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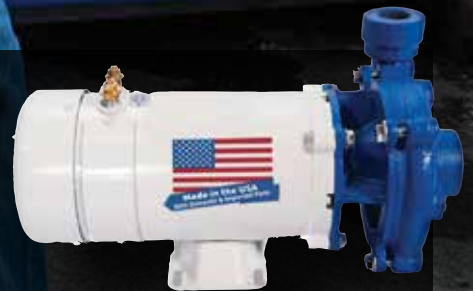
TLC Services flourishes through diversification and customer care in a beautiful and trendy Montana region

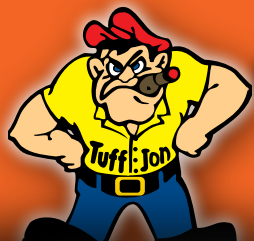
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LEFT: Economic twists and turns prompted TLC Services to offer an ever-wider array of services including septic pumping and portable sanitation. Owners Wes and Lori Dooley are shown with Satellite Industries restrooms that are part of their inventory. (Photo by Sam Wilson)

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By Jim Kneiszel

What's News in the World of Portable Sanitation?

Dead bodies, exploding restrooms and new restrictions are a few challenges faced by PROs in 2023

It's time for more portable sanitation stories, ripped from the headlines. As always, I welcome your comments on topics covered in the media in recent months.

Dead bodies, loaded pistol found in portable restrooms

My daily reviews of internet searches are chock full of news accounts of strange and disturbing things found in portable restrooms. This got me wondering about the most unusual items that have turned up in restrooms on your service routes.

In Canton, Ohio, a construction worker went to use the restroom on a building site and the door was locked. After a while, he forced his way in and found the body of a 70-year-old man. The cause of death was not immediately known, but the coroner reported there was no trauma found on the body. In Newport, Rhode Island, a 48-year-old man was found dead in a portable at a road construction site.

Based on news accounts I receive, instances of people dying in portable restrooms seem to be on the rise. I would only be speculating to suggest growing homeless populations, drug use or natural causes deaths are involved. Or maybe this is not something new, but we just hear about it more often because of the vast number and reach of media outlets through the internet. In another case that could have ended much worse, a visitor at an Omaha, Nebraska, playground discovered a loaded .45-caliber Sig Sauer handgun on the seat of a portable restroom. Local law enforcement posted a photo of the gun on social media and it was claimed by a man who said it was stolen from his unlocked car near the park. The sheriff's department reported there is no penalty for leaving an unsecured firearm in a vehicle and speculated the thief decided to dump the stolen gun or left it in the restroom for someone else to pick up.

So what have you discovered while servicing restrooms? And have you ever had to involve the police in a situation like this during your daily route? Share your stories at editor@promonthly.com and I'll list them in a future column.

Note to vandals: Blow up something else

"I like to blow stuff up. But not porta-potties." That's what an exasperated Avery White, owner of Abe's Portables in Omaha, Nebraska, told a KETV-7 reporter after several of the company's units were damaged by fireworks. At one destroyed park unit, White held up a paper fireworks wrapper

to prove how vandals were targeting the restrooms. "It's never going to cripple us, but it kind of sucks to have to clean these up," he said on the TV news. There was a rash of complaints about fireworks damage to restrooms across the country in the last several months. Over the Fourth of July alone, White said at least five of his restrooms were hit. A representative for a baseball organization in Omaha said these volunteer groups had to pay for repairs for at least seven restrooms. These groups raise money to offer sports programs for youth and I'm sure they don't have a lot of extra cash laying around to pay for this thoughtless vandalism.

Have you figured out a way to curb this rampant vandalism of your units? Please share your ideas to save fellow PROs time and money and help our community groups continue to offer valued recreational services.

Keep portable restrooms out of the bike lane

I'll bet you didn't know there are rabid bicycling enthusiasts looking out for restrooms blocking bike lanes in major cities. I saw the proof recently when David Shellnutt, known as The Biking Lawyer, posted a photo of a construction unit parked in a bike lane in Toronto in *Canadian Cycling Magazine*. "Sadly, this happens more often than not. At least three times last year we reported on it," Shellnut tweeted about the restroom put in the way of riders.

This is yet another placement hazard at or around construction sites in busy city locations. It's important to take many factors into consideration when serving your construction clients and protecting the general public around these sites. Worker safety is paramount as they navigate around trucks, machines and construction debris. But don't forget about pedestrians or cyclists when you set up restrooms. They don't expect obstructions in bike lanes or along sidewalks, and unlike the construction crews, they are not used to looking out for these hazards.

So what have you discovered while servicing restrooms? And have you ever had to involve the police in a situation like this during your daily route? Share your stories at editor@promonthly.com and I'll list them in a future column.

Glastonbury Festival ranks best in restroom access

The *European Cleaning Journal* noted that a survey by manufacturer Diamond Trailers ranked Glastonbury Festival in Somerset, England, as the top music venue for access to portable sanitation. Following standards published by restroom provider Let Loos, the *Journal* story said Glastonbury would need a minimum of 2,742 toilets and urinals for its 210,000-person capacity crowd. The festival provided about 5,000 units at this year's June festival featuring artists including Elton John, Guns N' Roses, Lizzo and Arctic Monkeys.

How does that ratio of people to restrooms compare to your biggest event of the busy season? If you served a big music festival this year, let us know how many restrooms and restroom trailers you provided to serve attendees. Did it turn out to be enough or will you be suggesting event planners add more units for 2024?

Check the rules before placing a backyard unit

Town officials in Rising Sun, Maryland, put a damper on backyard portable restrooms. According to the *Cecil Daily* in Elkton, Maryland, commissioners recently passed an ordinance to fine homeowners \$50 per day for having restrooms on their property for more than a week at a time. The ordinance will allow a portable restroom placement on a residential property twice over a three-month period, but not to exceed a week each time. The fines kick in after two weeks, allowing a one-week grace period.

