time will tell if California reverses its free-restroom rule and the trend sweeps the nation.

The vandalism never ends

Last month I wrote about the ongoing issue PROs are facing with vandalism. Well, the stories of damage, destruction and downright strange criminal behavior involving portable restrooms keep on coming. In case you didn't see the headlines, these incidents happened in the few short weeks since I wrote the May column:

- Police in Newport, Rhode Island, responded to a call of a deceased man found in a portable restroom. The death of the 48-year-old Newport resident remained under investigation, according to local news media. I hope your service technicians haven't come across anything like this. If they have, what steps did you have to take to cooperate with authorities and get the restroom back into service?
- A 26-year-old man suffering from anxiety, depression and substance abuse was convicted of arson for torching a portable restroom in Vancouver, British Columbia. The fire spread to a portable office and generator, causing \$43,000 in damage, according to a media account. The criminal's defense attorney said, "This is a one-off, completely out of character. He's extremely remorseful." But who's going to pay to replace the restroom?
- A reader told the *Seattle Times* that he helped stomp out a restroom fire near a park and playground. When firefighters arrived, they told the man that they respond to at least one restroom fire per week. How many units has your company lost to this type of vandalism over the past year?
- A Houston woman called her local TV news ABC-13 to complain about a restroom on a construction site near her home that had been used for prostitution and drugs. This went on for a few months, but the restroom was picked up as soon as a news reporter started asking officials about it. "I really feel violated, because no one should have to live in filth," the woman said.

If you have any advice or ideas on how to curb costly damage and improve dangerous working conditions for our technicians, please share your wisdom and stories. Write to me at editor@promonthly.com. ■



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BALANCING ACT

Don't Let Family Ties Hinder Business Operations

The owners of A Royal Flush in Bridgeport, Connecticut, understand the trials and tribulations of running a family business. However, the Butler family has not let those extra considerations stop their portable restroom company from succeeding. Find out how in this online article.

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OVERHEARD ONLINE

“The bottom line is you need to clean the restrooms, be professional and be fair. It's a pretty simple plan. By doing those things, growth just followed. We always try to put ourselves in our customers' shoes and act accordingly.”

— Take It From a PRO: Maintaining Inventory, Managing Odors and More
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FRAUD ALERT!

Avoid Workers' Compensation Fraud

As portable restroom operators, you pay for workers' compensation insurance to protect you and your employees. In this exclusive online article, columnist Amanda Clark explains how you can further protect yourself, your business and employees with a little fraud prevention.

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STAGE A BRAND REBIRTH

Don't Get Stuck in a Marketing Rut

How old is your marketing strategy? Do you have a strategy, or do you throw everything at the wall and see what sticks? In this online article, columnists Carter Harkins and Taylor Hill walk business owners through the steps needed to reinvigorate their marketing strategy.

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By Jeff and Terri Wigley

Curbing Complaints Over Smelly Summer Units

Double-charging deodorants, optimal airflow and extra services are all key strategies to knocking down strong restroom odors

QUESTION: We are located in southern Texas and the intense heat presents a challenge for our customers as well as to our company in terms of providing exceptional customer service. Over the years, we have read articles, watched presentations and participated in roundtable discussions concerning winter servicing. Could you please discuss summer servicing?

ANSWER: Summer servicing can be challenging for several reasons. Longer days with nice weather allow for more workers on the job site for longer periods of time. The intense summer heat can lead to increased odor issues. With additional usage exposing more waste above the water line as well as some water evaporating due to the heat, PROs need to consider alternative strategies in summer months. Here are suggestions we have gathered over the years:

POSITIONING UNITS

- Avoid placing units on asphalt or cement if at all possible. Being avid dog-lovers we are aware of the longstanding studies that illustrate the effect of heat on paved surfaces. For an air temperature of 95 degrees, the effective temperature on asphalt is 140 degrees! The same 95 degrees on a cement surface registers 125 degrees.
- Seek shade where possible. Using the same study as referenced above, 95 degrees registers 91 in the shade.
- Avoid placing a unit where the vent stack has a low clearance under an overhang or an overhanging object. The odor that escapes from the vent stack needs to have adequate space for the fumes to dissipate into the air.
- Do not place the unit next to a building with a door or window nearby. Air circulation is essential in dispersing odors.

USE EXTRA WATER IN THE TANK

Keeping the waste below the waterline helps prevent fly infestation and keeps the waste from breaking down and producing odor. Depending on the heat and the number of uses, consider these strategies:

- In situations with extreme heat and high-use units, some PROs will “double charge” the unit by adding a second 5-gallon bucket of water (10 gallons total) and deodorizer to the empty tank.

While propping open the door to the unit may seem like a good idea, the reality is a negative impact to the venting process as well as attracting flies and other insects.

- Others have told us they add “half again as much” which is basically a “charge and a half” or roughly 7 gallons.
- In some cases where usage is not as high, adding extra deodorizer is effective.
- Referring back to the winter servicing scenarios, you may want to impose a “summer service charge” to take into account the extra expense incurred in these scenarios (extra deodorizer, extra water, extra pumping volume).

CONSIDER TWICE-A-WEEK SERVICE

The more frequently waste is pumped and the unit recharged, the better the odor control. An additional visit each week can also help to monitor the position of the unit or units on the site.

FRAGRANCE DISCS

Scented discs combine with the airflow in the unit and can mask odors up to a point. Placement behind the vent stack near the vent screen or near the vent screen above the urinal are two common and effective locations.

