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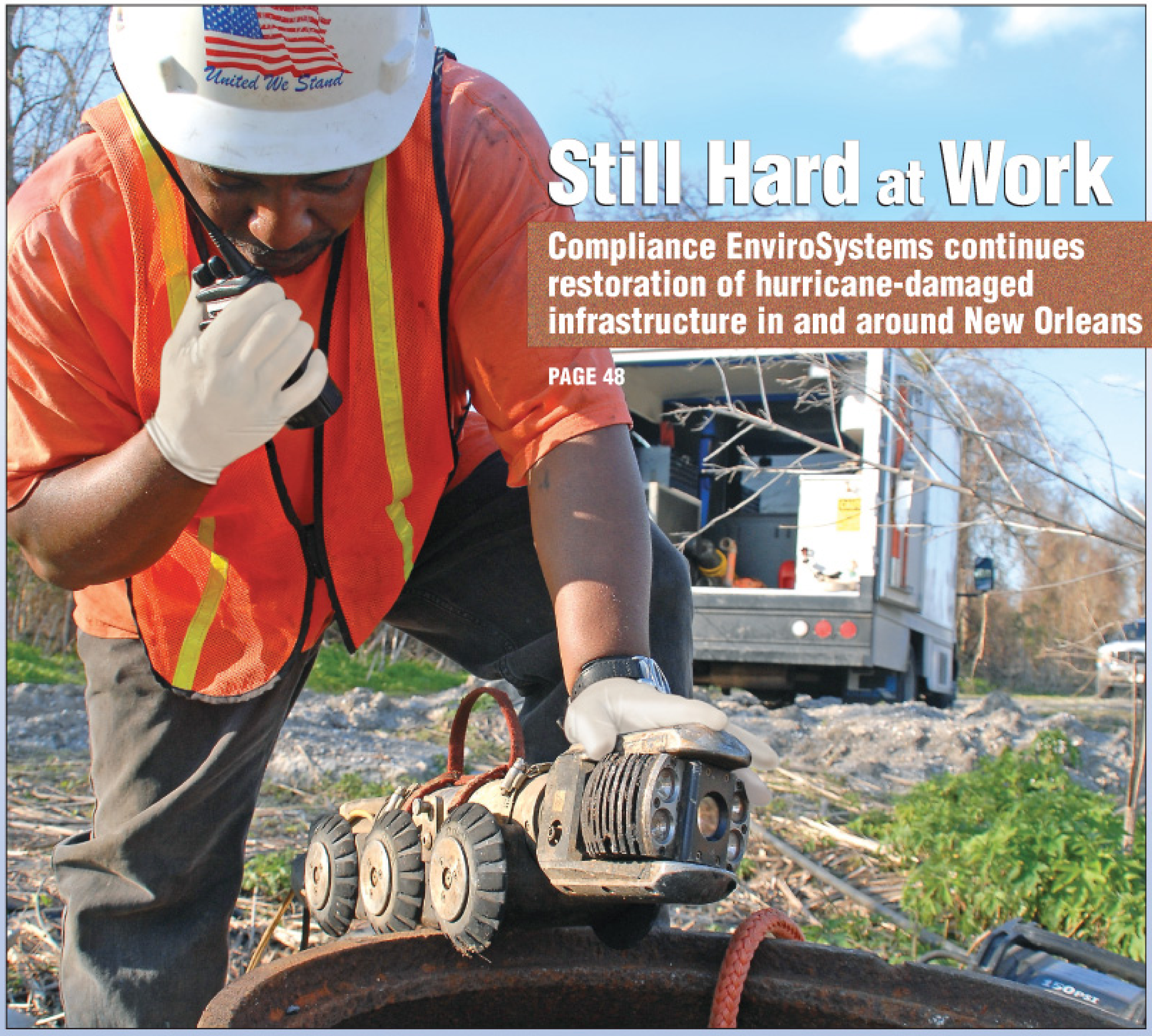

Still Hard at Work

Compliance EnviroSystems continues restoration of hurricane-damaged infrastructure in and around New Orleans

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TOUGH JOB
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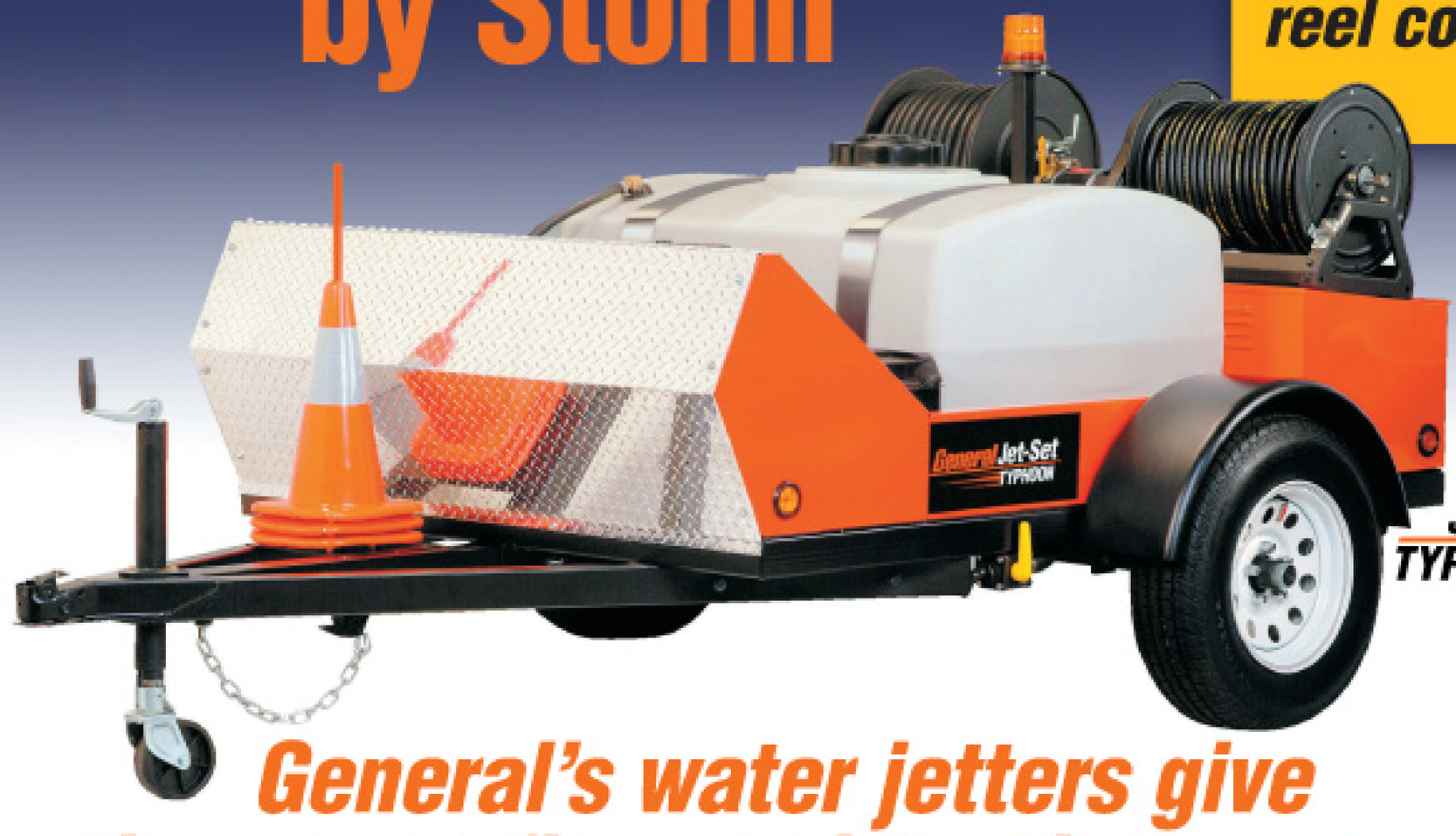

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J-2512 TYPHOON

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J-3055

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J-2900

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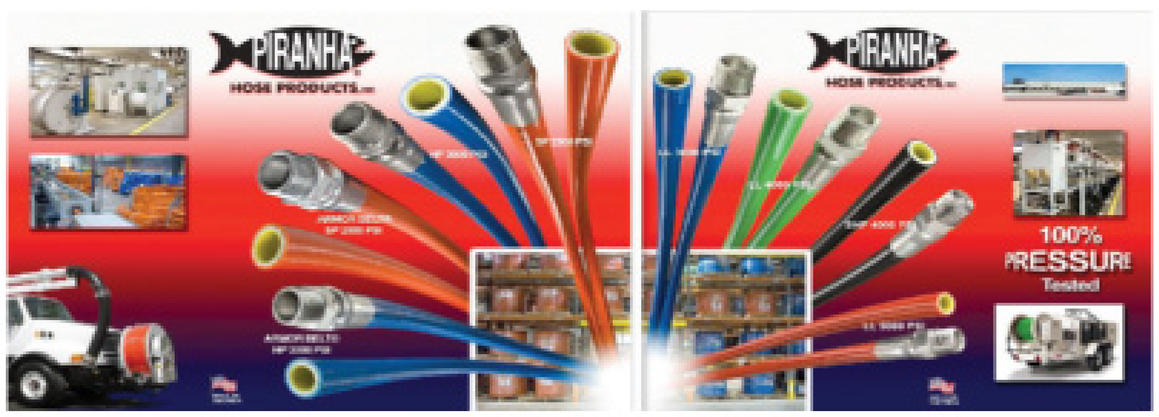

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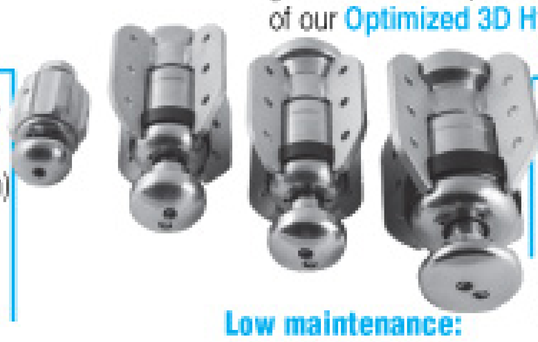

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- The latest in sealants for manhole chimneys
- Tough Job: A floor-cleaner nozzle sweeps a big sewer main
- Tech Perspective: The secrets of successful chemical grouting
- Money Manager: Ten ways to damage your business

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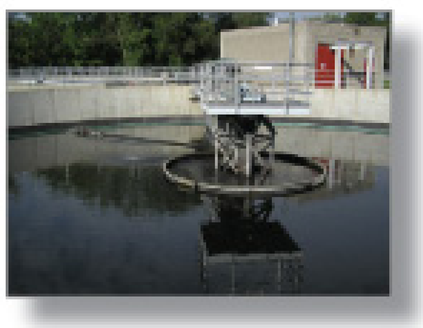

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Call 800-844-4974 or visit www.rootx.com to learn more.

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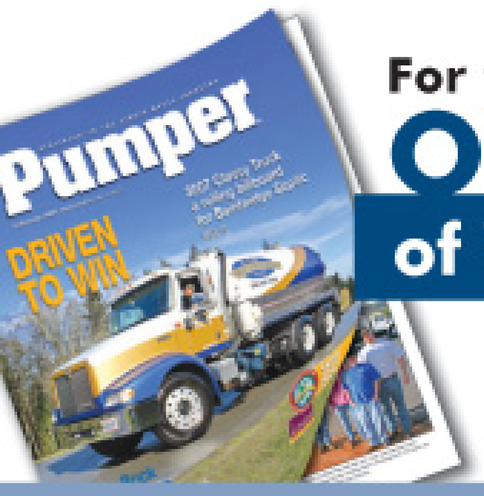

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Opting Out

It takes courage to stand aside and let others play the price game. The rewards of that choice are better customers, happier employees, and higher profits.

Ted J. Rulseh

In the movie comedy *Ruthless People*, Danny DeVito plays a vicious fashion executive who at one point snarls about how deeply he despises any salesman who cuts his price to get orders. Now imagine that character listening on the phone while the kidnappers holding his wife for ransom lower their demands. It's a hilarious scene: You can almost see the hot blood rise and burn a hole in the top of DeVito's balding head.

On a more serious note: How often do you cut your prices? There is a time and a place for everything — including price-cutting — so long as you do it selectively and for a strategic reason. Suppose a low-margin quote on a small job gets you a chance to show your stuff to a customer with huge long-term potential. That may be a good bet.

But as a way of doing business, price-cutting is not rewarding. You've heard the reasons why a dozen times. Maybe you've worked your way past the habit — or never had it — and if that's true, more power to you. But if you still struggle over pricing (and even many long-standing companies do), then maybe it's worth asking why.

My experience shows that price-cutting is often less a conscious decision or a business strategy than a symptom of weaknesses in the business and its management. Yes, for some companies — Wal-Mart and Motel 6 for two — low price is a strategy, and it works spectacularly for them. But chances are it doesn't work so well for you. Here is what a constant impulse to "race to the bottom" may say about you:

1. You need to plan more effectively. If you had a business plan, it would include a vision for the kind and level of service to provide, how your people and equipment will look, the kind of lifestyle you expect, and the income you want your employees to enjoy. You would invest to fulfill that vision and set rates and prices accordingly, with reasonable attention to the needs, expectations and means of prospective customers.

If your plan is inadequate, or you have none, you'll tend to chase any business that helps keep the lights on. To do that, you may fall into competing on price. Once you do that, you're letting competitors (usually not the best companies in town) dictate how you run your business. You've lost control. Instead of working to a profit plan, you're scrambling, hoping there's enough left at the end of the month to pay your salary.

2. You need to improve your salesmanship. Quoting prices isn't selling. Neither is haggling over prices. Selling is about convincing customers that your service has value — that you can solve a problem for them and do it better than the other guy. It's also about providing what customers need instead of what they think they want.

Suppose a customer wants a lateral cleaned after the sewer has backed up for the third time in four years. You could quote a price against competitors the customer has called. Or you could suggest a line inspection that would help you identify — and then correct — the root cause of the trouble.

"Mr. Smith," you might say, "I could clear your line today and maybe have to come back next year and do the same thing again. Now, what if I could fix it so you won't have to worry about your sewer backing up anymore?" Do this and you're on your way to a discussion that could lead to a profitable job — and a satisfied, loyal customer.

3. You need a sharper value proposition. At the end of the day, what is it you offer to customers? Is it just a basic cleaning job performed for a competitive price? Or is it a set of less tangible but in the end more compelling benefits? Like prompt service backed by a guarantee? Peace of mind? Respect for the home and property? The right service, done right the first time? Sell values like these — in your advertising, in your office staff members' phone scripts, on your web site, in every customer contact — and you elevate yourself out of the price game.

At the end of the day, what is it you offer to customers? Is it just a basic cleaning job performed for a competitive price? Or is it a set of less tangible but in the end more compelling benefits?

4. You need to target different customers. Some people are simply price shoppers by nature. You'll never bring them around. Decide whether it's worth your time even to deal with such people. If not, forget about them. Resist the temptation to quote prices over the phone to people who are obviously just calling a list of several companies pulled from the Yellow Pages.

Instead, develop a customer profile. Target businesses in certain industry sectors, people of certain ages and income levels, people who have been good customers in the past, and people with other characteristics that indicate they appreciate value. Direct most of your advertising and promotion to people who fit those profiles.

5. You need to develop more respect for your business and your services. You are a professional; the services you offer are essential. You shouldn't devalue them by selling them for the lowest dollar.

I once attended a town meeting where citizens criticized the volunteer fire department budget. The fire chief promptly stood up and defended his operation. Every man in the department was fully trained, he said. Every one was a licensed emergency medical technician. Department members were on call around the clock to cover every corner of the township. "I would say," the chief asserted, "that you're getting by real cheap with a real good service." That was the end of the discussion.

What would you say in defense of your business if someone challenged your prices? Perhaps it's worth your while to develop a value statement you could give if called upon — and to put a little passion into it the way that fire chief did.