I imagine this "emergency" ordinance was prompted by neighbor complaints about restrooms being used for graduation parties, pool parties and the like at private residences. Perhaps requiring frequent service intervals and screening the units from neighbors would have been a good intermediate step before so sharply limiting use of portable restrooms. Portable restrooms offer convenience and sanitation on private properties and local governments should do as little as possible to hinder their use. What say you?

Have you had to retrieve a restroom from the water?

Apparently portable restrooms are still seen bobbing up and down in canals in Cape Coral, Florida, a year after Hurricane Ian strewn debris across the Sunshine State. Residents aren't happy about it and are looking for someone to blame for the reportedly 30 restrooms yet to be pulled out of the water.

"It's more bacteria in the water, of course. And we have a lot of boats that come through here and they could hit [the restroom] and damage their boats, and it's just an eyesore," said Shelly Sorich, talking to NBC-2 News in Fort Myers, Florida.

Folks in Florida have been reading the name on the doors of floating restrooms and calling the PROs to retrieve them, including one that washed up on shore. One of the restroom contractors was Jeff Tankersley, CEO of TOI TOI USA, who spoke to NBC-2.

"We are fishing these out of canals and cleaning them up. There's a lot we are getting to. If there's one in someone's yard, we likely just haven't gotten to it," he explained.

I recall many years ago writing about a PRO who jumped into the water off the Atlantic Coast and pulled one of his units back to shore. He even sent us photos of this athletic feat. Have you ever had to perform a similar rescue? And if so, was the unit salvageable or beaten into a worthless pile of plastic by the wave action? I've been looking for another photo or video of a PRO dragging a restroom back to shore for more than a decade. ■

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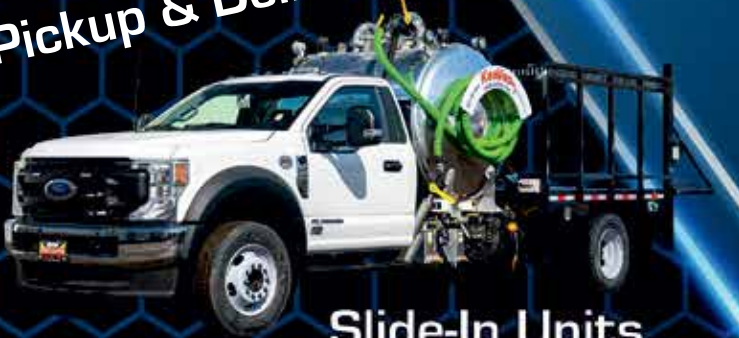
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STRATEGIC SUSTAINABILITY

Commonsense Strategies to Improve Your Business' Eco-Footprint



As portable restroom operators, it's easy to think more is more, especially when in the midst of a busy season. However, that's no excuse to let the ecological costs of portable sanitation spiral out of control. Columnist Amanda Clark provides simple, actionable strategies to improve your operation's sustainability.

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Business Builder

HIRING TIME

Keep Your Eyes Open to a Prospect's Potential

Hiring is a constant struggle for portable restroom operators. From the lack of experienced candidates to the competitive wage market, top talent is hard to find and keep. In this online article, columnist Anthony Pacilla shares hiring practices to find your ideal job candidate.

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NOT MY JOB?!

Safety Is Everyone's Responsibility

Portable sanitation carries its own set of safety risks — from airborne pathogens to driving hazards. It's easy to forget about these risks when dealing with the everyday monotony of driving routes and cleaning restrooms. However, as the boss, it's your job to remind your employees that safety is everyone's job. Read how in this exclusive online article.

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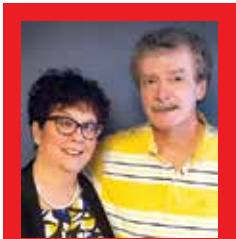
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By Jeff and Terri Wigley

The Competition Is Bad-Mouthing You?

Don't stoop to the level of your unfriendly competitors; keep your relationships with fellow PROs positive

Competition is a fact of business life. As professional operators, we need to have policies in place for our competitors just as we do for our customers and for our employees. This month's question is one that all of us should examine. Our answer is based upon our 22 years of experience in the metropolitan Atlanta area. With all of these tips concerning your competition, please keep in mind what we learned early in our business careers — "always consider your customer before your competition."

QUESTION: We have several competitors with actual physical locations in our area in addition to several brokers that advertise that they serve our marketplace. What are some general tips and strategies for dealing with competitors?

ANSWER: The first step in this process is to identify all of your competition. In addition to those competitors whose units you actually see in your area, use social media to research companies that advertise that they serve your area. You may find companies with whom you are unfamiliar.

As far as classifying your competitors, we generally considered each on a scale of "friendly" to "non-interactive" to "unfriendly."

- "Friendly" - We had competitors in our market who worked on a professional level. We earned the business for certain jobs and they earned the business for others. They may attend some of the same homebuilder's association meetings or chamber of commerce events. One of our common goals was to work to raise the standards of our industry by providing quality, professional service.
- "Non-Interactive" - We had several competitors that we only knew from seeing their units on job sites. They would not attend training or certification classes and did not interact with our company.
- "Unfriendly" - We had less than a handful of these competitors over the years and we tried to not let them influence our business relationships with other competitors. While instinctively you sometimes want to "go to war" with these companies, it can both harm your own company as well as those in your marketplace.

TIPS FOR INTERACTING WITH THESE TYPES OF COMPETITORS:

In general, attempt to communicate with competitors where possible

Your cost of doing business is specific to your company and you should not let a competitor dictate your pricing structure.

but never, ever communicate about pricing. Price fixing is a federal crime as the Federal Trade Commission writes:

"Price fixing is an agreement (written, verbal or inferred from conduct) among competitors to raise, lower, maintain or stabilize prices or price levels. Generally, the antitrust laws require that each company establish prices and other competitive terms on its own, without agreeing with a competitor. ... Price fixing is a major concern of government antitrust enforcement. Individuals and companies that knowingly enter price-fixing agreements are routinely investigated by the FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies and can be criminally prosecuted. Potential penalties include lengthy terms of imprisonment (up to 10 years) and large fines (up to \$1 million for individuals, \$100 million for companies, or twice the gain or loss from the offense). Where appropriate, the FTC may also bring a civil enforcement action."