CUSTOMER TRAINING AND COMMUNICATION IS VALUABLE

Convey to the customer that keeping the lid closed on the restroom tank is important in allowing odor to escape via the vent stack and keeping the water temperature slightly cooler. Some PROs have a decal on the lid that states, “Please keep lid closed,” as a friendly reminder.

While propping open the door to the unit may seem like a good idea, the reality is a negative impact to the venting process as well as attracting flies and other insects. Decals with, “Please keep the door closed,” can also be effective reminders to users.



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EMPLOYEE SAFETY

Properly servicing the equipment and taking care of the customer in the intense summer heat is only half of your company’s objective. Equally, if not more important, is taking care of the route service technician and all others who work outside of the office. A summer safety program is highly recommended.

Components of an effective plan include the following:

- This program should be written and used as a reference in training sessions before summer begins and referenced throughout the ensuing months.
- It is essential to recognize the symptoms of dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. The goal is to be able to proactively avoid each, while also knowing how to treat each condition. A useful one-page summary of heat related illnesses and the suggested treatment has been created by the CDC and can be found at www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/warning.html. This chart can be placed in each vehicle as well as posted onsite.
- Proactive planning that would include coolers with water bottles in each vehicle as well as an adequate water supply in the office. Some PROs include “water bottles on hand” in their weekly inventory of supplies.
- Personal protective equipment that is specific to summer heat includes large, brimmed hats, sunglasses, cooling towels and sunscreen lotion.
- Uniform policies for summer weather should be altered, if possible. Short-sleeved shirts or company T-shirts are essential and should be fresh and clean at the start of each day, as would be the case with a company uniform policy. Any job roles where short pants are permissible should be investigated. Company image and professionalism would

dictate that pants be a standard look and appearance — “cut-off jeans” are not permissible in most companies.

- Earlier start times allow for more services to be done during the “cooler” time of the day. Depending on the route and the intensity of the heat, some PROs encourage “15-minute heat breaks” throughout the day. This is time for the route service tech to be out of the heat, an opportunity to hydrate, and preview or review their daily route.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Summer is the busiest season for our industry with longer workdays during the week and special events on the weekends. Preparing for the heat is essential for providing quality customer service, while at the same time keeping employees comfortable and safe. Have a great summer! ■

Have a story idea?

» Email us at editor@promonthly.com

TAKE 5 ...

with Potter's Potties



He Has HIGH HOPES

Above: The Potter's Potties team includes, from left, Taylor Regel, Channing Cropp, Grayson Regel, John Owens, Chenoa Schmitz, Charlie Owens and Gary Ford. (COLE Publishing photos)

Bucky Potter graduated from Virginia's Hampden-Sydney College in 2017 with an aim to start his own business. After researching a number of opportunities, he chose portable sanitation and launched Potter's Potties that same year.

Beginning with just 28 restrooms and a single truck, the company now employs 18 people, and fields 1,500 restrooms, mostly from PolyJohn, with a few from Satellite Industries. Lang Specialty Trailers supplies three restroom trailers and A Restroom Trailer Company (ART Co.) supplies two. The company plans on buying an additional pair of trailers this year.

They're serviced by 14 vacuum trucks with aluminum tanks and NVE pumps, all from Robinson Vacuum Tanks. A dozen of the trucks feature 1,500-gallon waste/500-gallon freshwater tanks — eight Hinos, three Peterbilts and a Mack. Two Ford F-550s from PortaLogix carry 800-gallon waste/350-gallon freshwater tanks.

The company serves five northern Virginia counties around its home base of Warrenton. About 70% of the company's business comes from construction, with the remainder in long-term agricultural rentals and special events.

Potter's brand stresses service, cleanliness and environmental responsibility. The company is devoted to recycling cardboard and other materials, and recently committed to cleaning up Rector Tract, a public park in Remington, Virginia.

"Our whole industry is based on ensuring the proper treatment of wastewater," says Potter, 28. "Cleaning up a river in that park fit right into our philosophy."

Although Potter's Potties currently rents its facilities, the company recently purchased a 17-acre lot and is looking to rezone it with an eye to moving there permanently in a few years.

"With more space, we're looking at the possibility of providing lateral services to our customer base," Potter says.

Bucky Potter has built Potter's Potties, a 1,500-restroom business, in only six years. He credits his growth to positive thinking and concentrating on being clean and green.

By Peter Kenter

EXPLORE FIVE ISSUES THAT AFFECT BUCKY'S PORTABLE SANITATION BUSINESS:

7 CHOOSING THE RIGHT MENTORS

Potter was inspired by two uncles who operate roll-off container businesses. "They're both entrepreneurial people," Potter says. "I watched them build successful businesses and I liked the way that this put them in control of their lives."

Prior to graduating, Potter knew he wanted to enjoy those same benefits. He asked one uncle in Florida about potential entrepreneurial career paths and was introduced to his friend, Terry Powers, owner of portable restroom business T&S Professional Rentals, in Apopka, Florida. Powers invited him to visit for a few weeks to learn about the portable sanitation industry following his graduation.

"Terry put me in a truck with a service driver and let me sit in the office for a few days," Potter says. "It helped me understand industry lingo and to learn things like operating a pump properly and how to handle my first clog. He also introduced me to suppliers he found reliable, including contacts at PolyJohn and Walex."

Potter continues to network with local entrepreneurs, including Kristen Bush, owner of Johnny Blue in Winchester, Virginia. "I can give Kristen a call and ask her a question about winterizing the restrooms or anything else, knowing we share the same issues," he says.