If selling on price is working — if you like the way your company is running, you're content with your profits, and your employees are happy enough to stick around — there may be no reason to change. But if you're like most business owners, you'd really rather not play the price game. Make a resolution now to learn how to aim higher. ■

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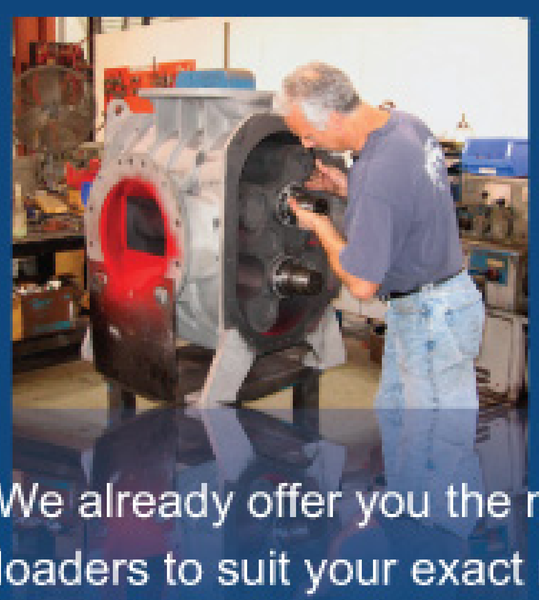

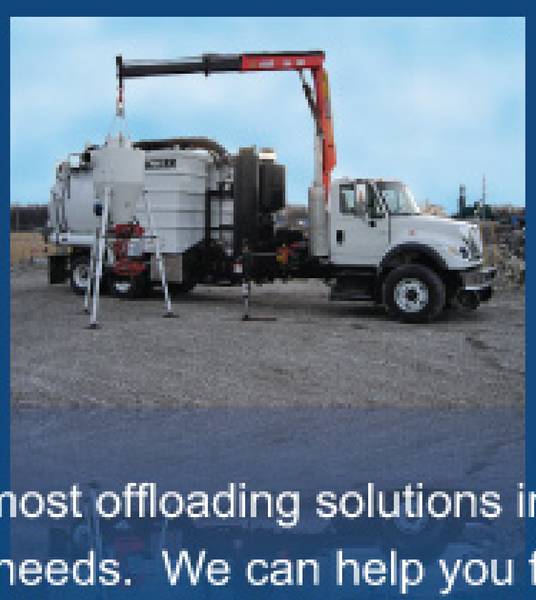

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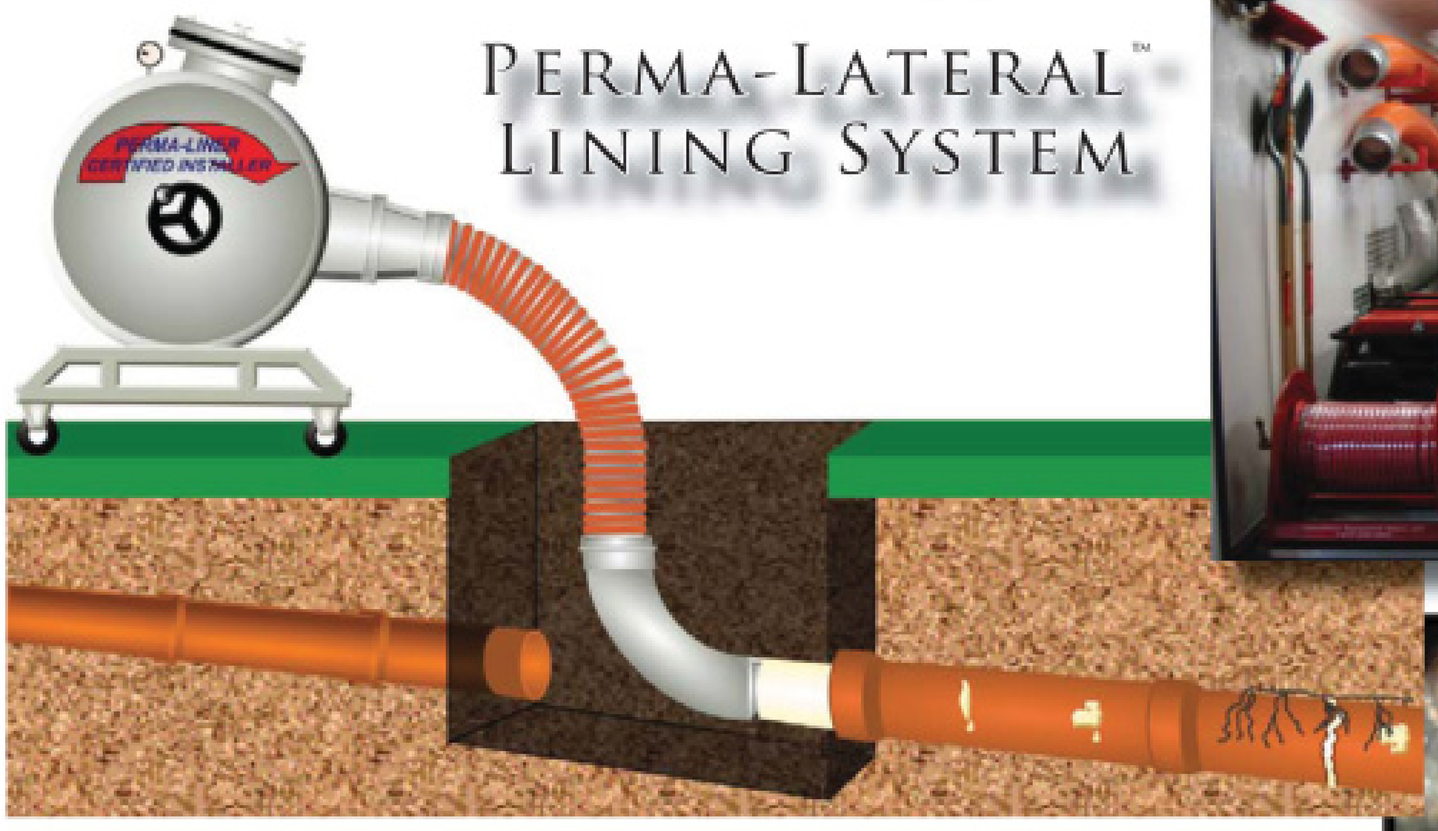

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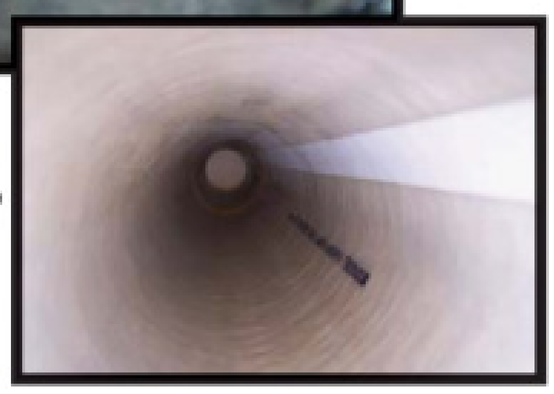

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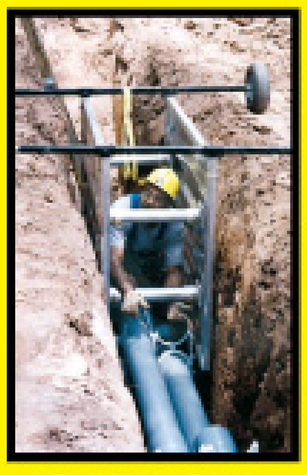

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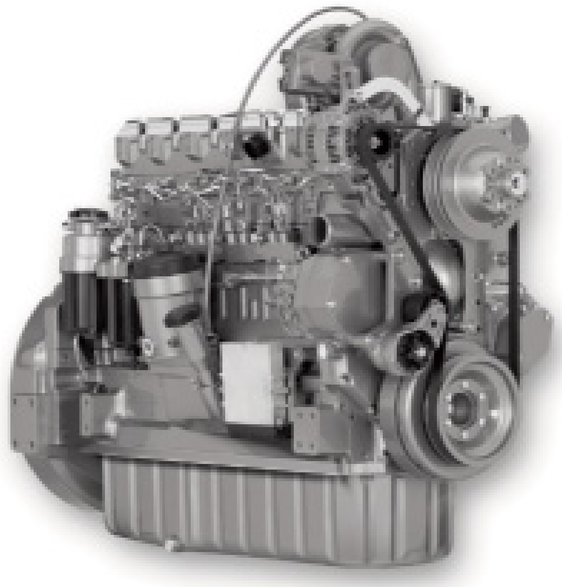

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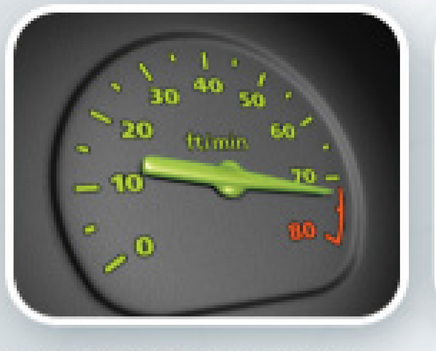

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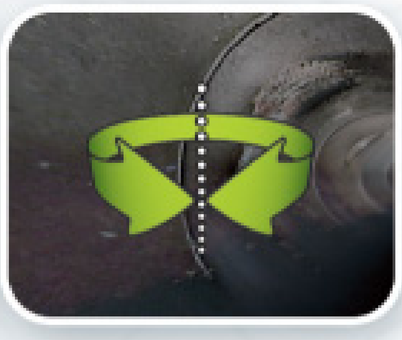

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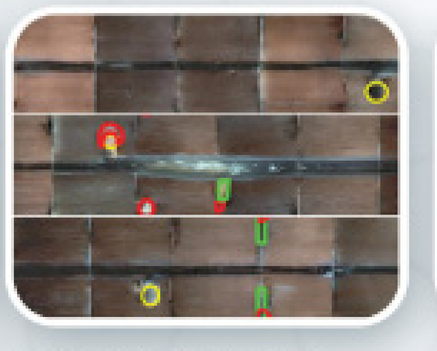

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Team Effort

Safe operation of high-pressure waterblasters calls for cooperation among crew members

By Ted J. Rulseh

Like competitive sports, many industrial cleaning tasks are team endeavors. That is especially true of waterblasting with high- or ultra-high-pressure equipment.

Pump operators, nozzle operators, and site supervisors need to function as a team to ensure that jobs proceed efficiently and safely. Useful recommendations can be found in *Recommended Practices for the Use of Manually Operated High Pressure Water Jetting Equipment,* published by the WaterJet Technology Association.

It is basic currency for staff to be trained in the equipment and fully familiar with the work site and work plan. Beyond that, the job's execution takes teamwork, from setup of the work site to teardown when the work is done.

Capable oversight

Like a coach, the supervisor prepares the game plan and makes sure the team members follow it. The role includes making sure all crew members have the necessary personal protective gear. It also includes preplanning the work itself, selecting the team members best qualified for the job, and instructing them in the hazards of the work area, the safety standards, and emergency aid procedures.

In addition, the supervisor works with the site owner to define the limits of the work area, post necessary safety signage, and erect barriers to keep unauthorized people out. It's also the supervisor's role to make sure crew members have carefully inspected all hoses, fittings, nozzles, air systems, and other equipment and have properly laid out the high-pressure hoses with adequate protection against damage from vehicles.

Safety FIRST

Getting down to work

In general, a two-person crew is required for jobs involving waterjet equipment with system pressure greater than 4,000 psi and with flow greater than 10 gpm.

A waterjet crew typically consists of a pump operator and a nozzle operator, but one or more other people may be needed, depending on the nature of the job and the work site layout. For example, the nozzle operator may need help handling a jetting gun if it is fitted with more than one jetting extension, or if the hose must be fed forward into the workpiece. If the pump is at some distance from the nozzle operator, a team member may need to monitor the jetting action and communicate between the two operators.

In a typical two-person crew, the nozzle operator handles the "business end" of the equipment and is responsible for carrying out the correct pre-operation and operational procedures. This person may also be responsible for ensuring that necessary permits, permissions and agreements are in place before work begins.

The pump operator monitors and controls the pressurizing pump throughout the job. This is important, because the pressure delivered to the system has profound effects on the nozzle operator. For example, a sudden change in pump pressure changes the reaction force on the nozzle operator and could cause him or her to lose balance.

Working as a team

The pump and nozzle operators must be able to communicate from the start of the job to the end, even if the noise of the equipment drowns out their voices.

The WJTA manual says the team members need to agree on a system of signals for each step of equipment operation: start the pump, raise the pressure, lower the pressure, shut down the pump. The supervisor must make sure each operator knows and understands the signals before work begins.

Before and after bringing the system up to pressure, the pump operator must examine the hose and the connections to the jetting gun or nozzle to detect any leaks.

The pump operator starts the pump only when so instructed by the nozzle operator. Before bringing the pump up to pressure, the pump operator must make sure the nozzle operator has the jet nozzle directed at or positioned inside the workpiece and has a secure stance.

The pump operator then slowly raises the system pressure, enabling the nozzle operator to adjust to the reaction force from the jet. Once the operating pressure is reached, the pump operator must not adjust it further unless the nozzle operator is aware. At shutdown, the pressure also must be reduced gradually.

Staying fresh

The pump operator also must watch the nozzle operator and others on the team, and lower pressure if any team member approaches a potentially hazardous position.

Because the reaction force on a jetting gun can tire the operator, workers should rotate jetting duty. The supervisor should set a schedule to ensure that nozzle operators switch at intervals to other less demanding tasks.

The pump operator monitors and controls the pressurizing pump throughout the job. This is important, because the pressure delivered to the system has profound effects on the nozzle operator.

The tips listed here do not represent all the safety precautions or crew member and team functions required for safe waterblasting. Workers and supervisors should consult the WJTA manual, their own company practices, and OSHA regulations for details. A well-prepared and well-coached team can make waterblasting a highly productive and safe venture. ■

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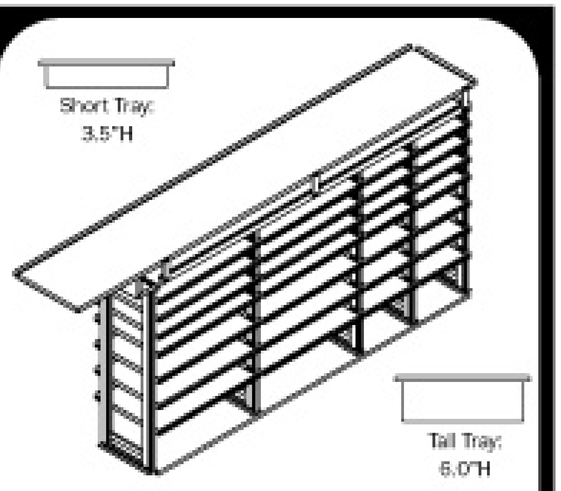

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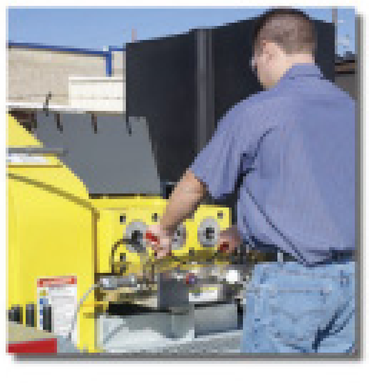

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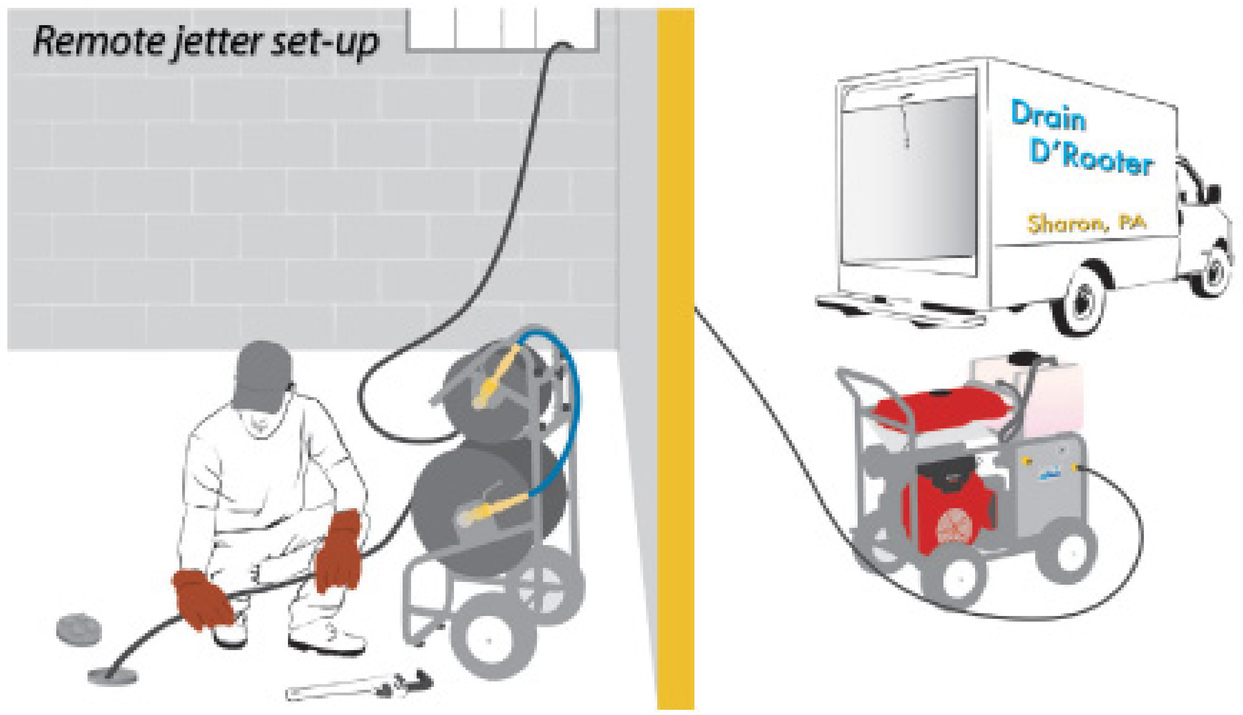

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Time to Sell?