Keeping this in mind at all times and knowing that each PRO and each market is unique, we have used examples to illustrate the tips that we are suggesting. Modify these examples to match those of your company, your competitors and your service area.

FRIENDLY COMPETITORS

- Offer help when needed. For example, a huge event may require more units than one company can provide or specialty equipment is required that the competitor may not have.
- Refer business to them for an area that you do not service and ask the same from them.
- For units more convenient for them to service, deliver your unit and contract them to service.
- Share pertinent information that may be of interest to the competitor. Examples: "Our driver saw one of your units tipped over on Main Street" or, "Our driver just pulled into the local wastewater treatment plant and it is closed today due to an equipment problem."



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NON-INTERACTIVE COMPETITORS

- Look for an opportunity to interact as in the examples discussed above regarding their units being tipped over or common interest items such as the local treatment plant closed.
- Pass on leads. "We received a call from an area that we do not service. Do you or do you know someone who does?"
- "There is an industry show coming up soon. You may want to consider attending."

UNFRIENDLY COMPETITORS

- In general, do not stoop to their level. Don't get into a price war. Know your company's cost of doing business and adhere to those numbers.
- Don't go onto job sites with their units and kick them off by offering better pricing.
- Don't criticize them by name to customers or to potential customers.

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES VERSUS ALL COMPETITORS

- Concentrate on your company and your company's strengths. "We are locally owned and operated." "We have been in business for this many years." "Customer service is our prime objective." "Our route service technicians are all industry-certified."
- Speak about competition in general terms to a customer or a potential customer - "Unlike our competitors in this area, our company uses barcodes to register each unit that is serviced."
- Do not speak about specific competitors by name nor respond to gossip about them or other companies.
- Be aware of your competition in terms of their pricing and product offerings. Some PROs will periodically conduct anonymous price

surveys of their competitors to ascertain pricing for basic once-a-week or twice-a-week servicing, including delivery and pickup charges. While this in no way should influence your company's pricing, you will have an idea as to how your company compares to other companies in your market. Your cost of doing business is specific to your company and you should not let a competitor dictate your pricing structure.

- Instill in your company a respect for all competitors. You must respect the competition and remember these companies remain an option for the customer.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Competition is a part of business. Act and react to your competitors in a positive manner. Your competition can make your company stronger and better. ■

Have a story idea?

» Email us at editor@promonthly.com

Right: The crew of TLC Services includes, from left, Andrea Fullerton, Trish Woodring, Emilio Romero, Todd Lehman, Zac Dooley, James Stocker, Colton Hughes, Seth Lyden, Chad Vanderby, and owners Lori and Wes Dooley. (Photos by Sam Wilson)



BIG SKY BOUNTY



TLC Services flourishes through diversification and customer care in a beautiful and trendy Montana region

By Ken Wysocky



TLC Services Belgrade, Montana

Owners: Lori and Wes Dooley

Founded: 1991

Employees: 16

Services: Hydroexcavation and excavation services, portable restroom rentals and service, septic pumping; septic system repairs, inspections and installations

Service Area: 200-mile radius around Belgrade

Website: www.tlcservicesmt.com

The recession of 2008 and 2009 devastated many businesses. But oddly enough, it was a blessing in disguise for TLC Services, a landscaping and excavation company that was forced by economic headwinds to perform an abrupt business U-turn and head in a different direction.

Today the company, based in Belgrade, a town near Bozeman in southwestern Montana, is a fully diversified business that rents and services restrooms; pumps septic tanks and inspects and installs septic systems; and offers hydroexcavation, excavation, concrete and gravel-shooting services. (The TLC in the company name stands for Tree and Lawn Care, its initial service offering; the Dooleys kept the name to retain its high level of brand recognition)

And in an everything-comes-full-circle scenario, the company — founded in 1991 — also re-entered the excavation field and once again owns

a large fleet of dump trucks, road graders, front-end loaders, skid-steers, bulldozers and more.

But back in 2008, offering a full array of such services wasn't even remotely on the agenda for owners Lori and Wes Dooley Sr. Instead, the couple was in full-blown survival mode, says Lori Dooley.

TOUGH TIMES

When the recession hit, people stopped doing excavation and landscaping. That spurred the Dooleys to consider providing more essential and necessary services that also were more recession-proof. And portable restrooms and septic-related services seemed like viable options.

"We had about a half-million dollars' worth of equipment just sitting there, so we found a buyer that wanted most of the iron on the excavation side," she says. "Then Wes went to the Water &



“Wes is a veteran of the United States Army, so the flag just made a lot of sense,” she says. “And people absolutely do recognize our trucks, which are moving billboards.”

LORI DOOLEY

Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport (WWET) Show and bought more than a quarter-million dollars of septic and restroom equipment.

“It was a bold move, but we had to do it,” Dooley adds. “It was very humbling because the successful company we were running suddenly was dying, which left us wondering what to do.”

Being part of a diversified company has been good for growing the restroom division because customers for one service like to use complementary services offered by the same company, Dooley says.

“We gain customers for a lot more than just one service,” she explains. “They might go from renting a portable restroom to having us dig a foundation for their house to hiring us to pump out their septic tank or replace their septic system,” she says. “They like dealing with just one company for multiple ser-



Above: Service technicians are shown with the TLC truck fleet, built out by Imperial Industries and running National Vacuum Equipment pumps.

Right: Colton Hughes accesses paper products on his service truck during a daily route.

Below: Hughes prepares to service restrooms on his daily route.



VICES, plus they get better quality control and don't run into potential scheduling or timing issues caused by using multiple companies.