Above: Technician Charlie Owens prepares to service PolyJohn restrooms during a daily route.

Below: Owens sprays off a PolyJohn restroom on a service route.



2 BUILDING A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CLIENTS

Potter's experience through his first year in business demonstrated the importance of building personal connections with his clients. "To begin with, every day that I wasn't servicing those units, I was out trying to sell more service contracts," he recalls. "I made a point of remembering the name of each new client, who they were and the conversation we had."

Potter believes the early traction the company enjoyed was the result of personal connection, with the same person who priced each contract servicing the unit and taking full responsibility for it. "As we've grown, I'm not necessarily the person who completes the work, but it taught me an important lesson about building personal relationships in the industry," he says.

3 DEBUNKING INDUSTRY STEREOTYPES

Potter is on a mission to demonstrate that the industry has evolved beyond stereotypes of the dirty portable restroom. "We're no longer seeing companies providing old units covered with concrete that offered one of the worst experiences you had that day," he says.

But Potter is pushing the envelope on the meaning of clean by advertising his restrooms as the freshest, cleanest and newest in the area — then living up to that promise. Employees even receive a "clean cash" monthly bonus for maintaining the units to a high standard, as determined by a random inspection of restrooms they service.

"When I send restrooms to a client, they're all the same style and color instead of a mix and they're spotless," he says. "Customers have started to take notice and it's become part of our brand."

Potter notes that he even sends brand new units to construction site clients, instead of separating out older stock. "We don't want to create two classes of restrooms," he says. "Everybody deserves our best."

Below: Bucky Potter and Charlie Owens clean a 2022 Mack MD at the Potter's Potties shop.



Below: Owens wrangles a hose on a Mack service truck built out by Robinson Vacuum Tanks and carrying an NVE pump.



“Our whole industry is based on ensuring the proper treatment of wastewater. Cleaning up a river in that park fit right into our philosophy.” – Bucky Potter

4 SOURCING NEW VACUUM TRUCKS INSTEAD OF USED

When Potter launched Potter's Potties he already owned a snow plow, and told his uncle about his plan to convert it into his primary service truck. “My uncle told me to stop right there,” he recalls. “He told me that the first time I promised a customer I'd be there in an hour and the truck wouldn't start that my word and reputation would be out the window. I wouldn't be considered reliable any longer.”

Potter took the advice to heart and purchased his first truck new, and has been doing that ever since. It's not easy for the business to swallow the expense of buying new vehicles, but there's more to the strategy than simple reliability. “Once you have your company name painted on that new vehicle, it's going to light a fire under you and make you work a little harder,” he says. “So even if buying new hurts a bit, I will work hard enough until it doesn't.”

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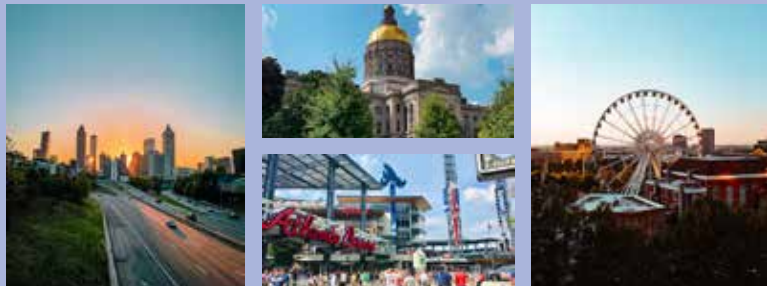
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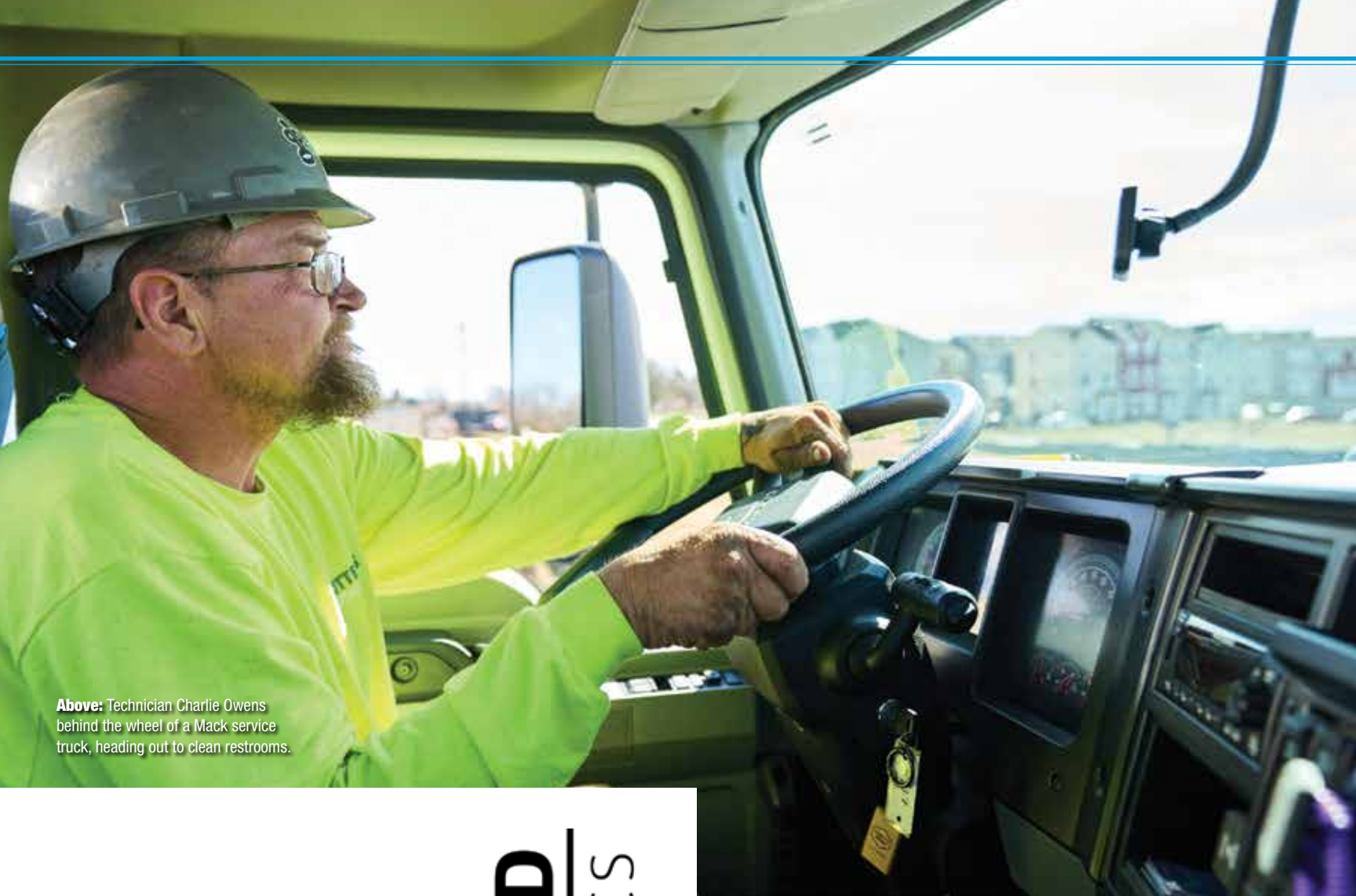