These practical tips will help you be ready when the right offer comes, and ensure that your business has the value to command a favorable price

By Fred S. Steingold

Fred S. Steingold practices law in Ann Arbor, Mich. He is the author of Legal Guide for Starting and Running a Small Business *and* The Employer's Legal Handbook, *published by Nolo. Legal strategies may vary depending on the state in which you live and the specifics of your situation. See your lawyer for legal advice.*

It's the dream of every small business owner: selling the business someday for a handsome price. Making that dream a reality takes time and effort. Here are 15 ways to make your business attractive to potential buyers.

1. Show a consistent profit. Most buyers seek a business that has been profitable for at least two or three years. Let's say that three years ago your business had a great year. Two years ago you lost money. And last year's profits were only mediocre. A prospective buyer is likely to feel uneasy about what the future holds. In that situation, it makes sense to delay selling while you work on producing solid profits.

2. Resolve outstanding legal problems. No potential buyer wants to face lawsuits filed by unhappy customers or disgruntled employees. If you've been receiving demand letters from an angry employee you recently fired, resolve the problem now.

3. Demonstrate that accounts receivable can be collected. You may want to include your accounts receivable in the sale. If so, you'll need to show that they are collectable. Begin by putting together an aging chart that shows how long the bills have been outstanding — 30, 60 or 90 days. Eliminate any dicey accounts by settling with the slow pays and writing off the deadbeats. The accounts that remain should have a long record of timely payment.

4. Clearly explain your business finances. Your accounting protocol should be consistent from year to year. Income, costs, and cash flow should be self-evident. A shoebox full of check stubs and deposit slips won't do the trick, nor will profits manufactured by questionable or overly aggressive accounting tactics.

5. Provide a convincing business plan for the future. The buyer will want to build on what you've done and hopefully do it even better. A business plan can fire the buyer's imagination with specific ideas on where to go. You need one that looks ahead to a time when you're no longer in charge. It can keep the buyer's enthusiasm alive during the nervous days before closing when buyers can get cold feet.

6. Secure beneficial relationships. Good relationships with customers and suppliers can impress a buyer. But unless you can point to solid contracts, a buyer may worry that these relationships are personal and not easily transferable. If you can position the success of the business as independent of you personally, you'll get a better price.

7. Show that experienced employees will stay on. Able employees can be a strong selling point. Consider offering employment contracts that commit key people to work for the business for at least a couple more years. You can also include a covenant not to compete. This can help further reassure the buyer that your key employees won't start working for a competing business.

8. Lock in your lease. The security of being able to operate the business from its current location can be crucial. The buyer may want to lock in a lease for several years. If you rent month to month, or if your lease runs out soon, negotiate with the landlord for a long-term lease. Make sure the lease will remain in effect even if you sell the business.

9. Disclose all relevant facts. The buyer wants to be able to trust you, so disclose even negative facts. Don't leave it to the buyer to discover negative information about your business. For example, if an exclusive contract with a major customer is about to end, let the buyer know.

10. Spruce up your premises. Apply a fresh coat of paint. Fix broken windows and cracked tile. Get rid of clutter.

11. Make upgrades and repairs. Maybe it's time to install better lighting or signage, replace old carpets, and buy new workstations. If repairs are the landlord's responsibility, insist the work get done to your satisfaction.

12. Get your inventory in shape. If you have a retail or wholesale business, sell or dump all stuff that you'll never sell for a decent price. A buyer doesn't want to pay good money for inventory that can't be sold.

13. Make sure equipment works. Repair or replace equipment that's not performing optimally. When you demonstrate your technology to a buyer, you want it to work the first time, every time.

14. Provide a clear picture of how you get compensated. You may receive a salary, bonus, fringe benefits, or all of these. Of course, you'll inform buyers about these forms of compensation. But also list non-cash perks. These can be such goodies as business related travel and entertainment, or a business car that's tax deductible.

15. Have a believable explanation of why you're selling. Few business owners just walk away for no reason from a profitable business. Be able to convince the buyer that you're cashing in your chips now for a good reason. Examples include retirement, starting a new career, relocating with a spouse, or going back to school. ■

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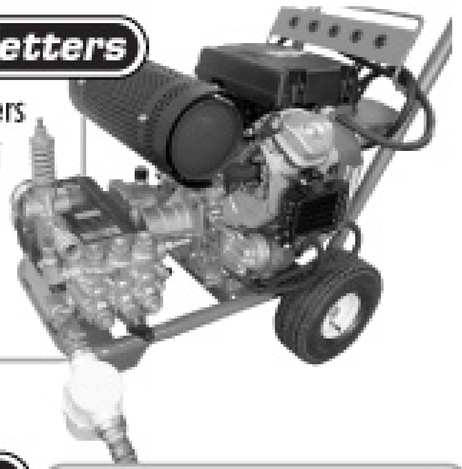

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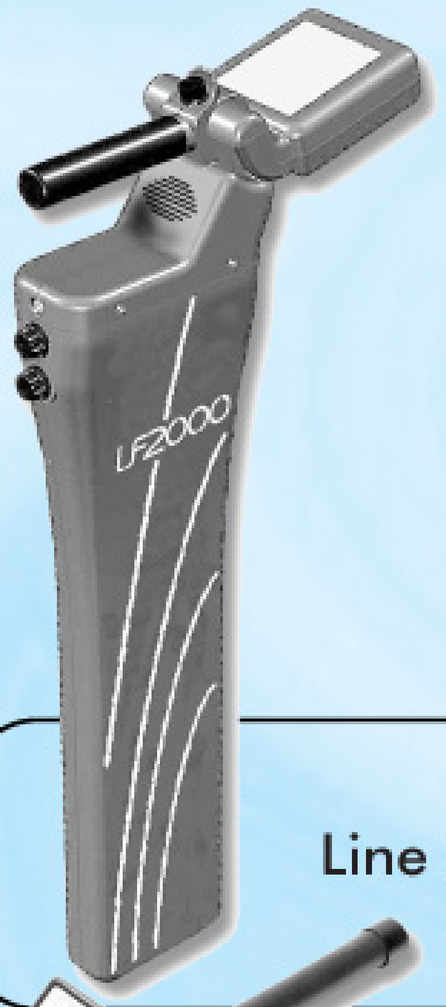

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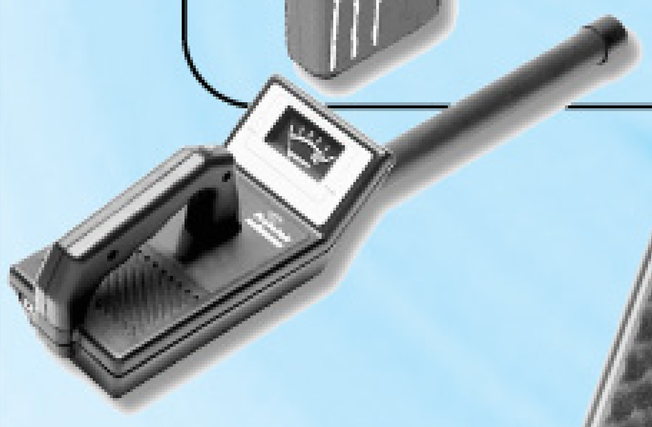

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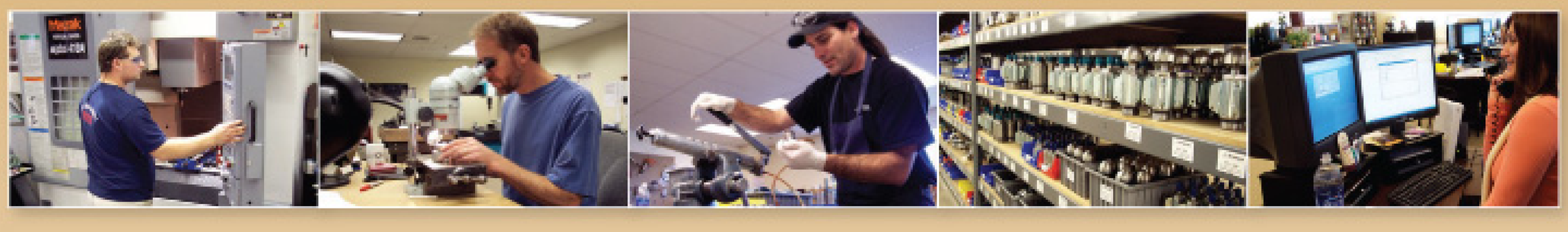

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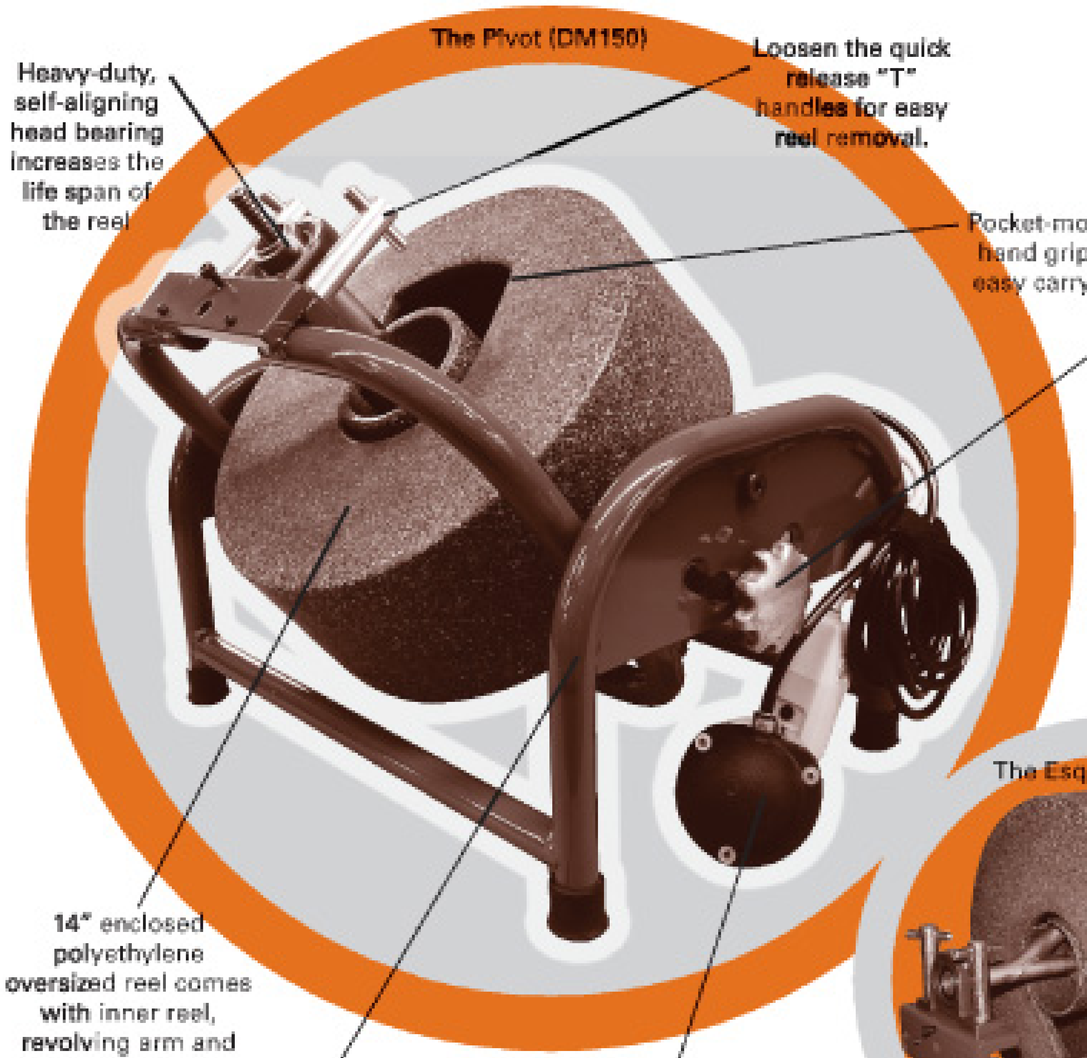

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The Equity in Quality

It's not marketing flash but excellent performance that lets your company gain a strong brand and a competitive advantage

By Dan Coughlin

Dan Coughlin is an executive coach who has worked with executives in more than 20 industries. He is the author of Accelerate: 20 Practical Lessons to Boost Business Momentum. *Visit www.businessacceleration.com.*

The Disney Co. re-releases a 50-year-old animated film, and it makes millions. Apple creates a cell phone, and the world holds its breath. Toyota makes a hybrid car, and in the era of $3-per-gallon gasoline, the Prius becomes a legend.

Do these initiatives succeed because the companies make a marketing splash? Or because they deliver performance? Clearly, it's the latter. There's a lesson to be learned here: If you have a limited sum to invest in your business, opt for improving performance — every time. The long-term payback will be extraordinary.

The quality you provide to customers is the value they receive from the performance of your products and services. Quality can refer to the number of mistakes per million parts in a manufacturing process. It also can refer to the refreshing taste of a dessert at a frozen custard stand, the speed with which a pizza is delivered, or the friendliness of your service technicians when they greet customers.

Your marketing theme will not be taken seriously if your actual performance doesn't live up to the promises you make. Here's a phrase-association game. What do you think of when you read these descriptions:

- An amazingly well designed, user-friendly computer …
- Entertainment for all members of the family …
- A cup of coffee so delicious it feels like a reward …

Most likely, Apple, Disney and Starbucks. These companies first created incredible quality, then became known for that quality. High quality first, great brand second. The brand attracts and keeps lots of great customers, but you can't successfully advertise what doesn't exist. You can use the same methods for enhancing quality no matter what business you are in. Here are five steps to breakthrough quality:

1. Define the performance business you are in. Disney/Pixar Animation Studio is in the motion and emotion performance business. Their quality is wrapped up in visually and emotionally appealing films. When Pixar's standard of quality became dramatically greater than that of Disney's animated films, Disney bought them out and put them in charge.

What performance are customers looking for from you? Do your customers want you to deliver faster (FedEx), break down less often (Toyota), make the buying process easier (amazon.com), or deliver breakthrough ideas (IDEO)? Focus on the performance you are expected to deliver.

> **Your marketing theme will not be taken seriously if your actual performance doesn't live up to the promises you make.**

2. Identify your current standard. So, how are you really doing in the areas in which customers expect you to perform in? Ask your customers a few simple questions: In terms of our performance for you, what are we doing really well? Where are we average or below average versus competitors? How could we perform better for you?

If you ask 15 customers those questions, you will get an idea of your current reality. Now, shop the competition. Study the performance they are delivering. Look at it from the customer's point of view. What is the competition doing better than you?

3. Focus on only two points. As you work to enhance quality, focus on only two points: the point just ahead of the best performer in the world, and the point just ahead of where you are right now. Who is the best performer in the world in your particular area? What makes that organization's performance better than yours? That is the only point that matters to customers. They want to be with the best of the best.

While keeping the highest standard in the world in mind, focus on getting to the point just ahead of where you are right now. Each day, move forward one step in terms of providing greater quality. And keep moving until you reach the spot just ahead of the best performer in the world.

4. The Tiger Woods Syndrome. There is one danger to be on the lookout for. One day, you will be the best in the world in your performance area. Then what do you do? Tiger Woods and Michael Jordan faced that problem, but instead of looking back at the second best performer, they kept their eyes focused on raising their own performance bar. If you are the best performer in the world, ask yourself one simple question: How can I make tomorrow better than today in terms of performance for my customers?

5. Loop back with customers. Customers have a neat way of keeping companies grounded in reality. In case you thought about coasting on past performances, remember that customers don't care about the past. Continue to engage customers in meaningful conversations about the quality they receive from you and what would make it better.

Every time you increase your relevant business performance, it's like putting money in the bank. Customers become more loyal, they purchase more of your products and services, they tell other people about the quality you offer, and they keep coming back for years and years. Quality is the real secret formula for long-term success. ■

CORRECTION

Last month's Better Business column by Joe Takash, on dealing with the the person authorized to say "yes," included incorrect author biography information. The correct information is:

Joe Takash is a keynote speaker and CEO of Victory Consulting, a performance management firm in LaGrange Park, Ill. His book, *Results through Relationships: Building Trust, Performance and Profit Through People,* will be out in 2008. **Visit www.joetakash.com or call 888/918-3999.**

COLE Publishing regrets this error.