"We don't use subcontractors — we like to do things ourselves."

RAPID GROWTH

On the restroom end of the business, the company started out with 70 restrooms and a Sterling service truck outfitted with a 950-gallon waste/225-gallon freshwater aluminum tank from Satellite Vacuum Trucks.

Today the company owns nearly 700 restrooms, many bought from PolyPortables, which was purchased by Satellite Industries, and others from Satellite.

"That may not seem like a lot and we could have a lot more restrooms out there," Dooley explains. "But we don't want to grow too fast and not be able to service them properly."

Growth occurred rapidly in 2009 and 2010, with sales increasing 33% each year. Today monthly rentals, primarily from construction contractors, generate about 80% of portable restroom revenues, with special events kicking in the balance.

The primary reason for that quick growth? Great customer service, she says.

"We truly listen to what customers need," Dooley says. "We also educate customers about how many units they're actually going to need, which benefits both them and the users. Their employees are happy because they

"We don't overload our drivers with too many units to clean. It's simply a matter of doing for customers what you'd expect someone to do for you."

LORI DOOLEY

have clean restrooms and our employees are happy because units aren't destroyed from overuse."

As for marketing, Dooley says the company never had to do much advertising because clean restrooms do the talking. "Most of our business comes from word-of-mouth referrals," she says. "Contractors talk."

TRAINING TIME

Accountability has been key to the restroom division's success. Company officials maintain quality standards from cleaning by doing spot checks on restrooms, either by calling customers or checking units in person, she notes.

"But we're really lucky because our guys are really great," Dooley adds. "I always tell our guys the only thing we can sell differently is service. We don't overload our drivers with too many units to clean. It's simply a matter of doing for customers what you'd expect someone to do for you."

For training, new hires spend about a month driving routes with at least three other technicians. Why three?

"All our guys have their own style and quirks for how to do things," Dooley explains. "So they learn some things from one guy and other things from other guys."

RELIABLE EQUIPMENT

The roster of equipment also includes 10 family units and nearly 30 hand-wash stations; six double-sink hand-wash stations from Satellite; and a semi-trailer from Great Dane that can transport up to 28 restrooms for special events. It features a lift-gate from Tommy Gate.

"We provide restrooms for Montana State University football games [in Bozeman], so being able to carry that many restrooms at one time is a total time-saver," Dooley says. "That gives our guys more time to set up restrooms and get them 'wet' and ready to go."

(continued)

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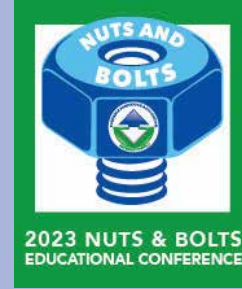
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Above: Colton Hughes and Chad Vanderby clean a row of Satellite Industries restrooms set up at a sports complex.

VINYL WRAPS ENHANCE MARKETING

While word-of-mouth referrals are a critical part of marketing efforts at TLC Services, the multifaceted company also relies heavily on sharp-looking trucks to keep it top of mind with potential customers.

Service vehicles run by the company feature distinctive vinyl wraps emblazoned with the American flag, a nod to co-owner Wes Dooley's military service, says Lori Dooley, his wife and co-owner.

"Wes is a veteran of the United States Army, so the flag just made a lot of sense," she says. "And people absolutely do recognize our trucks, which are moving billboards.

"A lot of times when people call us, they tell us without being asked that they found out about us because of our trucks. Or if we meet someone at a restaurant and tell them we own TLC Services, they say, 'Oh, you're the company with the flag on the trucks — we see your trucks everywhere.'

"That branding definitely has helped our company grow," she adds, noting that the wraps are so effective that she often urges Wes to drive a truck when he runs errands.

"If he had to go buy a six-pack of beer or some groceries, I'd tell him to take a septic truck," she says.

Dooley estimates the company has invested around \$40,000 on vinyl wraps for its service vehicles. She says she pays a slightly higher price for extra-thick wraps because they last longer.

To keep the good-impressions going, drivers are required to wash their vehicles once a week. Clean trucks enhance the company's image as professionals and tell customers that technicians will take care of them the same way they care for their vehicles.

"We do things the way we'd want companies to do if they showed up at our house," she says.

That professional image also applies to trucks that service special events, like the Big Sky Country State Fair.

"We have about 77 restrooms there that we service twice a day," Dooley explains. "There are a lot of families around and I don't want my trucks rolling through there looking like they just drove through a mud bath.

"I almost wish I had a drive-through car wash so our trucks would get washed every day."

For service trucks, the company owns two RAM 5500 trucks featuring 600-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater steel tanks from Imperial Industries and vacuum pumps from National Vacuum Equipment; and four Ford F-550 trucks. Three of the Fords feature 900-gallon waste/400 gallon freshwater aluminum tanks from Imperial and pumps from NVE and Masport; the fourth features a 680-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater steel tank from Imperial and a Masport pump. Two more RAM trucks are on order.

All but one of the service trucks are equipped with four-wheel drive because of the treacherous winter conditions, she says. Also, the Dooleys prefer smaller tanks because it's easier to comply with Montana's weight-restriction laws for vehicles, she says.

BIG SKY BOOM

Given what happened in 2008, isn't Dooley concerned about being too dependent on one business sector — in this case, construction contractors — for portable restroom business? Not really, thanks to a prolonged construction boom in the Bozeman area as well as the so-called Big Sky region, which straddles Madison and Gallatin counties, about 45 miles southwest of Bozeman.

Construction activity in the thriving Big Sky area — home to numerous celebrities such as Tom Brady, Justin Timberlake, Jeff Bridges, Phil Mickelson and Bill Gates — is centered on multi million-dollar homes and luxury ski resorts being built throughout the region.

"Big Sky is the home of the uber-elite — the one-percenters," Dooley says. "It's been great for business because they're building a lot of \$18 million houses that take five years to build.