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Above: Technician Charlie Owens behind the wheel of a Mack service truck, heading out to clean restrooms.

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5 **PAYING EMPLOYEES A COMPETITIVE WAGE**

Potter doesn't believe that workers would rather sit at home and collect government checks than work for a living. Instead, he believes the market is more competitive because workers have more opportunities.

"Instead of carrying 50 pounds of mortar on their back in construction for \$13 an hour, that same person can be driving a truck for Amazon at \$19 an hour with full benefits," he says. "Portable restroom businesses are competing against opportunities in the logistics sector for workers whose primary job is to drive a truck."

Instead of losing out on hiring good workers, Potter decided it was time to not only offer more money to new hires, but also provide an incentive bonus to existing staff for finding new employees.

"Yes, increased labor costs will be charged back to the customer," he says. "And you may have to have a difficult conversation with them about absorbing the price increases, but ultimately this is about better and more reliable service." ■

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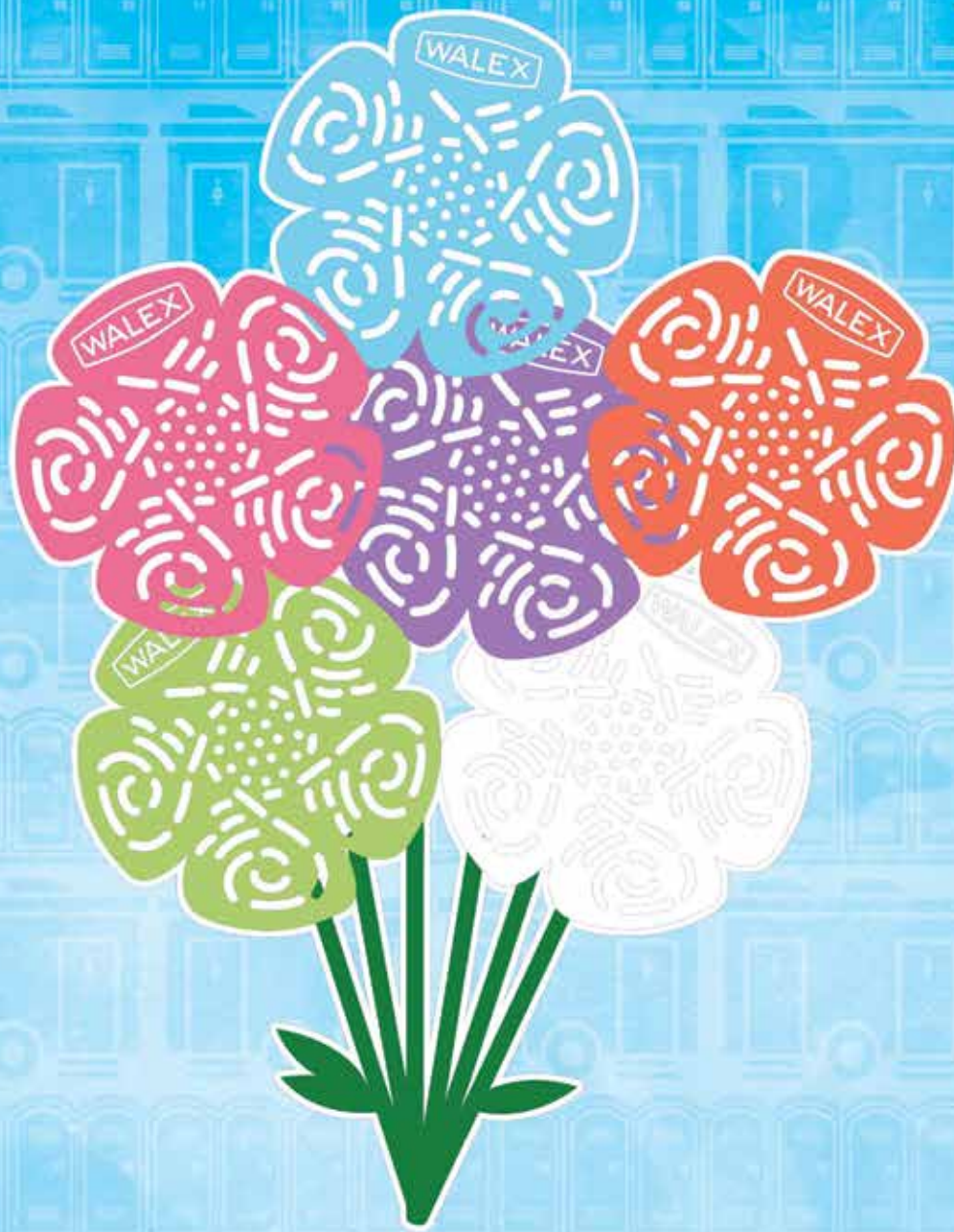
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Below: The management team includes, from left, Jake McWilliams, Eliana Baena, Kevin McWilliams and Carlos Miranda. (Photos by Matthew Bertsch)