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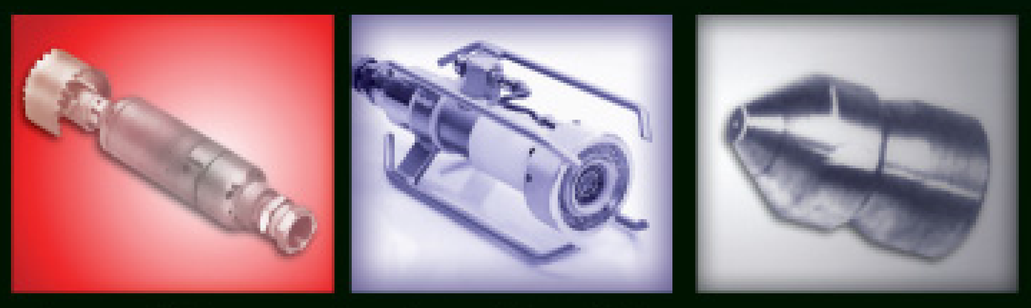

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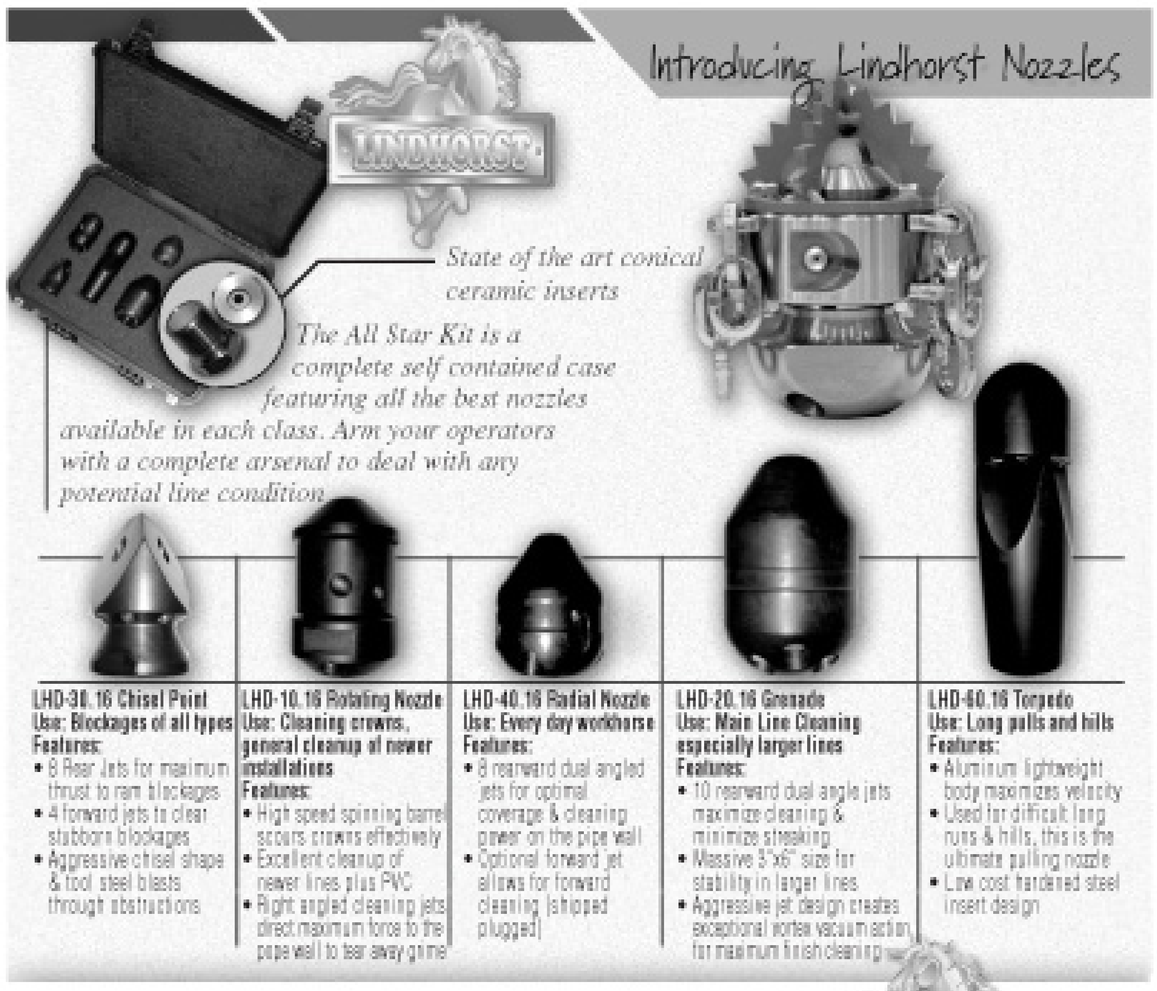

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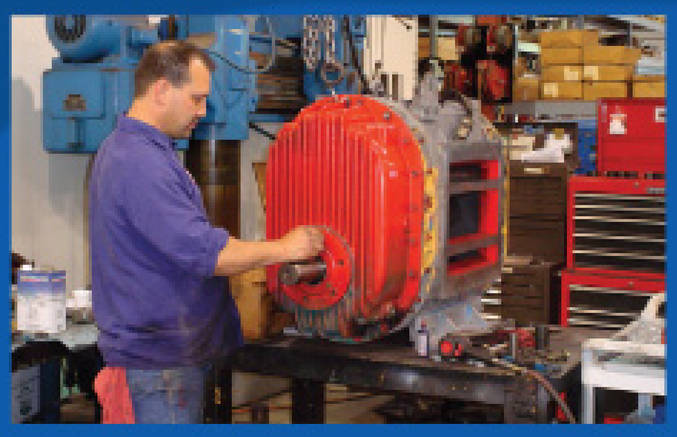

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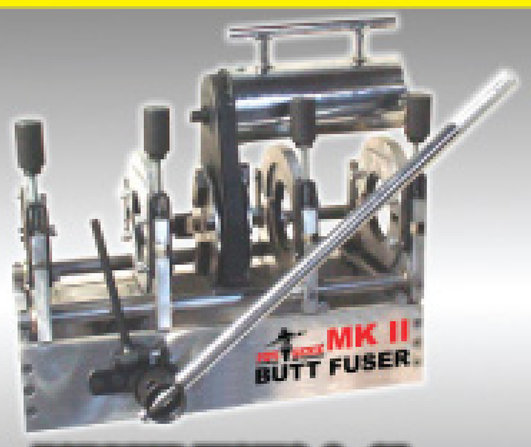

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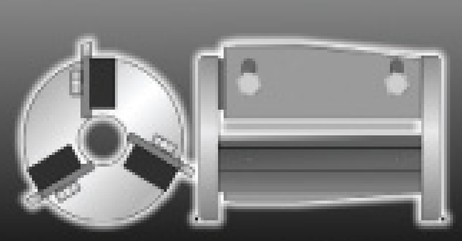

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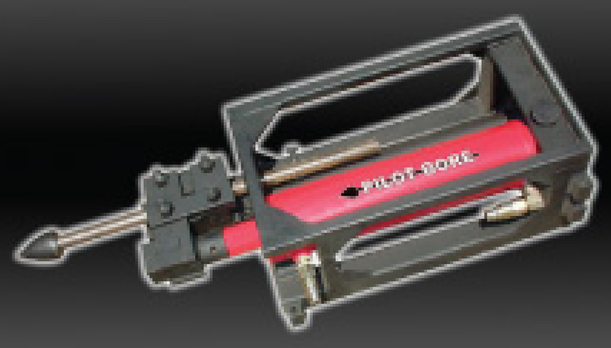

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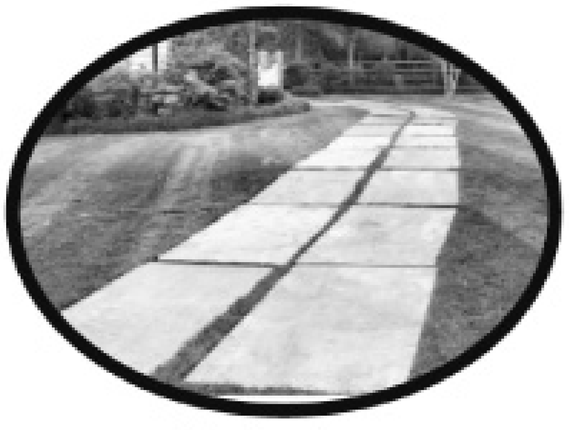

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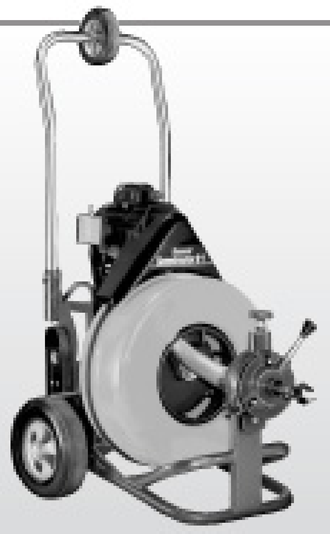

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Franchise News

John and Lois Proffitt

Mr. Rooter® franchise in Richmond, Va.
Est. 2007

By the time John Proffitt was 21 years old he had turned his family chores into a career. John is a third generation plumber, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. Plumbing continues to be a family affair for John. He and his wife Lois co-own a Mr. Rooter *franchise in Richmond, Va.*

Photo: John and Lois Proffitt

Why did you buy a *Mr. Rooter* franchise?

My wife and I discussed getting into the service side of plumbing as a backup to our commercial business. I was impressed with the equipment and work of *Mr. Rooter*. After attending a *Mr. Rooter* annual conference we were blown away with the people and their willingness to help. That trip alone convinced us to buy a *Mr. Rooter* franchise.

My *Mr. Rooter* franchise allows me to have more time to spend doing what matters most, building relationships with customers and employees.

What is the biggest benefit of owning and operating a *Mr. Rooter* franchise?

The biggest benefit is the *Mr. Rooter* franchise community. When going through different situations, the ability to network with other *Mr. Rooter* franchisees is priceless. Sometimes it helps to just talk with other owners. We also have excellent opportunity for growth and great ways to check the profitability and production of everyone involved. We believe in the team approach, and this is the perfect vehicle to provide success.

The biggest benefit is the *Mr. Rooter* franchise community. When going through different situations, the ability to network with other *Mr. Rooter* franchisees is priceless.

How has your business changed since you became a franchise owner?

Since I was first introduced to plumbing I have enjoyed dealing with people. I enjoy being able to help customers find solutions to their problems and work with them to correct the negative situations. My *Mr. Rooter* franchise allows me to have more time to spend doing what matters most, building relationships with customers and employees.

What do you see in the future for your franchise?

Our business is coming along nicely. I see a steady and prosperous increase in sales over the next few years as we continue to grow our customer base and build our repeat customers. I see lots of potential advancement for the staff now in place. I have a vision of opportunity advancement for everyone involved in our business; we are by no means limited to an hourly salary.

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Flush With Success

Roto-Rooter of Ogden brings 24-hour, high-quality inspection and cleaning service to residential and municipal customers across Northern Utah

By Marian Bond

Gabriel Estrada (left) and Cirilo Trejo vacuum debris from a municipal sewer line after flushing it and clearing root growth with specially designed cutters. (Photos by Ryan McGeeney)

Whether working on sewer drain, storm drain, irrigation pipe or sub-drain, John Hunter, always claims ownership of that pipe. If he cleans it, he looks at it as his pipe.

He tells the customer that it's his job to make sure the line is clean and stays clean, and gets any needed repairs. "I tell that to the cities and the farmers alike," says Hunter, owner of Roto-Rooter of Ogden, serving seven counties in Northern Utah.

Hunter has owned the company for 20 years after having been an employee for 18 years. He introduced many of the services that make the business a formidable competitor. Customers include homeowners, municipalities, (generally below 100,000 population), industrial and commercial businesses, and farms.

> "I'd rather be good at what I'm doing than to branch out to where I can't do a good job. Finding personnel is hard. People seem to move from one job to another. However, once someone gets on a flusher crew they tend to stay with me."
>
> **John Hunter**

Three elements are important to the business: maintenance and repair of the fleet, staff training, and experienced, hands-on management. With a reputation for prompt, efficient service, Roto-Rooter of Ogden is established with 14 Utah cities and sometimes serves cities in Idaho. Hunter prefers to work within 150 miles of home base. Residential work accounts for 60 percent of the business; 30 percent is municipal.

A broad base

Serving a broad customer base is challenging, but with wife and co-owner LaDawn, four office staff members, and 11 service technicians, Hunter keeps things humming, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He gives customers his cell phone number and even answers calls while on vacation. He also offers a personal, free visit.

"If a city calls with a problem, sometimes I'll meet with their engineer," Hunter says. "On a residential call, I go out at no charge, talk with the people, and find the problem. Then the crew will go back in to get it taken care of."

"We maintain and repair our trucks and most equipment in-house," Hunter says. "We do hose repair and tank repair. The guys who run the trucks know how to repair them. It's cheaper for us to repair them. I've been repairing trucks from the beginning as an employee, and I now train our technicians.

"Often, we can make a repair while on the job, as we have spare parts on the trucks. If we blow a hose, we can repair it right on the spot. If we have a leak, we have parts here in our shop so we can repair it. Part of our plan is to get the job done and keep things going." Work on the firm's two camera trucks is

PROFILE

Ogden Sewer and Drain Inc.
DBA Roto-Rooter of Ogden (Utah)

OWNERS:	John and LaDawn Hunter
YEARS IN BUSINESS:	20
ANNUAL REVENUE:	$1.5 million
MARKET AREA:	7 northern Utah counties
EMPLOYEES:	17
SPECIALTIES:	Waterjetting, pipe inspection
FLEET:	2 camera trucks, 5 flusher trucks, 5 jet-vac trailers

handled by UEMSI at its repair shop in California. The company has its shop in a 60- by 100-foot heated building, which houses most of the fleet during cold weather.

Get it right

No matter who the company serves, Hunter believes in training. That applies especially to the company's five FMC flusher trucks, each with a 1,250-gallon water tank and a pump delivering 1,800 psi/65gpm; and its five combination trailers from Hi-Vac Corp./Aquatech Products.

"It takes about a year and a half to really train someone to be boss on a flusher crew," says Hunter. "The person has to learn what the high-pressure hose is doing — how it is cleaning and how it feels when they hit something going up the line. If it's tree roots, or a low spot they will know what they're dealing with. You can tell by the feel what the problem is. I tell people they have to use their imagination. You have to feel the hose as it goes up the line."

If the problem is roots, he wants the operator to feel through the hose what is going on as they use the cutter. "A person who can't do that does not belong on one of these trucks," Hunter says. An employee who advances to head a flusher truck is assigned a helper.

"I may assign the person which city or customer to work for, but that person is then the boss of that truck," Hunter says. "They know to go in and get the job done. Everybody does not make it to that level. Right now I have three guys plus myself. I wish I had two or three more."

Trainees first work as helpers alongside Hunter or an accomplished technician.

Training for Customers

While John Hunter teaches his employees in the field the finer points of handling nozzles and cutters and finding problems, he also offers a two-hour class at no charge to cities and other clients to help their employees understand their equipment.

"They may not know where you can use cutters and where you can't use cutters," Hunter says. "Or what nozzles to use. My training helps them with their problems, and they'll still call me if they need my services. I give them the ideas, and I'm still going to get work from them. It always keeps me in their mind, and they will refer some work to me, too."

Ogden Sewer and Drain employees perform repairs on-site. Here, after a bent section is removed, two service technicians work to join sections of cable before completing a work order.

Be the best

The company has not made it a priority to add services such as pipe bursting and pipe lining. "We find the problem and get the job ready for whoever will come in to complete that type of job," Hunter says. "I'd rather be good at what I'm doing than to branch out to where I can't do a good job. Finding personnel is hard. People seem to move from one job to another. However, once someone gets on a flusher crew they tend to stay with me.

"Residential work is actually more difficult, because the worker is pulling the cables in and out of the house, whereas in commercial work the technician is handling levers on the equipment and it is not as physical."

The demanding part is making sure the job is done correctly. Hunter observes that municipal systems are aging. "These are old clay and concrete pipes and they're getting in pretty bad shape," he says. "Usually we find tree roots in the pipes, and low spots with grease built up. We clean the pipes and make sure everything is kept running."

Other major customers are Hill Air Force Base and three area sewer districts. "The Air Force base has its own equipment, but if they have problems, they will call us," Hunter says. "We also do work for contractors on the base. With the sewer districts, we go in and cut tree roots. I'm on standby if their machines go down."

Hunter stays in very close contact with the municipalities. "If there is a plug in a city main, I will have a crew there within the hour," he says. "They don't even have to buy their own equipment. I take care of the systems even if they have their own and they want me to help them out. Some of this work can be very demanding."