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“There also are new ski resorts being built like the One & Only Moonlight Basin with 500 people working there on just one portion of it,” she continues. “We’ve had around 60 units out there for about three years and we clean 35 of them every day.”

The company also rents about 20 restrooms to another resort that’s been under construction for three years.

“Once we decided to service the Big Sky area, a lot of contractors started calling,” she says.

Dooley initially was concerned about servicing Big Sky because getting there requires taking U.S. 191 through Gallatin Canyon, a hazardous drive in winter.

“It’s very dangerous — there’s a crash almost every time it snows,” she says. “But one of our big clients down here [who also does construction in the Big Sky area] said he needed our units up there because we clean them.

“I said it would cost a lot of money and he said that’s OK, so I said OK,” she continues. “I was anxious about doing it, but we didn’t want to leave a lot of money on the table.”

TLC dedicates one driver to the Big Sky area, she says.

GROWTH AHEAD

Dooley says she expects continued growth, as evidenced by orders for more service trucks and restrooms. But she prefers advances to come slow and steady to avoid potential declines in customer service.

“We just want to be sure it’s controlled and sustainable growth,” she says. “There still are a lot of opportunities for growth, but we plan to take it slow.”

The Dooleys also are busy preparing three of their four sons to run the business after they retire. Wes Jr., age 24, now runs the hydroexcavation arm of the business as well as excavation work for septic system installations; Zachary, age 22, manages the gravel-shooting and concrete-work divisions; and Timothy, age 15, is being groomed to work in the portable sanitation and septic divisions.

“Wes and I are so proud that we run a business our sons want to work for,” Dooley says. “They each want to run their own divisions and seem very happy with that.”

As for retirement, the Dooleys plan to stick around for a while.

“We feel very blessed to have built our company into a very good business,” she says. “But we’re not done yet. We’ve got even more building to do. We’re not ones to sit still.” ■

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Below: Hughes and Vanderby deliver restrooms to a soccer complex in Bozeman, Montana. Restrooms are from Satellite Industries and their trucks are built out by Imperial Industries and run National Vacuum Equipment pumps.



Below: Hughes replenishes hand sanitizer inside a Satellite unit while Vanderby wipes down the door.

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| | RCF 370 | As Per Application | 28.5" | 30 | 385 | 8 | Fan | 1,400 |
| | RCF 500 | As Per Application | 28.5" | 30 | 450 | 8 | Fan | 1,400 |
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| <p>See ad page 13</p> | <p>Robinson Vacuum Tanks 306 Runville Rd., Bellefonte, PA 16823 814-933-0927 info@robinsontanks.com • www.robinsontanks.com</p> | <p>Conde, Fruitland, Jurop, Masport, Moro, National Vacuum Equipment</p> |
|  <p>See ad page 5</p> | <p>Satellite Industries - Satellite Vacuum Truck Division 2530 Xenium Ln. N, Minneapolis, MN 55441 800-883-1123 • (f) 763-553-1905 information@satelliteindustries.com • www.satellitetruckxpress.com</p> | <p>Masport, Conde, National Vacuum Equipment</p> |
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Right: The leadership team at A1 Texas Gold is shown in the company yard with a variety of restrooms. From left are John and Jordan Garcia and Jessee and Jordan Pilgrim. (Photos by Levy Guzman)



A new name is one of many A1 Texas Gold's many changes as it retools for success

By Betty Dageforde

GOOD AS GOLD

Hurricane Harvey hit Rockport, Texas, just a few months after *PRO* last visited Texas Gold Skiddos in 2017. Jordan Garcia and her father, David Wells Jr., were enthusiastically just getting started with their portable restroom and septic pumping business, which was intended to complement Wells' septic installation work. The plan was to focus on construction accounts, gradually expanding into special events, while Wells worked his way towards retirement.

But things did not go according to plan. The company was suddenly thrust into the role of emergency services provider for Rockport which, in 2023, is still recovering from the hurricane. That disas-

ter was followed a couple years later by the COVID-19 pandemic. And in 2022 Wells passed away and Garcia had the sad task of reorganizing the company without her father.

Today the business has a new name, new ownership structure and a new focus. It's now called A1 Texas Gold and Garcia's husband John, sister Jessee Pilgrim and brother-in-law Jordan Pilgrim are her co-owners. And, with life returning to normal and the recent acquisition of another company, they are finally getting back to their plans to grow the business and break into the special events market.

ESSENTIAL SERVICE

Rockport had no water, sewer or electricity for 35 days after Hurricane Harvey, Garcia reports. Not only was the company able to provide portable sanitation, but they had access to water from a well on their 6-acre property.

The team sprang into action. "We had to cut our way out of the

TIME FOR A PRO FAMILY REUNION?

Return Engagement takes readers back to visit a portable sanitation company we wrote about long ago to learn how their business has changed over the years. If there is a past featured *PRO* you would like to catch up with, send suggestions to editor@promonthly.com and we'll plan an update.

driveway,” Garcia says, “But we had portable restrooms for first responders and we had our well set up with generators. My dad was kind of a prepper so this was his moment to shine and we were still able to operate.”

In the aftermath, they provided services to cleanup and construction crews. “We were subbed out to another provider,” Garcia says. “They had all the units but subbed the servicing to us — which actually helped us out tremendously. I would say it single-handedly probably kept us in business. We also serviced a lot of the FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] base camps, electric substations and private individuals working on their homes.”

Garcia can’t guess how many units they lost. “We’d find them in crazy places — like in the trees,” she says. They were able to quickly get their hands on more units through the resale market. But Garcia laughs that she had to give up her original idea to have all their units perfectly matched in the company’s signature gold color — “Now we kind of look like the circus.”

Just as events started coming back online, everything was shut down again due to COVID. Construction stalled at first but eventually picked up. “People were trying to escape the big cities and were attracted to the coast,” Jordan Pilgrim says. “So there was a lot of home construction and new homes needing septic tanks.”