THE POWER OF PLANNING



These Pennsylvania PROs charted a long course toward success, eventually meeting their goals for a thriving business

By Betty Dageforde




Gotta Go Potties
Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania

Owners: Jake and Eliana McWilliams
Founded: 1994
Employees: 25
Services: Portable sanitation, roll-off containers and excavation
Service Area: 60-mile radius
Website: www.gottagopotties.com

When Jake McWilliams took over the restroom side of his father’s septic and portable sanitation business, he and his wife, Eliana Baena, made a plan. Success doesn’t happen overnight and they were willing to make some near-term sacrifices for long-term success. For 10 years they both held other jobs so they could invest all the earnings back into the business.

The effort paid off. The couple now employs about 25 people and are organized into three business entities — portable sanitation, roll-off containers and excavation.

McWilliams’ operating philosophy includes doing things others don’t want to do; simplifying operational details; and having clean trucks, new equipment and happy drivers.

Their company, Gotta Go Potties, is located in Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania, in the Pocono Mountains. They work within a 60-mile radius and operate out of an 8,000-square-foot garage on a 25-acre lot. Eliana, an accountant, is the company’s controller and handles all the finances. McWilliams says the two of them blend well. “I’m always like, ‘Let’s do more and more!’ and she’s like, ‘Okay, if we’re going to do that, we need X, Y and Z.’”

WORKING THE PLAN

Kevin McWilliams started the portable restroom business in 1994, growing it to 500 units. In 2004 son Jake McWilliams took over management of the business when his father bought a septic

company. After a few years, he was ready to seriously grow the business and make it a sustainable occupation for himself and Eliana.

His first step was to take a job as a police officer working the night shift. “We had a plan — that I would keep working as much as I physically could so we could buy new equipment, get good drivers and make sure everything was paid as it should be,” he says.

Eliana also held a second job as an accountant. By 2016 she was able to quit and work full time for Gotta Go. A year later McWilliams did the same and the couple officially took over ownership of the portable restroom and excavation work, while Kevin broke off and kept the septic pumping business.

PLAIN AND SIMPLE

McWilliams likes to simplify things and keep everything organized for both customers and employees. Each of the companies has its own color scheme which appears on everything from file folders to equipment. They minimize the number of brands of equipment, vehicles and vendors they use.

Hunter green is the color for portable sanitation. General manager Carlos Miranda oversees 15 technicians, while office manager

“I’d rather pay people to come into the shop and clean their truck for a day than lay them off and then hope they come back in the spring. It’s worth every penny to have them there all winter.”

JAKE MCWILLIAMS

Nancy Scalia and Christina McFadden-Serfass handle routing, dispatching, billing and phones. Their inventory (PolyJohn, Satellite Industries) includes 2,000 standard restrooms, 200 ADA-compliant units, and 120 hand-wash stations. They also have 14 restroom trailers (Rich Specialty Trailers) in sizes ranging from two to five stations.

The company has streamlined the ordering process with vendors. For example, when they need more restrooms or another pallet of Walex deodorant tabs, a quick text message is all it takes.

The company has 10 identical vacuum trucks — 2019-2022 Isuzus built out by FlowMark with 900-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater aluminum tanks and Masport pumps. Their five transport trailers (Liquid Waste Industries) carry eight to 18 units. They also have an Avant loader. Linxup is their tracking software.

Safety orange is the color for the roll-off business, which employs office manager Candace Babiaryz and four drivers. McWilliams purchased the business from a friend in May 2022. “I had wanted to do it for years but didn’t



Above: Gotta Go has a fleet of 10 service trucks built out by FlowMark and utilizing Masport pumps. Here Matt Mason hangs the hose after cleaning units in the company yard.

want to step on anyone’s toes and have to fight somebody I knew,” he says. They have four trucks (Volvo, Hino, Ford) and 90 roll-off containers, mostly from Custom Container Solutions, with SwapLoader USA hook lift hoists.

Lime green is the color for the excavation company, which employs two technicians along with “septic mound guru” Samantha Miranda. They install sand mounds, septic tanks, drainage ditches and driveways, and do lot clearing and minor foundation work. Here, again, they keep it simple.