Not just pipes

As for quality work, Hunter expects the best from his crews. "No matter where my people are working, I want the same high quality," he says. "My wife watches the tickets as they come in to check for accuracy in billing. Her staff also calls every customer to be sure everything is OK. If it's not, the technician

LaDawn and John Hunter.

Roto-Rooter of Ogden employs a small fleet of service trucks with flushing and vacuum capability. The business contracts with cities throughout northern Utah, maintaining sewer systems on a year-round schedule.

> **"If a city calls with a problem, sometimes I'll meet with their engineer. On a residential call, I go out at no charge, talk with the people, and find the problem. Then the crew will go back in to get it taken care of."**
>
> **John Hunter**

goes back."

LaDawn Hunter runs a tight ship at the office, working with four secretaries, controlling the money and delegating the crew for house calls. "People often ask me how I handle my job," she says. "I'm kind of old fashioned. We have all the computer programs, but I still do some of it the old way. We have problems in the area with power glitches.

"Computers are fine if they're working, but when you don't have power and they're not working, I still want to be able to run my business. We have generators and we can hook up the phones, but that's not enough to power all the computers. So I back up data the old-fashioned way. My accountant laughs at me and says he is going to get rid of my pencil and paper, and I say it's not going to happen."

In the field, Roto-Rooter of Ogden vehicles have to maneuver into tight spaces, such as in irrigation fields and on golf courses. To defrost lines under the floor of a frozen food plant, crews use an Epps Model 4435H13 to deliver water at 200 degrees at 4 gpm.

Hunter chose UEMSI camera trucks and systems in part because the repair shop is nearby in Sacramento, Calif. "We do maintenance once a year on the camera vans in November or December, before the weather turns too bad," he says. "We take the vans to them and they go over the truck from one end to the other. This saves us from a breakdown right in the middle of the busy season."

For root control, Hunter makes his own cutters, using blades from UEMSI. "We go through at least 20 motors a year, and it's cheaper for me to build my own," he says.

Technician Cirilo Trejo pulls a hose from a sewer line after a routine root removal. The hose is outfitted with one of owner John Hunter's custom-made root cutter attachments. It has a welded frame instead of a frame assembled with bolts, which eventually can loosen.

Hunter has built a strong business by sticking to the core principles of fleet maintenance, staff training, and effective management. That approach has helped the company forge solid relationships with a wide variety of customers and create a tradition of service excellence. ■

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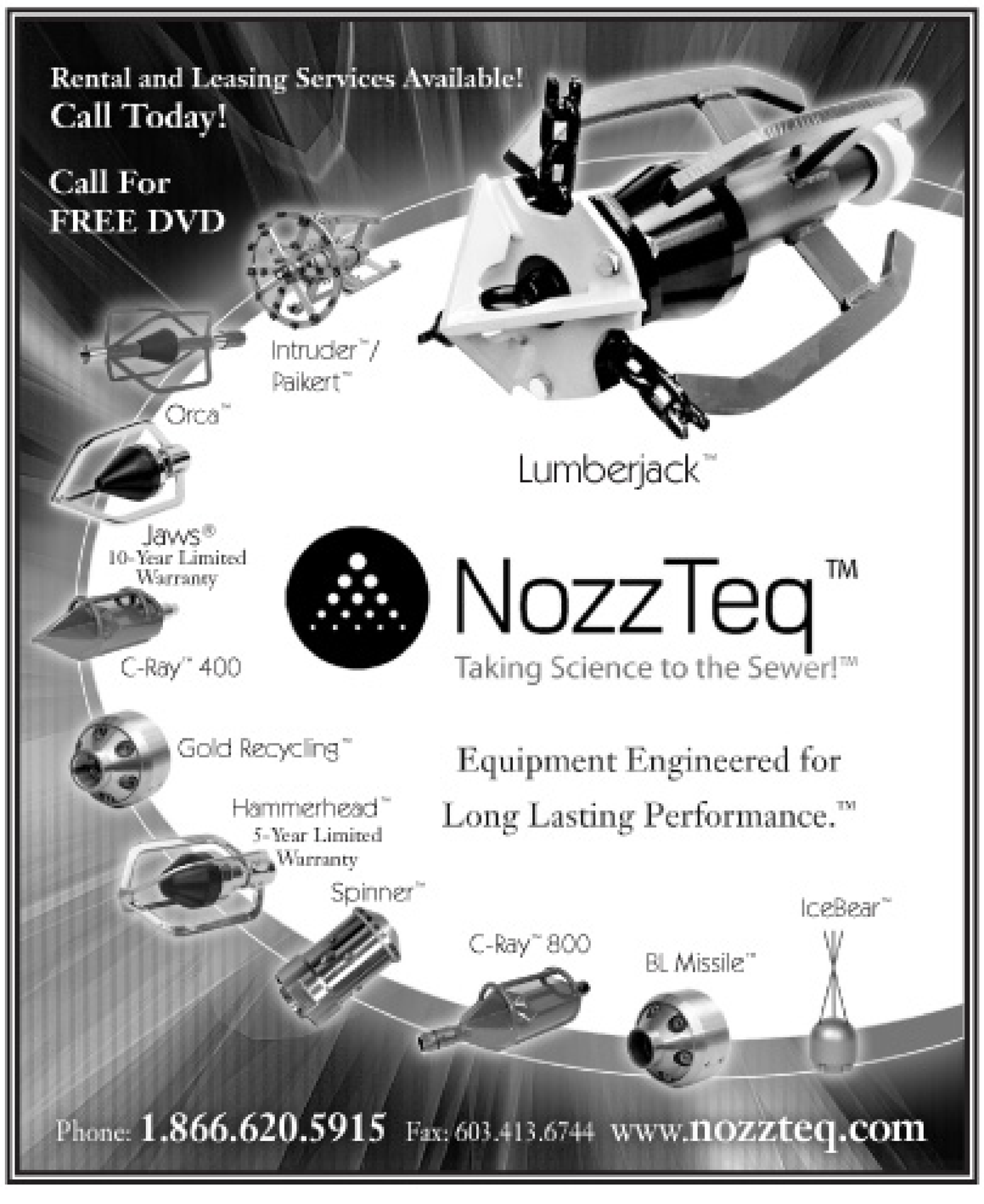
Gabriel Estrada measures the length of sewer line while a co-worker flushes the line.



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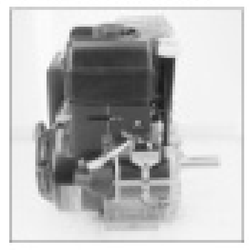

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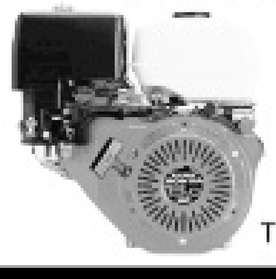

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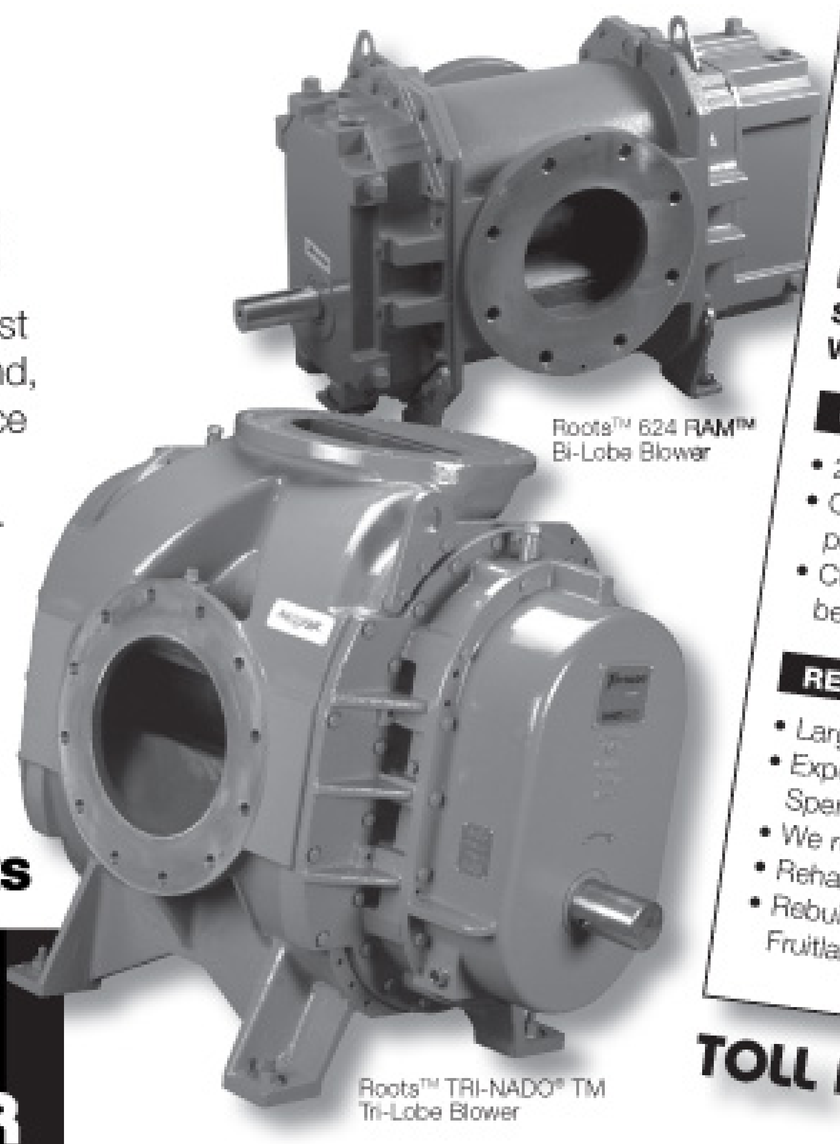

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Still Hard at Work

Compliance EnviroSystems continues the long and difficult task of restoring New Orleans area sewer systems after the 2005 hurricanes

By Gini McKain

Dudley Sullivan of Compliance EnviroSystems notes recently cleaned locations on a work site in New Orleans. (Photos by Dan and Gini McKain)

Most people believe that areas overwhelmed by hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 have recovered and that almost everything is back to normal.

Nothing could be further from the truth. All you need for proof is a quick drive through the Lower 9th Ward section of New Orleans. There, crews from Compliance EnviroSystems LLC are still at work, cleaning and inspecting sanitary and storm sewer systems that were clogged or damaged in the storms.

"More than two-and-a-half years after the hurricanes, our crews are still helping to restore full sewer service to the residents of the five parishes (counties) that constitute the Greater New Orleans Area," says Trey Horne, operation's manager for CES, based in Baton Rouge, La.

After leading a heroic effort that at times involved more than 180 combination trucks sent by contracting firms across the country, CES continues to rehabilitate the sewer systems and prepare them for hurricanes all but certain to strike in the years ahead.

National scope

CES, founded by CEO Kenneth Dutruch in 1994, is a full-service professional sewer evaluation, cleaning, and technical assessment firm. The company has seven branch offices in areas as far afield as Maryland and North Carolina.

Its staff of 105 includes civil engineers, environmental scientists, biological and computer scientists, and many skilled and highly trained support personnel. Other CES technicians are trained in high-pressure cleaning, monitoring, dye and smoke testing, manhole inspections, GPS Survey, and advanced GIS mapping.

This collection of talent helped the company face the enormous sewer rehabilitation tasks after the hurricanes.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, which hit in August and September 2005, constituted the largest and most costly natural disaster ever to strike the United States. Immediately after Hurricane Katrina, CES was hired to clean and inspect the sewer systems in the New Orleans area. The company did so with its own crews and with assistance from other companies from as far away as New York and Idaho.

> **"When the water was then pumped out of the city, the receding water carried that soil with it. This has undercut the aging sewer lines to the point of failure. Some streets and sidewalks are collapsing, causing disruption, blockage or infiltration to the lines."**
>
> **Trey Horne**

"Our work has been the result of a total effort by many forces, says Brad Dutruch, vice president and general manager. "There is little question that our job would have been significantly more difficult without the use of our fleet of combination vacuum trucks. It took our

PROFILE

COMPLIANCE ENVIROSYSTEMS LLC, BATON ROUGE, LA.

FOUNDER/CEO:	Kenneth Dutruch
FOUNDED:	1994
SERVICE AREA:	Texas to Maryland (17 regional offices)
SPECIALTIES:	Full-range sewer system evaluation and rehabilitation
EMPLOYEES:	105
WEB SITE:	www.ces-sses.com

A camera from CUES Inc. is used to document sewer lines that have been cleaned.

Traffic on New Orleans streets has picked up, especially with building material suppliers going to homes under restoration. The Vac-Con truck shown here is operational with its back end facing into traffic, allowing operator Limmie Sibley to work safely in the front.

own crews, including two full-time mechanics, often working long, continuous hours, to get this job done."

The company used combination trucks supplied by Vac-Con Inc. by way of the local dealer, Covington Sales. "Without the aid of new technology like GPS, and much help that we received from other contractors who came in from around the nation, I don't think that we could have accomplished what we did," adds Dutruch. "New Orleans alone had an estimated 58,000 catch basins and 3.5 million linear feet of storm drain lines to clear, clean and inspect."

Residual damage

As it turned out, the original cleanup, as difficult as it was, did not completely resolve the problems in the sewer systems

"In doing this work, we have encountered several situations that only seem to have compounded the original damage," says Horne. "Severely affected locations that were initially bypassed in favor of restoring the majority of the system are now creating even more problems.

"It appears in some instances that the force of the flood water entering the system caused the subsurface soils around the pipe joints or cracks to be hydroblasted. When the water was then pumped out of the city, the receding water carried that soil with it. This has undercut the aging sewer lines to the point of failure. Some streets and sidewalks are collapsing, causing disruption, blockage or infiltration to the lines."

Another problem has been the blockage of once-cleaned lines by

Technicians Bruce Walter and Paul Bordelon check video images in a camera truck. The camera collects data on runs up to 700 feet long.

Team Effort

In cleaning large sections of storm sewers incapacitated by hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, Compliance EnviroSystems learned the necessity of dependable equipment and reliable communications.

"It must also be remembered that we weren't alone out there," says Brad Dutruch, vice president and general manager. "We had to call in and assemble as large a workforce from around the country as quickly as we could. New Orleans and suburbs had had their own trucks under water and were no longer usable. This meant using all our own personal contacts and any others that we could call upon for that assemblage. NASSCO was a great help in this effort to help get a staff together.

"We reached our high-water mark when we had more than 180 combination trucks working around the clock, seven days a week, pumping out and cleaning through the debris- and silt-clogged storm and sewer lines once the water receded. The support of the Vac-Con factory and their dealer, Covington Sales, was essential. Along with our own mechanics, they helped to keep our equipment operational.

"Covington vice president and sales manager Chris Kinchen outfitted an enclosed trailer with tools and spare parts, and came onsite to help service our needs for the several-month duration.

"Without the aid of new technology and help we received from other contractors who came in from around the nation, I don't think that we could have accomplished what we did for the city and the citizens of New Orleans."

the influx of debris from the recovery effort. After simply being dumped curbside, awaiting pickup, some of that debris washed into the storm sewers during many subsequent rainfalls.

Looking ahead

Now, in a second and third phase of operations for various parishes, CES is following up the job of preparing the systems for future major storms. Included in the preparations are contracts with various governmental and geopolitical entities to clean, video inspect, and evaluate more than 1.8 million linear feet of storm and sanitary sewer work in and around parts of Orleans (New Orleans proper) and St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson and St. Charles parishes.

Previous contracts with the various entities gave CES valuable personal contacts and familiarity with the local neighborhoods — all helpful for logistical purposes.

"Now that we are finished with Phase 1, we are working on the second phase of the cleanout for the city's Emergency Sewer System Assessment (ESSA) and the LADOT Federal Aid Submerged Roads project," Dutruch says.

"In these operations, we are going back to areas we had to bypass initially. Yet we are still in the 9th Ward today. The problem here is that many of these sections are now even more difficult to clear. Much of the debris from residential cleanout and repairs was just dumped out into the streets in front of the houses. This has since flowed into the lines, making our job that more difficult.

"The city depends on smaller temporary pumps in the pumping stations to move the sewer flow. We are often forced to isolate lines, and in many instances, we depend on our Vac-Con trucks for bypassing these locations."

From left, Joe Atol, vice president of operations; Trey Horne, operations manager; and Brad Dutruch, vice president of sales and marketing, go over strategy for operations in the Greater New Orleans area.

> "There is little question that our job would have been significantly more difficult without the use of our fleet of combination vacuum trucks. It took our own crews, including two full-time mechanics, often working long, continuous hours, to get this job done."
>
> **Brad Dutruch**

Working in traffic

The CES crews are clearing lines that require them to work in main streets that now carry heavy traffic, including trucks carrying building material. The company would like to average 2,000 feet a day, but obstructions and other difficulties often limit them to about 1,500 feet.