A DEFINING MOMENT

The company’s next big challenge was losing Wells in October 2022. It was unexpected, although his health had been declining. Garcia’s first concern was the employees — four service technicians and one septic installer/maintenance provider. “We focused on making sure everybody felt taken care of and safe in their job,” she says.

Then she had some decisions to make. “We had to decide what to do with the business. The problem was, the disaster stuff had shrunk, market share had shrunk.” She also needed help running the company. She was actually doing so from Florida due to her husband’s job with the U.S. Coast Guard.

“We had to decide what to do with the business. The problem was, the disaster stuff had shrunk, market share had shrunk.”

JORDAN GARCIA



A1 Texas Gold

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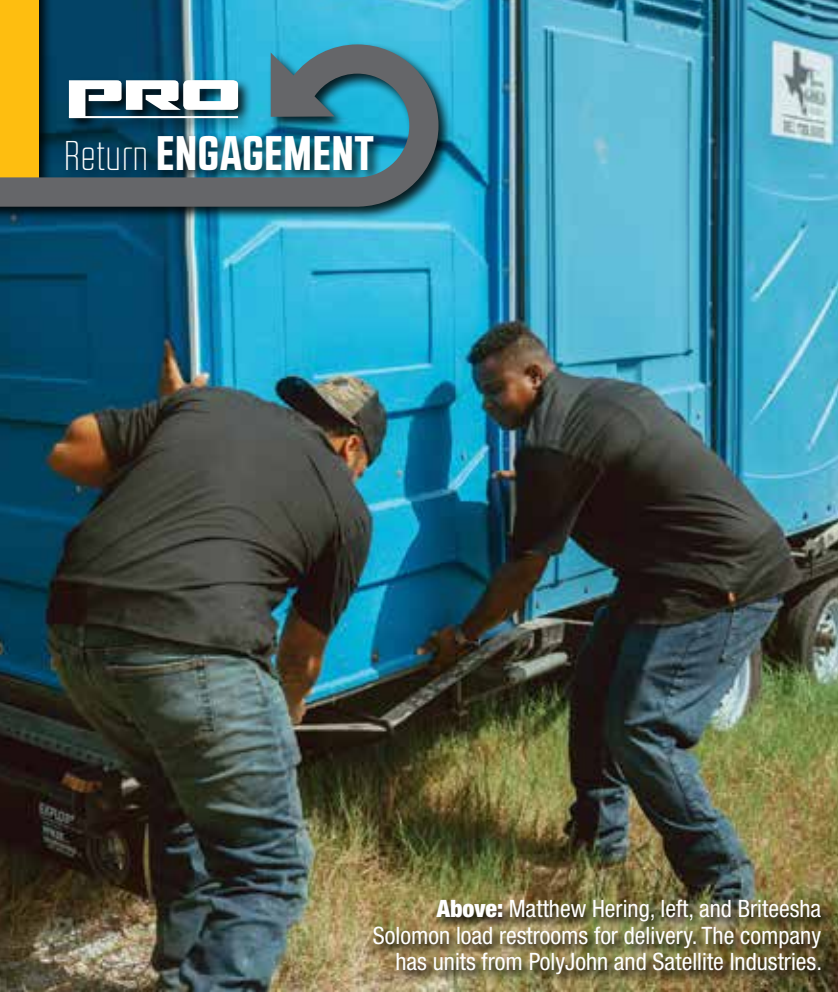
Service Area: 50-mile radius

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Above: The A1 Texas Gold team includes, from left, Gerardo Lopez, Terri Gonzales, Brandy Shetters, Marley Griffin, Jordan Garcia, John Garcia, Jordan Pilgrim, Jesse Pilgrim, Matthew Hering, Brittany Solomon, Briteesha Solomon. In the background is a 2023 Ford F-550 carrying a Masport pump and built out by Iron Vac.

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Above: Matthew Hering, left, and Briteesha Solomon load restrooms for delivery. The company has units from PolyJohn and Satellite Industries.

Answers began to appear. Earlier in the year, Pilgrim's parents sold their hotel, which he and his wife had been actively involved in. "So we were looking for a new venture to get into anyway," he says. "The obvious choice was to step in and help with this."

NEW NAME, NEW OWNERS

"I had been talking off and on to A-1 Norm's Portables," Garcia says. "The owners, Rene and Wayne Price, were wanting to retire." A-1 was an 18-year-old business with 300 portable restrooms and two vacuum trucks.

She says it was an all or nothing moment. "I felt like we either acquire this company and move full steam ahead or we don't. I thought this was a way for us to really continue on and be able to make money and make the economies of scale make ultimate sense."

The purchase went smoothly. They combined the two names, keeping portions of each, to create A1 Texas Gold. Then they worked with a local company, Persona Digital Marketing, to create a logo. They are now going through the process of changing decals, marketing materials and the website. The biggest challenge was converting everything to one billing system and method of charging.

To reassure customers, the Prices sent out a letter introducing the new owners and also rode with the drivers for a couple weeks to familiarize them with the routes and meet the customers.

COMPANY ASSETS

The company now has about 450 restrooms and 10 hand-wash stations (PolyJohn, Satellite Industries). Service vehicles include two RAM trucks (2011 and 2014) with 800-gallon waste/350-gallon freshwater stainless steel



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tanks and Masport pumps, and a Ford F-350 and Ford F-450 built out by KeeVac Industries with 300-gallon waste/135-gallon freshwater stainless steel tanks and Conde Super 6 pumps (Westmoor Ltd.). A recent addition is a 2023 Ford F-550 built out by Iron Vac with a 900-gallon waste/350-gallon freshwater tank and Masport pump.

Septic work, which used to account for half the company's business, had been declining with the poor health and passing of Wells. But Garcia says they are determined to reinvigorate that side of the business and get it back to 50/50. Luckily, they have a young, enthusiastic guy who can help them do that, Gerardo "Jerry" Lopez, who had worked under Wells for a long time and recently became licensed as an Installer II and septic maintenance provider.