“We do one job at a time,” McWilliams says. “We start it and finish it before going on to the next one so we’re not jumping all over the place.” Equipment includes Bobcat E35 and E50 excavators, a Bobcat C64 skid-steer, a Peterbilt tri-axle dump truck and a Dodge Ram 5500 dump truck with a mason dumpbody.

LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITIES

When McWilliams sees other companies avoiding or pulling back on certain projects, he sees a door open. “Whatever other companies aren’t willing to do is what we are going to do,” he says.

“A lot of people lay off in the winter — we decided not to. People cut their advertising in the winter — we hammer down on it, pushing toward construction.” They try to buy at least one or two restroom trailers a year to

“There are so many different things you can get into. ... When you do something nobody else wants to do, and you do it the right way, it’s endless.”

JAKE MCWILLIAMS

upgrade product offerings. “People don’t mind paying more money when they’re getting a better product,” he says.

The company answers phones 24/7. He and Eliana personally answer them after hours. Drivers are on call on a rotating schedule to handle emergencies.

McWilliams says they should probably do more with social media but admits he has mixed feelings. “For big job sites, when they’re building a warehouse, I just don’t see the foreman sitting in a truck covered in mud looking at TikTok to see who he’s going to use for port-a-potties.”

A VARIETY OF WORK

About 65% of the company’s portable sanitation work is for construction projects. Other work includes long-term seasonal rentals at wineries, parks and schools; emergency situations such as power outages and water main breaks; and events which include everything from small family weddings to large festivals.

They especially like the large events where it’s all hands on deck from all three companies. With the addition of roll-offs, they’re now able to offer one-stop shopping for clients who need portable restrooms and trash service.

Celtic Fest is an especially fun event for the company. They bring in 175 units, which they service Friday and Saturday nights after the crowds leave. But they also do daytime servicing on Saturday.

“We bring in four to six trucks and clean all the units in about an hour and 15 minutes,” McWilliams says. “We go in and just bang it out so fast it’s crazy.” The best part is, they don’t just sneak in and unobtrusively take care of business. They are paraded in by security and a bunch of guys in kilts playing bagpipes.

(continued)



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Left: Technician Steve Ladlee cleans a row of restrooms from Satellite Industries.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION IS KEY

For the portable restroom side, employees are found through referrals and the Indeed website. “As long as someone is a good person, you can teach them the rest,” McWilliams says. “If they act like they don’t care and they’ve got a bad attitude, it doesn’t matter what the job is, it’s not going to work.”

Because McWilliams says he knew nothing about roll-offs when he got into that line of work, he did not recruit online but instead talked to people in the industry who pointed him in the direction of guys who were seasoned and knew what they were doing.

McWilliams says they do whatever they can do to make sure people are happy. Employees are always treated with respect, they’re well trained, have good equipment and get a lot of support.

“Retaining employees has been a huge contributor to our success,” he says, “because training new people all the time is just horrible, and having seasoned people is so valuable. We have a lot of guys who have been with us 10, 12 years. We have great employees.”

Benefits are also an important factor in discouraging people from jumping ship. In addition to good pay, insurance and a 401(k) plan, team members receive a gift card for their birthday, a gift card and a pie at Thanksgiving and a gift card and a honey-baked spiral ham at Christmas. They are given jeans, boots and hoodies. And the company buys a couple thousand T-shirts a year not only for the team but to occasionally pass out to customers — “little billboards,” McWilliams says.



Above: Ladlee loads a Satellite Industries restroom onto the carrier of a service truck built out by FlowMark and carrying a Masport pump.

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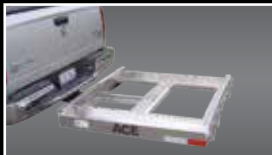
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Above: Rob Kindrew prepares to fill the freshwater tank on a service truck in the company yard.

WHEN THE WEATHER TURNS

Winters in the Poconos are cold and snowy, but the company stays busy, mostly with construction and emergency work. Trucks are stored inside, rock salt is used in the units, and technicians go to four-day routes. The holidays they weren't able to take in the summer are taken in the winter linked to Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's. When work is slow they winterize trailers, detail the trucks and polish the aluminum tanks.

Gotta Go hasn't laid anyone off in the winter for eight or nine years. Doing layoffs is a dangerous game, McWilliams says.

"You could make a business smaller in a weekend — lay off the guys and sell the equipment — but it's so much harder to get bigger again. It could take years to get back to where we were. I'd rather pay people to come into the shop and clean their truck for a day than lay them off and then hope they come back in the spring," he says. "It's worth every penny to have them there all winter."

Winter is also a time for planning, McWilliams says, "In the winter, you have to figure out how many units you're going to need for the summer events. And when winter's coming, you have to get ready in the summer. If you're not doing that, you're done."

ALWAYS PLANNING

McWilliams says one of his challenges is learning when to say no. "It's hard," he says, "because you always want the work but it's not always worth it. You can't make everybody happy."

He says one of the best things about this type of business is there's always a demand for it.

"You can be as busy or as slow as you want," he says. "There are so many different things you can get into — start with a portable restroom, get a trailer, pump out septics, install systems, put a driveway in, take care of garbage. When you do something nobody else wants to do, and you do it the right way, it's endless."

Planning is still the foundation of the company. "We plan and over plan," McWilliams says. "We have plan A, B and C at all times." ■

LEARN OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

There's more than one way to get an education. Not all learning takes places in the classroom, on the job, or from reading. Jake McWilliams — who says he can't even stand to read a restaurant menu — found a way that worked for him.