Dudley Sullivan, a CES area foreman who lost his house in the hurricane, says the Vac-Con combination unit in the lower 9th Ward is equipped with a 12-cubic-yard tank. The normal procedure is to dump the tank once a week on a Friday, or sooner.

The operator, Limmie Sibley, says he uses the truck's jetting system at 1,100 psi when driving the jet nozzle down the line and 800 psi when drawing the hose back. The manholes the crew uses to access the sewer are typically six feet deep with 8-inch sewer line connections.

Safety is paramount in all CES operations. Horne says the Vac-Con machines can easily be placed in traffic with the back end facing oncoming vehicles, minimizing the operators' exposure to danger. All controls are on the front of the truck.

Video inspection

The Algiers section of New Orleans is another difficult work site. Here, the sewer line is located at the toe of the levee along the Mississippi River in an undeveloped area set apart from the residential district and accessible only by a rough gravel road.

CES personnel inspected sewers in the area using a CUES inspection camera coupled with that company's Granite XP pipe survey and reporting software. Technician Bruce Walton manned the video monitor screens inside the CES inspection truck while operator Harold Knightshed handled the camera at the manholes. The two recorded video data in increments of up to 700 feet for later review and analysis. "Immediately after the hurricanes, we had all the help we could ask for," says Dutruch. "Immediate recovery was an essential goal for the Greater New Orleans area.

"Now that the emergency effort has subsided and there is a semblance of normality restored, the job is far from over. It is reliably estimated that it could take as much as ten more years to bring everything back to the way it once was." With its capable staff and up-to-date equipment, CES is well prepared to get the job done. ■

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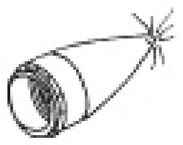

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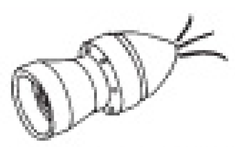

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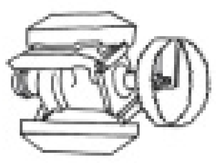

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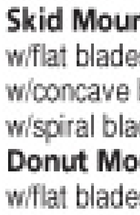

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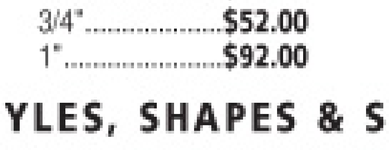

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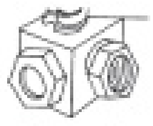

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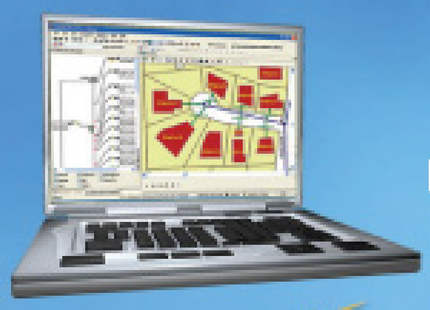

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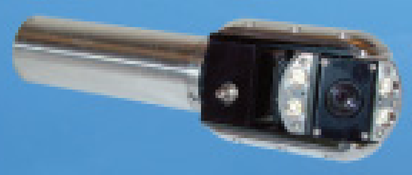

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Phone Books vs. Internet

Cleaning professionals debate the merits of Yellow Pages advertising as compared with the Internet and other venues

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Question:

I put a lot of money into phone directory advertising and I am wondering: Does it pay off? I have asked a handful of customers, and they reply with, "I got your number from the local plumber or hardware store, or from a friend." I don't hear much about the phone book. It takes a number of phone books to cover our area, and that is getting expensive. I see and hear a lot about Internet web pages, and I am looking for feedback.

Answers:

We are just going through the phone books that we advertise in (about 14), trying to decide if it's worth it to have anything more than a bold listing. A good amount of our calls are word-of-mouth. We do have a web site that generates interest sporadically.

Overheard ONLINE

❑❑❑

The Yellow Pages are a necessary evil, but in the last seven years I have cut my bill by about 50 percent. When I go to the Yellow Pages, I never call a company with the largest ad. I know how much ads cost, and I know I will be paying for their ad. Many customers know the high price of Yellow Pages ads, and they also will not call the companies with full-page ads. The Yellow Pages representative has tried hard to get me to spend money to advertise online, but I turn them down.

After cutting my ads down 50 percent, I have not seen a decrease in business. If you don't have a web site, I would get one, but don't expect it to start your phone ringing off the hook. The Internet is just another way to advertise.

❑❑❑

I'm a very small fish. I never got much from the phone book. I get a few calls from the Internet. I don't feel customers have a clue what Yellow Pages cost. I ask every customer how they were referred to me (initial phone call). I don't respond to any phone questions until they answer this question.

In most cases their answer is a referral from a plumber or another customer. Referrals tell me they want quality service, not a phone estimate. Get them talking. They will tell you everything if you listen. The question about phone books is an important one. What types of customers use the Yellow Pages? I don't know, but I should.

❑❑❑

We just started our company three years ago, and because we used a cell phone for our business phone we could not get into the phone book. Our main source of advertising was a local cable ad, which was pretty expensive but definitely got us rolling.

It took us two years to get a small Yellow Pages ad and had to argue to get it then, but it also put us in the white pages. Even though our business name was easy to remember, the people had a hard time finding our number. Even the referrals (the best advertisement) had trouble finding our number.

We were parking our truck on a very visible lot (great advertisement) and had many people say they drove to where the truck was parked to get our phone number. The first two months in the Yellow Pages, our business doubled. The Yellow Pages will also help with the newcomers to the area.

We have a web page, and it does very little in the line of getting local customers. It is, however, a necessity now days. With PayPal and a page for payment of services, it has enabled us to easily take credit and debit card payments with minimal expense.

❑❑❑

Internet is going to be the future of advertising. You're still going to have to advertise in the Yellow Pages if you're just starting out. Referral companies are good, too. Service Magic is a great lead company — that is through the Internet. Yellow Pages online is expensive. I've tried and will never do it again. Word-of-mouth is still the best advertising. I would prefer Internet over Yellow Pages right now. ■

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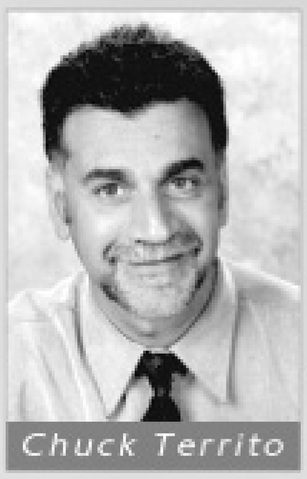

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Reaching Out

An innovative mix of technologies helps a Massachusetts sewer department seal leaking laterals, reduce I&I, and preserve treatment plant capacity

By Scottie Dayton

The inflated blue bladder is lubricated and ready for retraction by vacuum back into the hose carrier.

While controlling mainline inflow and infiltration, the Rockland (Mass.) Sewer Department faced another challenge: groundwater migrating into the sewers through 6-inch vitrified clay laterals.

Heavy infiltration during spring and fall pushed the treatment plant's limited capacity, affecting the town's ability to grow. Repairing the laterals became the next major objective. An inspection by Metcalf & Eddy Inc., an environmental engineering company in Wakefield, Mass., identified leaking joints 20 feet up the service connections. The engineers decided that grouting was the most economical solution.

National Water Main Cleaning Co. (NWMCC) in Canton, Mass., a division of Carylon Co., won the repair contract. "We have years of experience sealing laterals up to eight feet, but this was our first attempt at such a distance," says project manager Jim Falconieri. "The thought of all the things that could go wrong was daunting."

> "We have years of experience sealing laterals up to eight feet, but this was our first attempt at such a distance. The thought of all the things that could go wrong was daunting."
>
> **Jim Falconieri**

Grout truck operator Gary Millington (in fluorescent safety shirt) helps Marc Anctil of Logiball lubricate the inflated bladder with silicone. After lubrication, vacuum will retract the bladder into the hose carrier.

With the help of a lateral packer manufacturer, a new combination TV/grout/cutter truck, and some tweaking of chemical recipes, NWMCC successfully repaired 34 service connections. That and similar projects will help the town plan for expansion without building a larger wastewater treatment plant.

Chronic area

Although installed in the 1950s, the clay laterals were in good shape; only their bell and spigot joints were leaking. "Grouting is used to control infiltration," says Falconieri. "It's not a structural repair."

M&E had identified a neighborhood with chronic infiltration. Falconieri's two men used a Lateral & Mainline Probe (LAMP) system from CUES Inc. of Orlando, Fla., to assess each service connection and pinpoint infiltration sources. Inspections were done during high groundwater conditions.

"Most leaks were in the one to four gallons per minute range with some exceeding 10 gallons per minute," says Falconieri. "After reviewing the findings, we chose 34 laterals for sealing as part of Rockland's program to reduce I&I." Falconieri asked Marc Anctil, president of Logiball Inc. in Jackman, Maine, to provide in-the-field training and advice. "Learning on the job made Gary Millington, my grout truck operator, and me very nervous," says Falconieri. "We didn't want to dig up yards to retrieve stuck equipment."

Falconieri brought his newest truck, a combination TV/grout/cutter from Aries Industries Inc., and replaced its 15-gallon vacuum tank with a 30-gallon tank.

Tough Job

PROJECT:

Seal 34 laterals 20 feet from the mainline

CUSTOMER:
Rockland Sewer Department, Rockland, Mass.

CONTRACTOR:
National Water Main Cleaning Co., Canton, Mass.

EQUIPMENT:
Launcher and packer from Logiball Inc., Jackman, Maine; AV-100 grout from Avanti International, Webster, Texas

RESULTS:
Laterals sealed and groundwater infiltration stopped

Long train to daylight

The lateral packer from Logiball has a 25-foot-long rubber hose, or carrier train, attached to the bladder launcher with pan-and-tilt camera. After the bladder is lubricated with silicone, vacuum retracts it though

an opening at the head of the carrier train. "Whenever something that long is put in a sewer, anything can go wrong," says Falconieri. A remote-controlled winch at the downstream manhole advanced the packer.

Millington had to learn how to get the carrier train into the mainline, position it, and inflate the bladder up the lateral. A maximum pressure of 40 psi seals the ends of the bladder, our profits would have gone with it." Millington's steady hand avoided damage.

Hold that flush

NWMCC notified residents when their laterals would be blocked, and asked those who stayed home not to flush toilets or use water during the repair. Rockland officials worked with

Grout truck operator Gary Millington double-checks connections before lowering the 25-foot-long packer into the pipe.

packer against the walls. "To achieve an effective seal of 20 feet, the packer travels 25 feet due to the plug at the end," says Falconieri.

Separate hoses carried AV-100 liquid acrylamide grout and catalyst from Avanti International to the packer, where the chemicals mixed together as they were injected. "Marc increased the gel time from 10 seconds to five minutes because of the distance we pumped the grout," says Falconieri. "It's a catalytic cure, but with such long gel times, we didn't know if the grout would gel prematurely or not at all."

Although the forward end of the bladder seals against the lateral wall, its expansion is restricted to form an annular space. Grout flows through this passage, out the bad joints, and gels with the surrounding soil. Millington could see water running as the bladder approached the joint, and stop after the grout was injected. The average annular space held 12 gallons of grout. The most used in any repair was 26 gallons. Pressure monitoring told Millington when laterals were sealed.

Retracting the bladder was difficult because of its length and the friction created by residual grout in the pipe. "It's not a solid skin coating, but a thin gelatinous mass," says Falconieri. "Had we ruined the NWMCC, answering homeowner questions. Even though the area was quiet, the crew coned off the CCTV truck, and a police officer controlled traffic.

Rehabilitations took 30 minutes, and three or four were completed each day. It took Falconieri's team 11 days to repair the 34 laterals. "The surprise was how well it went," says Falconieri. "With Marc's help, we were sealing laterals like old pros after the first day. None of our fears materialized."

The repairs enabled Rockland to attract more business and residents without spending millions to enlarge its wastewater treatment plant. ■

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On Steroids?

A highly customized Jeep Grand Cherokee helps EcoClean build a reputation for inspecting in tough-to-reach places

By Ken Wysocky

At first glance, the 1997 Grand Cherokee Limited that EcoClean uses to transport inspection gear looks like a classic case of killing a mosquito with a shotgun. Why would anyone build a cross between a monster truck and an off-road SUV, complete with 38 1/2-inch tires and a steel-plated frame, to cart around a robotic camera or two?

But it all makes sense when you learn this bad boy goes to rough, remote-access pipelines in the wilds of Maine, and beyond. "We have quite a few remote-access lines around here," says Greg Goan, owner and manager of EcoClean — The Sewer & Drain Specialist, based in Portland and specializing in inspections, pipe cleaning, and repairs.

"When they were put in years and years ago, no one ever maintained the access roads. So now you have to get through big gully washouts, boulders and drainage ditches to reach those utility lines. But with this truck, we basically go anywhere we want to go."

Going to extremes

Goan first considered using a vehicle such as a Polaris Ranger 6-wheeler or a John Deere Gator, but they couldn't handle rugged terrain, and the open cargo beds left expensive camera equipment exposed to the elements. So Goan, an off-road enthusiast, had a brainstorm: Why not customize an SUV?

Three of Goan's best friends own New England Offroad Outfitters in Portland, and they were eager to tackle the project back in 2004. "They were all for taking a truck that not many people use for off-roading and taking it to the extreme," he recalls.

It's hard to recognize the Grand Cherokee now. It has 3/16-inch steel plating around the frame, an extended long-arm suspension with 7 1/2-inch coil springs on adjustable spacers, high-pinion Dana 60 axles from a 1978 Ford F-350 Snowfighter one-ton pickup truck, and chromoly hardened-steel axles running 5.88 gears to compensate for the larger tires.

It also uses ARB Air Lockers selectable locking differentials inside both axles for added traction ability, and an Atlas II 4:1 transfer case that lets drivers choose between front-wheel drive, rear-wheel drive or four-wheel drive.

Drawing stares

The conversion process took about four months and cost between $85,000 and $90,000, including the price of the vehicle. "I'll be honest — no one is stupid enough to put that much money into a truck," Goan says. "But off-roading is a hobby for me, so when I saw the business potential, it just made sense."

EcoClean uses the unit to transport three robotic cameras made by Envirosight LLC: a Rovver 125, a Rovver 225 and a pole-mounted QuickView zoom camera. The company uses PipeTech software from Peninsular Technologies to collect data and store videos and photos.

A 1998 Jeep Wrangler TJ acts as a support vehicle. Its frame is also wrapped in 3/16-inch steel, helping it carry an onboard welder, air compressor and miscellaneous repair parts for both vehicles so crews can make repairs in the wild. But the Grand Cherokee draws the most stares.

"At first, it was kind of nutty," Goan recalls. "Every time I drove

MONEY MACHINES

OWNER:	**EcoClean LLC – The Sewer & Drain Specialist, Portland, Maine**
FUNCTION:	Transporting camera systems for inspecting remote-access pipes
VEHICLE TYPE:	Modified 1997 Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited
PRIMARY EQUIPMENT:	Rovver 125, Rovver 225 and pole-mounted QuickView zoom cameras from Envirosight LLC
COST:	About $85,000
WEB SITE:	www.ecoclean1.com

Owner Greg Goan gave the truck an eye-catching graphics wrap to go with extensive mechanical modifications.

MONEY Machines

The off-road inspection truck owned by EcoClean LLC attracts lots of attention.

The truck carries a complete array of camera equipment for inspecting at manholes in remote locations.

"When they were put in years and years ago, no one ever maintained the access roads. So now you have to get through big gully washouts, boulders and drainage ditches to reach those utility lines. But with this truck, we basically go anywhere we want to go."

Greg Goan

down the road, people with cell phone cameras were hanging out their car windows. People are amazed when they see it."

The truck's agility in rough terrain is earning EcoClean a reputation for succeeding at problem jobs that other companies have tried and failed. It has reached remote-access lines in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont, and soon might travel to Hawaii. "Have equipment, will travel — that's our motto," Goan chuckles.