COMING TOGETHER

Things are still in flux as everyone works out job duties and makes plans for the future. But they are working it out step by step.

Jordan Garcia will be moving back to Texas in the latter part of 2023 when her husband retires from the Coast Guard.

Jessee Pilgrim currently works as a travel agent but also performs administrative tasks for the company. Jordan Pilgrim works as a full-time sales rep for a food service company, which he will probably leave in 2024, but is also working on sales and marketing for A1. He's focusing heavily on social media.

"We were wildly successful with it for our hotel business, to the point Facebook added me to an exclusive group of about 700 small businesses in North America," he says. "I'm hopeful we can



Above: This photo of Jordan Garcia and her father, David Wells Jr., was taken for a *PRO* story in 2017. Wells passed away in 2022.

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Left: Geraldo Lopez washes down the inside of a portable restroom.



Below: Brittany Solomon services a portable restroom. (Photo courtesy of A1 Texas Gold)



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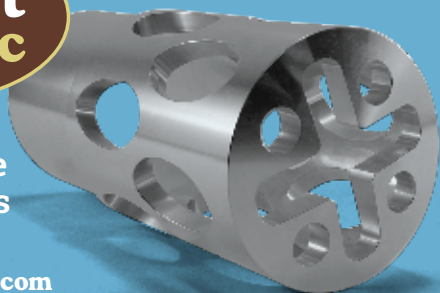
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do the same here." He also believes in personal contact and is on the board of the local chamber of commerce.

The company is now networking with event organizers and bidding on projects. And on the septic side they are looking at buying a dedicated Class 6 vacuum truck. Pilgrim says they are now one of the largest sanitation companies in the area.

Garcia adds that they market themselves as a full-service waste company and they're excited about the future. "It's our third month operating as A1, so we're just trying to see where we're headed. I think it's good." ■



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PUMPS & COMPONENTS

By Craig Mandli

HOSE AND FITTINGS



KURIYAMA OF AMERICA KING BEE KBEE SERIES

King Bee KBEE Series polyethylene liquid suction hose from **Kuriyama of America** provides flexibility for maneuvering in tight areas such as portable restrooms. The hose remains flexible in subzero temperatures,

is crush resistant and will not kink, according to the maker. The easy-slide helix protects the hose tube from cover wear and moves easily over rough surfaces. Over-molded cuffs help prevent leaking. It is available in 2- and 3-inch I.D. sizes in multiple lengths. The 3-inch I.D. hose is also available as a 3-foot hose guard. **847-755-0360; www.kuriyama.com**

HOSE REEL

HANNAY REELS HEAVY-DUTY 1500 SERIES

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



VACUUM PUMPS



FRUITLAND MANUFACTURING ELIM G-172

The **ELIM G-172** gas engine-driven system from **Fruitland Manufacturing** is the most compact option in the Eliminator slide-in engine-driven line. It is suitable for portable restroom and septic vacuum truck applications,

especially where space and efficiency are required. This package comes with a 14 hp Briggs and Stratton Vanguard engine, a 127 cfm free airflow Fruitland RCF172 vacuum pump, a standard bolt-in truck mount, and is

available in left-hand or right-hand orientation. Packages are also available with various pump models and types and in many different configurations. **800-663-9003; www.fruitlandmanufacturing.com**

NATIONAL VACUUM EQUIPMENT B250 MAX PAK

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



SATELLITE MASPORT HXL4V

Satellite Industries integrates the **Masport HXL4V** vacuum pump into its trucks and slide-in systems. It has the capability to achieve a minimum of 27 inches Hg (intermittent), and comes equipped with heavy-duty bearings and Viton oil seals for exceptional

longevity. Kevlar vanes are heat stabilized and machined with exacting tolerances for durability. Durable translucent high-temperature oil lines allow a visible oil flow to the pump. The double-end shaft accommodates clockwise and counter-clockwise drive systems, offering the flexibility to suit specific requirements. O-ring end covers eliminate air or oil leakages. **800-883-1123; www.satelliteindustries.com**

WALLENSTEIN VACUUM MODEL 151

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



WESTMOOR CONDE POWERPAKS

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

Direct-drive units incorporate a centrifugal clutch that allows throttling down the engine and disengaging the vacuum pump. Throttle up and the pump is in action. Specify either vacuum and pressure, or vacuum-only pump choice. Diesel-powered units are also



PRODUCT FOCUS

available for applications where nonsparking engines are required.
 800-367-0972; www.westmoortld.com

WASHDOWN PUMPS

MORO USA DC WASHDOWN PUMPS

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



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 - Northeast septic pumping and installation, \$5.2mm revenue
 - Southeast portable sanitation and roll off company, \$4.25mm revenue
 - Southeast portable sanitation and roll off company, \$4.0mm revenue
 - Northwest septic pumping and installation, \$3.6mm revenue
 - Midwest portable sanitation and restroom trailers, \$1.75mm revenue
 - Southwest portable sanitation company, \$1.75mm revenue
 - Southeast portable sanitation company, \$1.6mm revenue
 - Northeast portable sanitation company, \$1.0mm revenue
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 - West coast portables and septic company, \$1.0mm revenue
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Attend PSAI's 46th Nuts & Bolts Educational Conference

By Veronica Crosier

Next month the Portable Sanitation Association International will host its 46th Nuts & Bolts Education Conference near downtown Atlanta Oct. 31-Nov. 2. Nuts & Bolts is one of the most unique ways to learn about the industry, whether you're new in business or looking to expand in size or services. Last year, attendance set a record with 250 registered industry professionals. PSAI expects to see this number grow again this year.

Attendees will enjoy a variety of speakers, panels and of course, a favorite of attendees every year, the roundtable discussions. This is an opportunity for industry professionals of all experiences and operation sizes to ask questions and share knowledge directly. Some of the best networking connections are made during these sessions.