While he and his wife Eliana Baena were working at getting Gotta Go Potties on solid footing, his night shift job as a police officer provided educational opportunities. Not only did he learn a lot about the importance of rules, polices and procedures, but the job afforded him ample down time which he took advantage of.

"I listened to a ton of audiobooks," he says. "It was all business development, like how to build a program, how to stick with the program, this is why you're doing the program, when to borrow money, when to spend money, educating myself on why you do certain things. Then when one book talked about another book or person, I'd listen to that book, and so on."

There's always a way to do something, he says. "I beat that into my kids' heads — that if you want something, you can do it. Just do it. I've heard 'no' a lot in my life but I just go and ask somebody else."



Left: Kindrew sprays down a Rich Restrooms trailer in the Gotta Go Potties yard.

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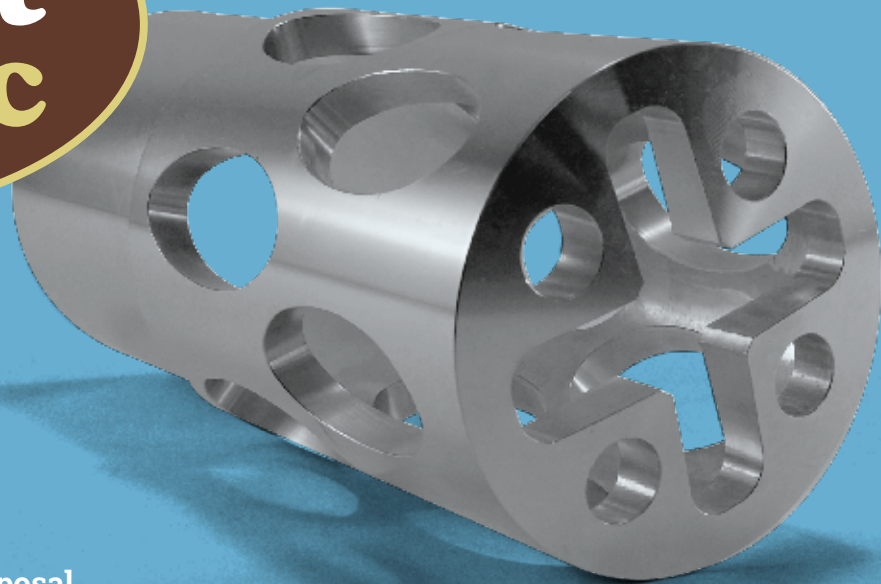
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Trade Associations 101: How Groups Like the PSAI Work For You

By Veronica Grosier

This year, Portable Sanitation Association International has seen steady membership growth. We've also enjoyed meeting folks new to or considering entry into the PRO industry. What we discovered through these conversations is many people still do not know what a trade association is, what purpose it serves and how members benefit. Having celebrated over 50 years as an association, we are here to answer those questions.

WHAT IS A TRADE ASSOCIATION?

A trade association is a nonprofit formed to serve common interests and participate in public relations for the industry it serves. Members typically include industry professionals, suppliers, brokers and affiliate stakeholders of the industry. For instance, PSAI is comprised of about 80% portable restroom operator companies of all sizes, and 20% suppliers and brokers of equipment, plastics, software, insurance, branding and more.

WHAT PURPOSE DO TRADE ASSOCIATIONS SERVE?

Associations serve a variety of purposes, many benefiting industry professionals even if they aren't members of that association. Here are just a few:

TRANSPARENCY

Because trade associations are for and by the industry professionals they serve, they have the industry's best interests at heart. There is no ulterior motive to the services they provide, so members can count on information from an association to be good at face value. As a nonprofit 501(c)6, trade associations are required to make their bylaws, financial statements and more, publicly available. This adds another layer of accountability, making associations a reliable, trustworthy source of information and services.

INFORMATION AND EXPERTISE

Associations are a valuable resource for professionals seeking education, certifications, best practices and industry regulations. Associations do the legwork to curate industry standards and best practices to advance the knowledge and expertise of its members. This helps elevate the image of the industry across the board by promoting high levels of service from knowledgeable professionals.

INDUSTRY ADVOCACY

Trade associations, unlike some nonprofits, are able to lobby the government. They are also able to maintain national and international standards. For example, PSAI maintains two standards for portable sanitation through the American National Standards Institute. These set the bar for best practices ensuring PROs' clients are requesting adequate equipment and service to meet safety and hygiene standards. Even if you're not a PSAI member, these standards are the reason for the answer you give when clients ask how many units they need for a specific event or work site.

COMMUNITY

Companies join for the resources, but they stay for the community. Networking is one of the most powerful benefits of associations. They attract professionals who want to improve their industry, share knowledge and common experiences. In the PRO industry, we face unique challenges. To pick up the phone and connect with a fellow industry professional when you're in a bind is a powerful thing. In PSAI, it doesn't take long before new members stop calling it their "network" and start calling it their "family."