By the looks of it, not much will stop Goan from getting where he needs to go. Mixing business with pleasure never looked like so much fun. ■

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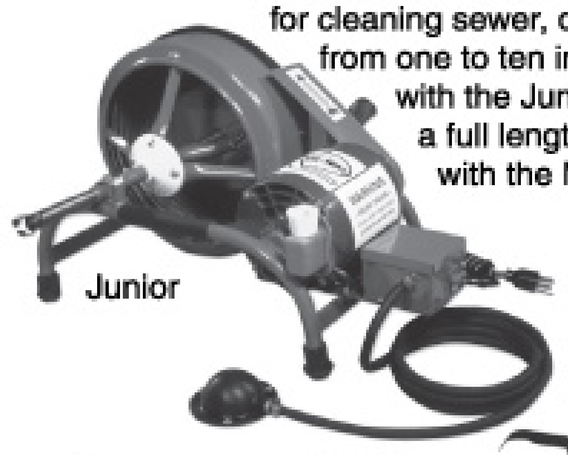

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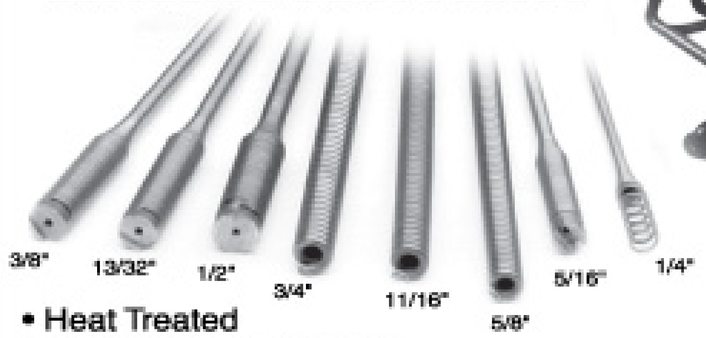

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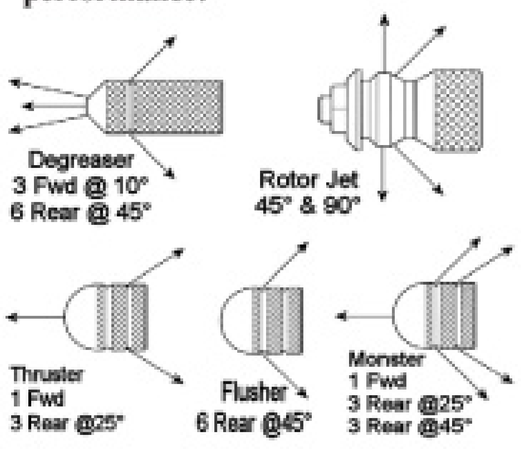

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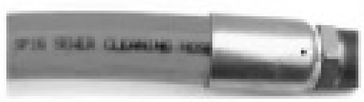

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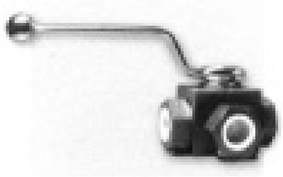

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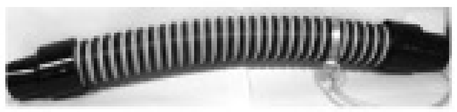

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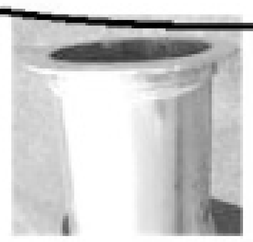

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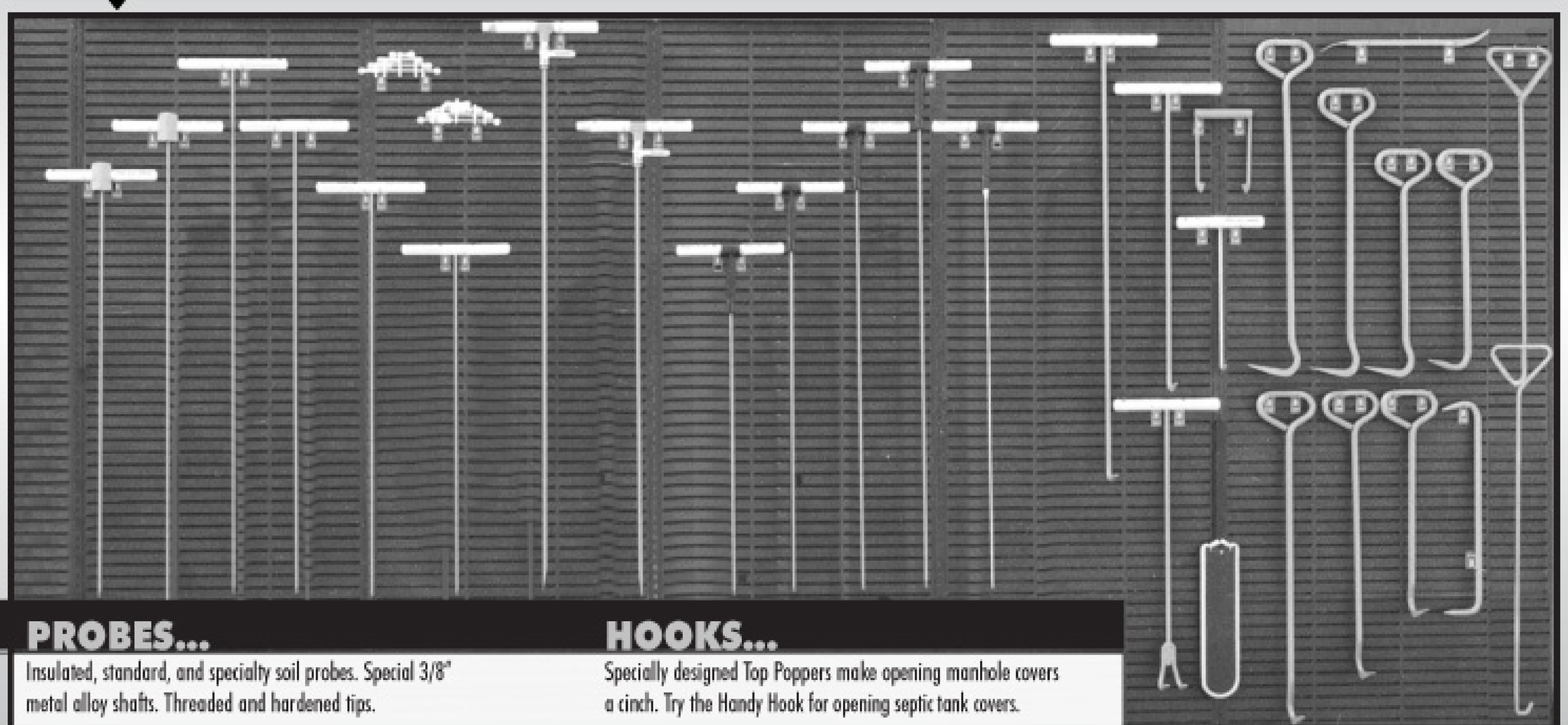

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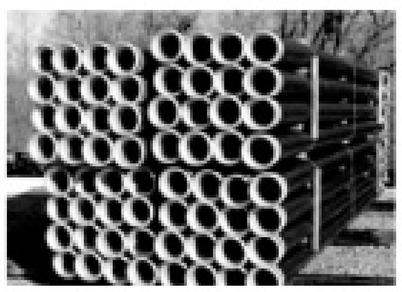

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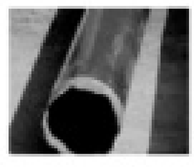

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Tech Perspective

Compact Power

Trailer-mounted cleaning and hydroexcavation units can provide a solid complement to full-size truck-mounted vacuum systems

By Mike Moore

Tech Perspective looks at technology-related issues and provides information and advice that cleaning professionals can apply to equipment selection and to their daily work in the field. Industry members are welcome to offer ideas for this column. Please direct them to editor Ted J. Rulseh, editor@cleaner.com.

The V250 hydro vacuum excavation system from Vemeer offers contractors and municipalities a low-cost, portable system for potholing and vacuum applications.

Industrial vacuum systems have been part of cleaners' fleets for decades, used for a host of tasks from cleaning sewers, catch basins and water valve boxes, to removing slurry from horizontal directional drilling projects.

Truck-mounted combination units offer high-pressure waterjets for cleaning and powerful vacuum for picking up debris. Besides cleaning chores, they can be easily adapted for hydroexcavation, which enables digging safely around buried utilities and exposing those utilities for repair work.

Because these machines are versatile and highly efficient, municipalities and contractors who buy one often find it fully utilized within a short time. Faced with a large expenditure for a second truck-mounted unit, many instead choose a trailer-mounted system. This lets them keep the truck unit free for major projects that require maximum power and use the trailer unit for the small- to medium-sized jobs.

Small package

A wide array of attachments can make combination units even more versatile. For example, reduction tools in different sizes allow cleaning of smaller valve box basins. A valve exerciser attachment, which mounts to the vacuum trailer, can save crews the manual labor of hand cranking valves.

Sometimes ground conditions or confined spaces make a work site unsuitable for a truck vacuum. Here, a more mobile trailer vacuum can provide easy access.

An expanding application for combination units is for excavating post holes for road guard rails and traffic signs. Hydroexcavating prevents damage to buried utilities and requires less labor than using an auger.

Trailer-mounted vacuum excavators are well suited for these applications because they are portable. Contractors can choose anything from a 100-gallon unit that fits in the bed of a one-ton truck to a full-size trailer unit with up to 1,200-gallon capacity. The larger units have the power to move displaced soil up to 200 feet from the source, yet require only one person to operate.

A wide array of attachments can make combination units even more versatile. For example, reduction tools in different sizes allow cleaning of smaller valve box basins. A valve exerciser attachment, which mounts to the vacuum trailer, can save crews the manual labor of hand cranking valves.

Trailer-mounted vacuums have some limitations. Most trailer units deliver vacuum capacity of about 15 inches Hg, providing a solid water lift of 15 feet from the port without introducing air into the stream. It is possible to go 30 or 40 feet deep if some air is mixed with the material being vacuumed.

Large vacuum trucks typically deliver at least 20 inches Hg and so can lift a column of water from a greater depth without introducing air.

In addition, the positive displacement blowers on trailer-mounted systems are typically smaller, providing 575 to 1,025 cfm air flow, compared to 3,000 cfm and up from some larger truck units. Smaller units use only 3- or 4-inch hoses, compared to the 6-inch hoses found on truck models. The smaller hoses provide less suction, but do allow access to tighter spaces.

Making sound decisions

In choosing a trailer-mounted combination machine or vacuum excavator, contractors should look at a variety of factors that affect proper sizing and the selection of equipment and accessories. Major considerations include:

What is the main application? Will the unit be used for jetting small sewers and cleaning of valve boxes and catch basins? Heavy-duty sewer cleaning? Potholing? Major hydroexcavation projects?

What options are desirable? Is there a need for a valve exerciser? Sewer jetter? Reduction tools? Heater for excavating in heavy clay soil or in frozen conditions?

Is there a need for dry as well as wet excavation? Water-based excavators typically dig faster through a wide variety of soil types and reduce the volume of the displaced material. They also move more displaced wet spoil to the holding tank than an air system.

However, the displaced spoil is wet and cannot be returned to the site immediately without drying.

While spoil from air systems can be directly returned to the site, these systems do not cut as well in hard ground conditions, such as clay. Some manufacturers offer both systems in one package, letting the user choose the best option for the job.

The heart of the system

In comparing machines, contractors should look for a high-quality vacuum blower. They should also select a tank with capacity to hold a half-day's or day's worth of spoil, as this reduces the number of trips needed to empty the debris tank.

If a hydroexcavator will work in areas with cobble rock, then a unit with a 4-inch hose and a blower with about 1,025 cfm air flow is desirable. Cobble soils require a larger blower to remove spoil effectively, and the larger hose helps limit clogging.

In areas without cobble rocks, a 575 cfm system and 3-inch hose will generally suffice. Blower size affects the amount of engine power required: A larger blower increases the cost of the unit.

Contractors should select a filtration system that filters the spoil without clogging. Also important is a strong trailer frame that will support the weight of the unit and a full tank of spoil over a long equipment service life. Options on trailer units can include:

- Controls that allow the user to reverse the flow of the vacuum to blow the spoil back into the hole.
- Booms that support the weight of the hose, reducing operator effort.
- Automatic tank clean-out systems.
- Auxiliary hydraulic systems that allow users to run a concrete saw and other tools off the unit.

Trailer vacuums are a great complement to a truck vacuum and a versatile tool for busy contractors and municipal crews.

Mike Moore is vice president of sales with McLaughlin, a manufacturer of vacuum excavation and auger boring equipment and underground locator technology in Greenville, S.C. He can be reached at 864/277-5870 or mmoore@mightymole.com. ■

Safe Hydroexcavating

Safety is essential when operating any truck- or trailer-mounted hydroexcavation equipment. Here are a few basic tips to remember:

- Make sure the air knife or water lance has a covered tip so as not to damage buried lines or cables. A sharp tip may slice or puncture a line.
- Be sure operators exposing electrical lines wear dielectric boots and gloves. An electrical line could have a fault and leak current into the ground.
- Always use eye protection to protect workers from flying debris.
- Use proper traffic controls when working along streets to make sure the site and operators are clearly visible to motorists.

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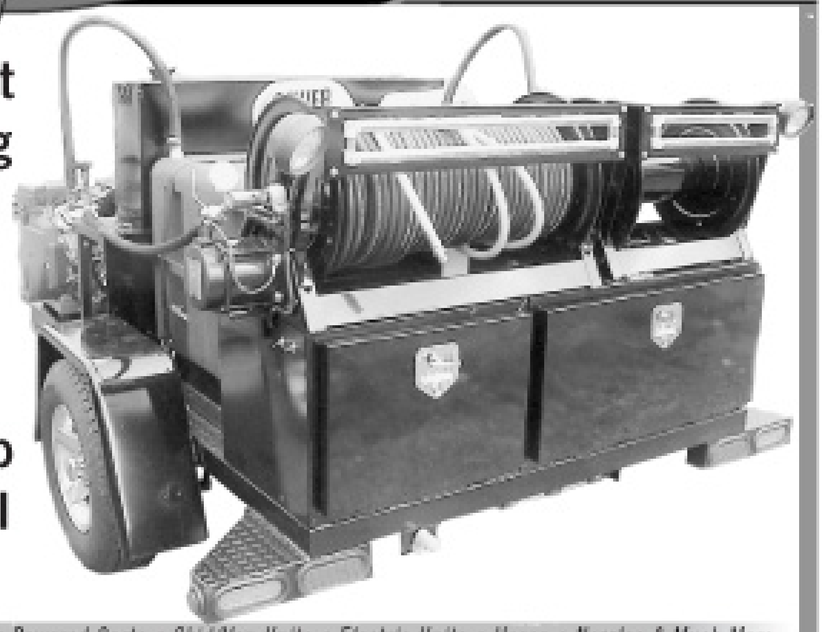

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Industry NEWS

NLB Releases Accessory Catalog, Updates Online Quoting

NLB Corp.'s new waterjet accessory catalog features field-reparable lances and rotating nozzles, rotary hose devices and 3-D tank cleaning heads. It is available online at www.nlbcorp.com. The company also has updated its online quoting system with responses typically e-mailed with 24 hours.