PSAI adds a little fun to every event. The first day ends with the PSAI Ramble Amble. This poker-run style activity debuted last year, proving an immediate hit. Participants can run or walk (ramble or amble) a scenic 1-2-mile route just outside the venue's front door, collecting chips in exchange for cards and getting a little education along the way. Attendees can participate for free or pay a small entry fee to be entered to win a cash prize. Half of registration proceeds will benefit the PSAI Scholarship Fund and charity of choice, and the other 50% will be a cash prize for the best hand. Last year's winner received \$800!

Special to this year will be two site visits. Satellite Industries and United Site Services will host tours allowing attendees to see firsthand how some of the largest supplier and portable sanitation operations in the industry work.

The tour at United Site Services will cover these areas:

- **HydroFlow Sanitation System**
- **Trailers**
- **Emergency Response**
- **FSL/Routing & Logistics**
- **Safety/Lytx & Penske**

At Satellite Industries, attendees will gain insights about the tank and truck manufacturing process from start to finish — including metal fabrication and assembly for the different size tanks and trailers. Satellite's team will share the modernization of the restroom sub-assembly and assembly process along with their culture, history and growth.

Whether you wish to broaden your knowledge, earn CEUs or network with the best in the industry — PSAI Nuts & Bolts Educational Conference will have something for you. We look forward to seeing you in Atlanta. To register for the conference, visit www.pσαι.org/events. ■

CLASSIFIEDS

PORTABLE RESTROOM TRAILERS



2004 Wells Cargo Comfort Elite II, located in Northwestern PA. Garage kept in Winter. **\$20,000.00** Call **814-336-3384** or email **powellsan1@windstream.net** (T10)



2014 Wells Cargo - Ultralav - Model# WC12 located in NW PA, Garage Kept in Winter. **\$22,500.00** Call **814-336-3384** or email **powellsan1@windstream.net** (T10)

PORTABLE RESTROOM TRUCKS

2024 Peterbilt 536 cab & chassis with 2,150 gallon, Two compartment (1,600 waste - 550 water) with An NVE B250 blower package, a DC10 wash down Pump, dual service, strobe package, toilet carrier, And backup camera (coming in April) Stock# 14095 www.VacuumSalesInc.com. (888) VAC-UNIT (822-8648). (TBM)

New Imperial 1,300 U.S. gallon, portable toilet service unit mounted on a 2023 Ford F550 cab & chassis with a Masport HXL4V pump package. (Stock#14103) www.VacuumSalesInc.com. (888) VAC-UNIT (822-8648). (TBM)

SEPTIC TRUCKS



2006 Peterbilt 335 Vacuum Truck. 2,700 gal. aluminum tank with 158,320 miles. 10 speed transmission, 335 H.P. Caterpillar engine and air locker rear-end. Chrome wheels & Air conditioning. Located in Santa Clarita, CA. **\$55,000** email: **myerspumping@hotmail.com** (T10)

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➤ **PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT**

Modular restroom units designed to deter vandalism

By *Tim Dobbins*

Vandalism is too often an unfortunate reality of the portable restroom business. Whether it's graffiti, theft or property destruction, it becomes a time consuming and costly issue for PROs.

Portable Solutions Group made use of modifying shipping containers into an array of containerized solutions and engineered enclosures with their line of DropBox products, and among the lineup are a series of modular restrooms designed to keep vandalism disruptions and costs to a minimum.

"Most of these acts of vandalism occur in areas of low public visibility, like restroom facilities," says Robert Slagel, CEO and president of PSG. "So, we applied our expertise in site security and modular builds to create a restroom unit that was secure and comfortable for its users."

For Slagel and PSG, providing extra security to the restroom stalls when designing was a must-have, so DropBox modular units are access-control compatible. "This unit allows customers to require badge access to enter the restroom, leaving a data point for accountability," Slagel says. "Badge entry enhances security, keeping your job site safe while minimizing disruptions."

DropBox restroom units are manufactured with the heavy construction industry in mind. They feature a shipping container exterior shell and a finished industrial interior with individual stalls to provide privacy. Though heavy-duty in construction, the modular units can still be easily moved throughout sites and according to PSG, provide a solution for new construction, outages and project turnarounds.

To create a comfortable user experience, the units are climate-controlled, and each stall comes standard with a full-size toilet, running-water sink, hand dryer, soap dispenser and mirror.

PSG offers various toilet types and occupancy and size options and will build to the user's request. "The units are completely customizable, from exterior paint to interior finishes and flooring," Slagel says. "The added security of our access control software is optional, with many variations, including badge entry, facial detection and exterior 360 cameras."

Depending on the customer's site needs, the modular restrooms may have self-contained tanks or connect to municipal utilities. Access to the fresh and wastewater tanks is through container cargo doors or an additional door on the exterior of the units.

Slagel says customers are most satisfied with the restroom's durability for a moveable unit, making it feasible for semi-permanent and permanent use if needed. **740-532-7822; www.portablesolutionsgroup.com** ■

Nexar Fleets fleet management solution

Dash cam retailer Nexar launched Nexar Fleets, a fleet management solution designed for small business use, offering a simple, easy to install solution. Nexar Fleets' new geofencing feature is an integral part of its AI-powered fleet dash-cam monitoring and tracking solution. The geofencing feature allows setup virtual boundaries for fleets. This technology enables real-time alerts when a vehicle enters or exits a specified area, enhancing security and control over fleet operations. Nexar Fleets also constantly monitors vehicle performance to discern fuel usage patterns and take steps to boost fuel efficiency. **646-983-0703; www.getnexar.com**



AirVote service request QR code

AirVote released two features to its location-specific real-time contactless customer feedback platform: the ability to submit a service request by scanning a QR code and adding a service tracker for grease interceptor maintenance that captures metrics mandated by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and local authorities. Location-aware service requests submitted on the spot save time for support teams and customers. Grease interceptor service reports simplify the compliance process for food establishments. **425-314-3334; www.air-vote.com** ■

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