There is an association for almost any industry you can imagine. For those in the portable sanitation industry, we hope you will take advantage of the resources PSAI provides, whether you are a member or not. Be sure you're using all the resources available to you. Associations are here to make your work the best it can be! ■



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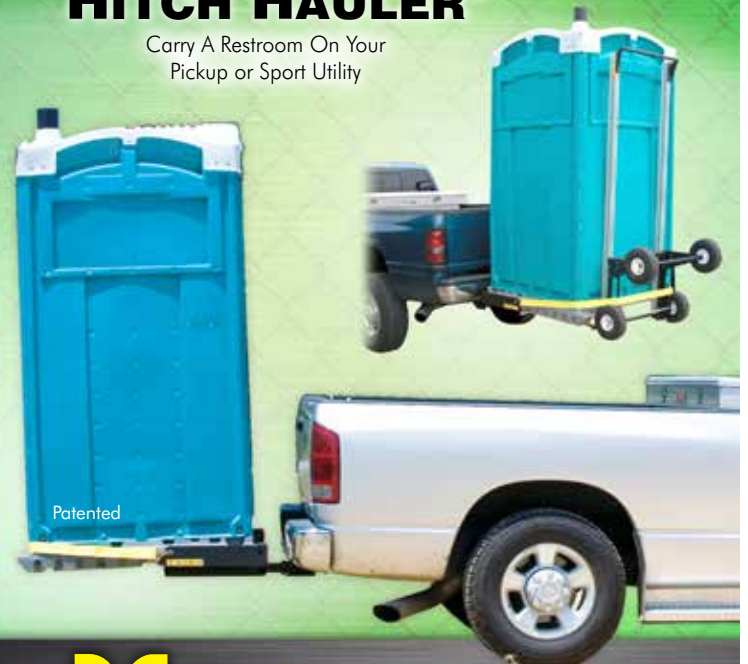


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Isuzu Commercial Truck of America announced its first all-electric production model, the N-Series EV. The 2025 Class 5 truck, featuring a 19,500-pound gross-vehicle weight rating, a battery electric platform developed by Isuzu Motors Limited, and an all-new cab design, will be available in the first half of 2024. The trucks will offer wheelbases ranging from 132.5 to 176 inches to accommodate a variety of body lengths, four choices of battery capacity, the largest of which has a range up to 235 miles, DC fast charging and AC (level 2) charging capability, and an optional Advanced Driver Assistance System package to improve safety and reduce the number and severity of collisions. Every N-Series EV will be powered by a number of 20 kWh, lithium-ion battery packs, and users will be able to choose from three-, five-, seven- and nine-battery-pack models. **866-441-9638; www.isuzucv.com** ■

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PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

New restroom features all-plastic front

By Tim Dobbins



PolyJohn brings something new to their portable restroom lineup with the PJP4. What makes this unit different from other PolyJohn offerings is an all-new, all-plastic front.

“We have two main front panels,” says Danny Schaver, marketing director for PolyJohn. “One that has an aluminum door frame, the PJN3, and now the plastic front in the PJP4.”

The company developed the unit partly because of interactions with end users. “We knew that we needed to change a few things with our all-plastic front variation and after talking with many customers there were a couple things that stood out,” Schaver says. “We developed a larger door opening, better door spring points and larger company logo area.”

PolyJohn accomplished those additions while also including features like a foot door opening spot, universal rotary latch and a stronger vertical rib structure. “We always, always go to our customers for input in product development,” Schaver says. “There are many rounds of our business development team talking with customers, gaining data and coming back in house with our engineering team for developing and testing.”

The end result is a portable restroom with an exterior height of 91 inches, width of 43.5 inches and length of 47 inches. Interior space measures 82 inches tall by 41 inches wide and 41 inches long. The PJP4 comes standard with a 60-gallon holding tank and weighs 165 pounds. The door offers an opening width of just over 26 inches and is 73 inches tall.

PJP4 units are available in 15 color options and customers can also choose to mix and match from various corner and screen colors. Optional features include a multipurpose shelf, instant antiseptic hand cleanser and foam dispensers, containment tray, sink and paper towel dispenser.

“We have a great lineup of interchangeable parts and variations,” Schaver says. “These new fronts are all part of the PJ unit family. And now with the addition of our Grated Skid, we have built a buffet of products that our customers can choose from to have whatever option they want to make their fleet their own.”

The PJP4 was officially released at the WWETT Show, and Schaver says it was well received. “Users like that it fits the look and feel of previous models of PJ units so it will be able to blend into the rest of their fleet.” **800-292-1305; www.polyjohn.com** ■

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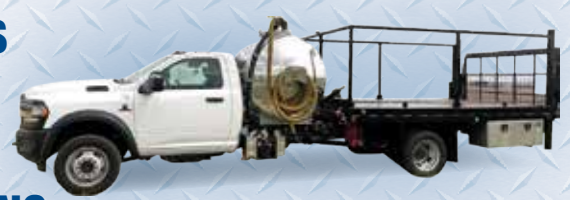
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Satellite Industries opens new facility

Satellite Industries celebrated the opening of its new manufacturing facility for the deodorizer and consumables division in Cedar Park, Texas, in the Austin metropolitan area. The event featured a ribbon cutting, facility tours, food and entertainment. The facility features a climate-controlled lab and production areas ensuring no moisture contamination and automated powder blending. In addition, increased warehouse space with multiple shipping bays allows for storage of more deodorizers, consumables, restrooms, hand-wash units, truck and trailers.



Brian Tabel

Isuzu's Brian Table joins NTEA board

Glenn Ellis was appointed president and chairman of the board for Hino Trucks. Ellis succeeds Shigehiro Matsuoka, who retired after holding the position for four years. In addition, Ellis will serve as an officer of Hino Motors Limited, Hino Trucks' parent company.

Hino Trucks announced two other organizational changes. Bob Petz, who previously served as senior vice president of vehicle and parts sales, was appointed chief operating officer and executive vice president. And John Donato, previously vice president of parts operations, will assume the role as senior vice president of sales and marketing. ■



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