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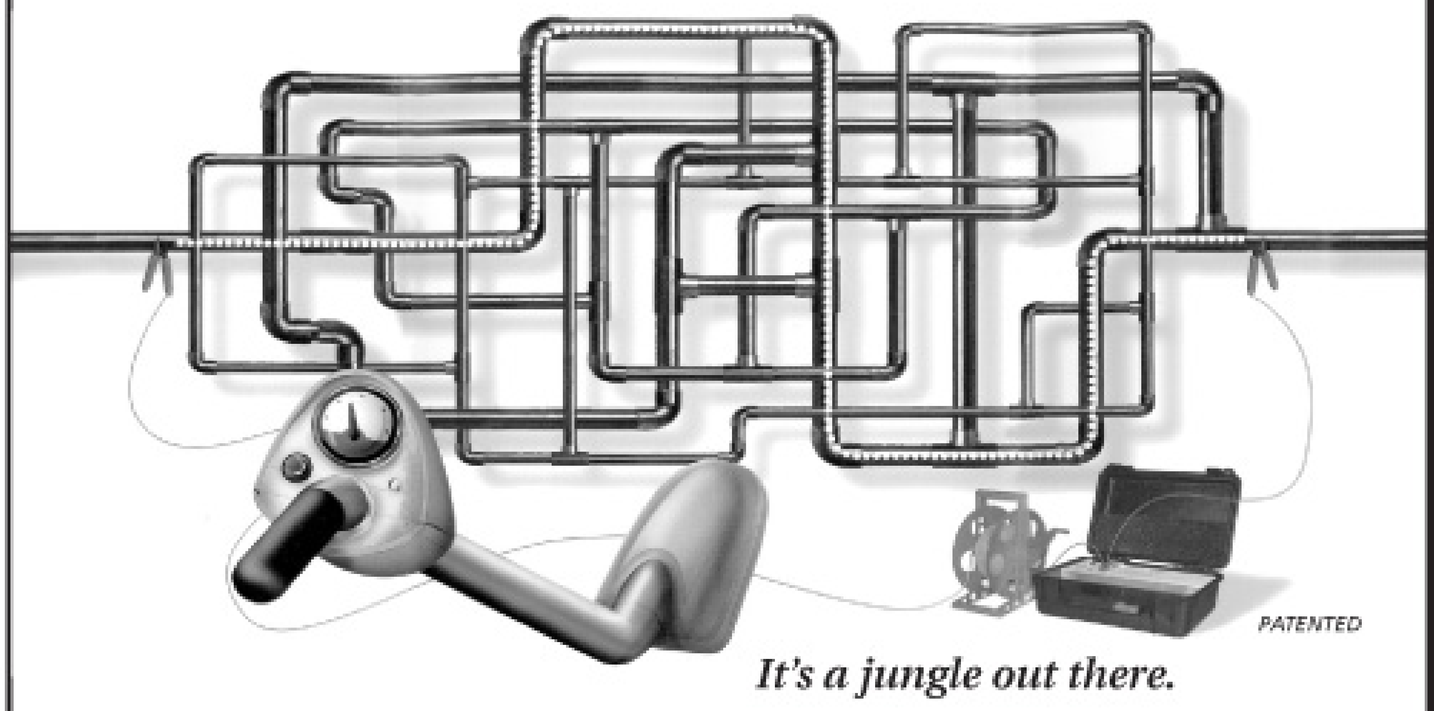

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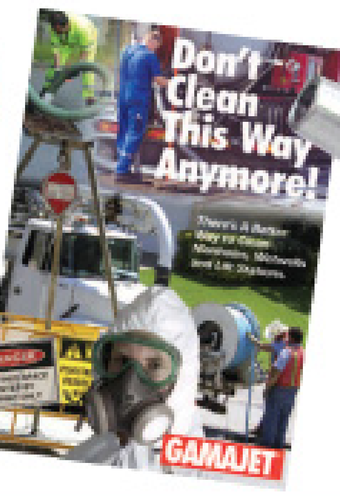

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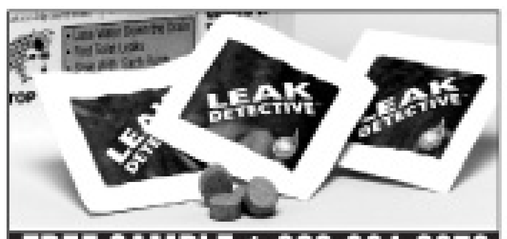

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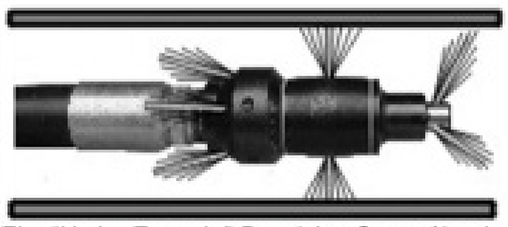

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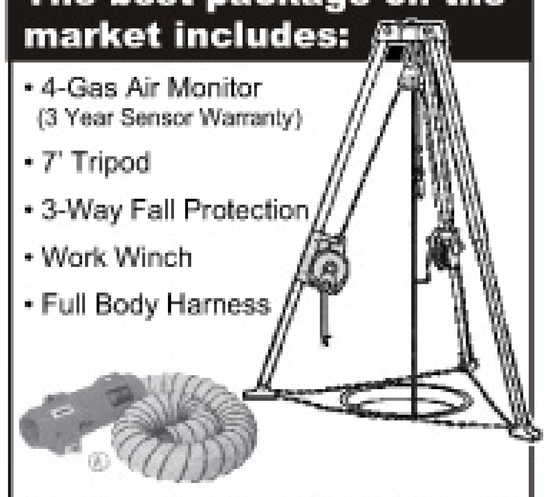

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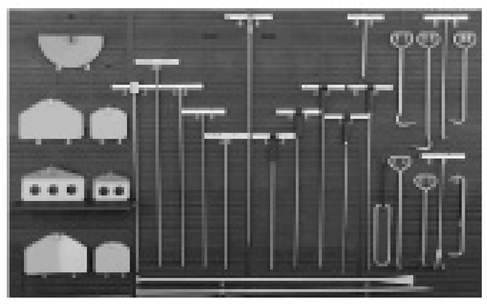

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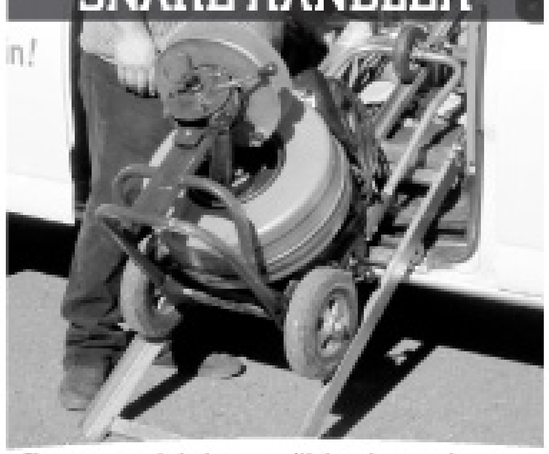

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1994 KW T-600: 300 hp Cummins, 180K, 2500 gal. tank, large storage compartments, tires 75%, 200 gal. fresh water tank, 6" heated dump valve, stainless steel hose trays, great truck!! $36,000

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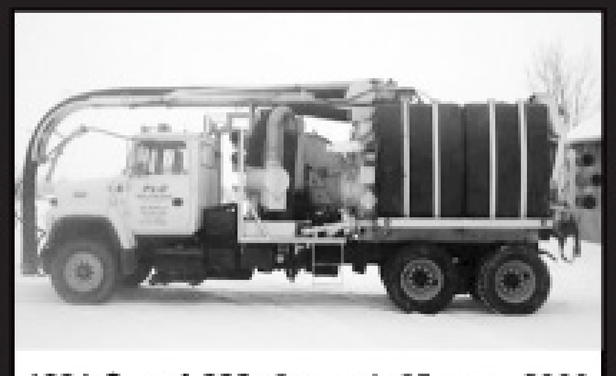
Shower and Restroom Trailers: Platinum and Gold Series, new and used available. Each with separate men and women sides.

CCI/Brian Touey 805-896-3777 CBM

1996 Ford L9000 Vactor 2115: 80 gpm @ 2000 psi sewer flushing system, 3650 cfm/16" vacuum system, dual hose reel controls, telescoping boom. $89,000

Bob or Tom 850-547-9999 CP6



1991 Camel 200: 6-speed, 65 gpm, 2000 psi, Roots 624 blower, tandem axel, ready for work, 169,000 miles, excellent condition.....$46,000

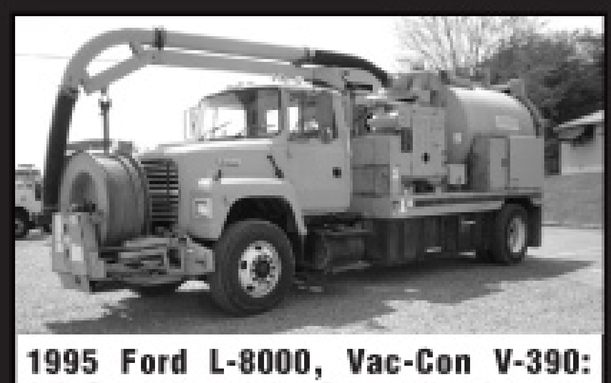
920-655-7302 or 920-866-9109 C6

Vac-Con V350LHA Combo Truck on 1999 Sterling L7501: 3-stage fan, 650 gal. fresh water storage, 5-yd. debris body, telescopic boom, articulated front hose reel, hand gun wash-down system. $79,900

800-992-3656 C6

1994 Vactor GMC White Cabover: Cummins 6 cylinder x2, 1,000 gallons, 5 yards, dual fans, excellent condition. .....$70,000 OBO

Contact Bill at 1-866-744-9921 CP6



1995 Ford L-8000, Vac-Con V-390: 8.3 Cummins, John Deere diesel upper, 3-stage blower, 9 cu. yd. debris body, 37,789 miles, 1,389 hrs. vac unit, 527 hrs. jetter. $47,900

814-696-4343 - Hollidaysburg, PA CMP6

1982 Jet Vac, Vactor 810: New water pump, new Ford 300 vac engine. Works well. New 8" pump hose. Money maker! Call me and I will send additional photos. $18,000

Joe @ 801-807-8335 C6

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Product Spotlight

Camera System Lets Technicians Share Results Instantly

By Ken Wysocky

When an inspection reveals a fracture in a property owner's sewer line, the last thing a technician wants to do is wait for approval to make the repair. The upgraded P330+ flexiprobe digital inspection cameras from Pearpoint, a Radiodetection brand, have Bluetooth wireless capability that enables technicians to e-mail inspection images to customers, says Tom Schmandt, general manager.

The system includes a 1-inch adjustable-focus color camera for 1- to 4-inch pipes or a 2-inch fixed-focus color camera for 2- to 6-inch pipes. Both are made of stainless steel and are equipped with LED lights. The 2-inch camera is self-leveling, and the 1-inch camera lets users rotate transmitted images so that they are easier to view.

Digital technology enables the P330+ cameras to transmit sharper images to the command module's 8-inch color monitor (2 inches larger than its predecessor). The module also lets users pause, zoom in and out and pan while watching the inspection, providing better views of problem areas. The splash-proof keypad is designed for easy outdoor operation, even if the user is wearing gloves.

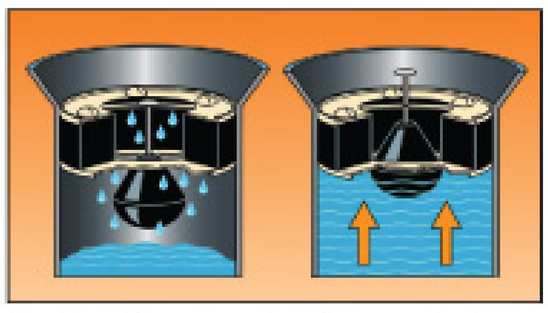
Users can capture still-picture images at the press of a button. The unit includes a 2-gigabyte Compact Flash card, twice as big as the prior model's card. An available 8-gigabyte card can store seven hours of video. The cards enable technicians to download video onto a PC or laptop computer via an included USB cable.

With an integrated easy-report writer function, operators can create comprehensive reports in the field. The report can be edited onsite, then recorded onto a Flash Card for mobility and transmission. Universal brush skid sets enable users to adapt the camera quickly to different pipe diameters.

The flexiprobe series offers compact reels on wheels in three sizes, starting with a mini-reel with 115 feet of push rod instead of the typical 100 feet. It weighs about 24 pounds. "Customers told us that every so often they need 105 or 110 feet of push rod, so we made this one a little longer," Schmandt notes.

P330+ flexiprobe digital inspection cameras from Pearpoint

A standard reel carries 200 or 400 feet of push rod and weighs 40 or 55 pounds, and a large specialist reel carries 500 feet of push rod and weighs 74 pounds. All camera components, controllers, rods and accessories are interchangeable. **For information: 800/688-8094; www.radiodetection.com.**



General Pipe Offers Basement Flood Guard

Designed to prevent basement flooding, General Pipe Cleaner's Flood-Guard is designed for 2-, 3- and 4-inch floor drains and operates like a check valve to seal off water back-up caused by overloaded sewers. **For more information: 800/245-6200; www.drainbrain.com.**

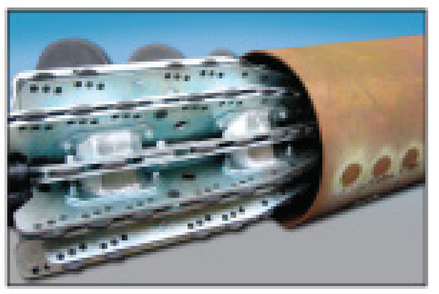
MyTana Offers Upright Cable Cleaning Machine

The upright Workhorse Model M888 from MyTana Mfg. Co. Inc. clears 3- to 10-inch mains with 125 feet of 11/16- or 3/4-inch cable in a closed reel. Standard features include a 1/2-hp motor, proprietary gearbox drive, auto feed, stair climbers, and movable front yoke mechanism that simplifies changing out the reel. **For more information: 800/328-8170; www.mytana.com.**

RIDGID Introduces Micro CG-100 Gas Sniffer

The Micro CG-100 gas sniffer from RIDGID uses Tri-Mode Detection: visible signal, audible alarm or silent vibration, to warn users of methane (including natural gas), propane, butane, ammonia and many other combustible gases. The vibration alarm increases in intensity as gas levels rise. The sniffer can be adjusted to high- or low-level sensitivity within a wide overall range (40 ppm to 6,400 ppm). The battery-powered device provides more than 20 hours of use, while an LED light at the end of the probe provides illumination. A 16-inch black probe hose provides access to confined spaces and is secured by a built-in clip for secure storage. **For more information: 800/769-7743; www.ridgid.com.**

TT Technologies Designs Large Diameter Cutter Head

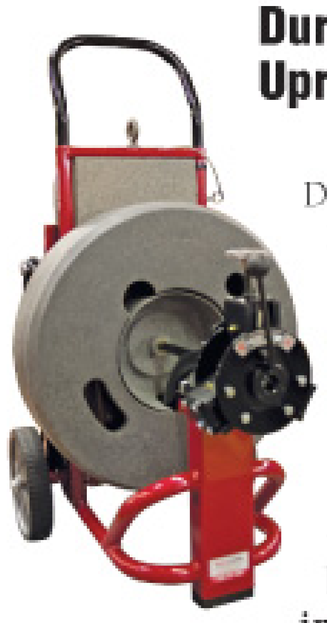


The Steel Cutter head from TT Technologies is designed for bursting/splitting steel pipes up to 32 inches in diameter when used with larger Grundoburst static bursting systems. Pulled by a hydraulic bursting unit, the cutter head's special cutting wheels slip the host pipe, while an extended expander displaces the split pipe into the surrounding soil and pulls in the new pipe. **For more information: 800/533-2078; www.tttechnologies.com.**

Dresser Roots Designs Compact Blower Unit

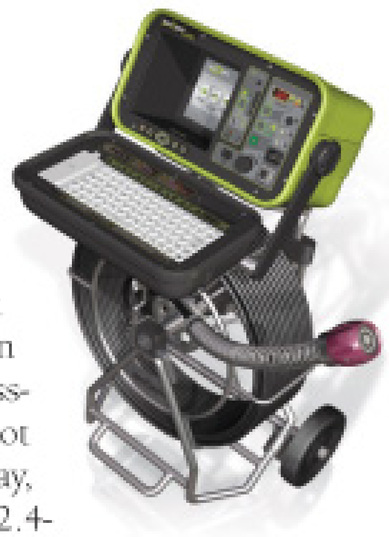
The EasyAir X2 compact blower unit from Dresser Roots is compact, pre-assembled, skid-mounted with all piping, valves and instrumentation in place. Designed for both vacuum and pressure applications, the package features a powder-coated noise enclosure for durability and quiet operation. **For more information: 877/363-7668; www.rootsblower.com.**

Duracable Introduces Upright Cable Cleaner



The DM 175 Gladiator cleaning machine from Duracable Manufacturing Co., comes with 100 feet of 3/4-inch cable and features a 1/2-hp motor with 10:1 gear ratio that operates at 145 rpm, 175 rpm or 215 rpm. The unit has a three-position adjustable handle that locks in place with a lanyard. The frame has an integrated toolbox and is balanced to prevent against "dancing," even with all the cable out. Stair climbers are standard, while horizontal support legs and loading wheels are optional. Swing bolts on each side of the head bearing allow for quick reel release. **For more information: 800/247-4081; www.duracable.com.**

Envirosight Introduces Push Camera with Sonde



The VeriSight push camera system with sonde from Envirosight LLC features a stainless-steel, self-leveling camera with tri-level sonde, splash-proof digital controller with text writer, storage for 45 hours of MPEG4 video on an 60 GB internal hard drive and a welded, stainless-steel reel with Kevlar-reinforced 100- or 200-foot push rod. The camera, with shadowless LED array, measures 1.8 inches and comes standard with a 2.4-inch skid. A 4- to 8-inch adjustable skid is available. Located behind the camera, the sonde operates at a selectable 512 Hz, 640 Hz or 33 kHz for locating distances up to 12 feet. Built into a water- and shock-resistant ABS plastic housing, the controller displays video on an 8-inch TFT LCD. **For more information: 866/936-8476; www.envirosight.com.**

NLB Launches 400-hp Convertible Waterjet Unit

The 325 Series of convertible waterjet units from NLB Corp. can operate at up to 400 hp at any of six pressures up to 24,000 psi. Two diesel-powered models are available, each with a low-wear quintuplex pump and swing-out manifold for easy conversion. The 400-hp Model 405 can be converted to run at 8,000 psi, 10,000 psi, 12,000 psi, 15,000 psi, 20,000 psi and 24,000 psi. Flows range from 25 gpm to 74 gpm. The 365-hp Model 365 can run at 8,000 psi, 10,000 psi, 12,000 psi, 15,000 psi, 20,000 psi and 24,000 psi. Flows range from 22 gpm to 64 gpm. **For more information: 248/624-5555; www.nlbcorp.com.**

Clear Computer Offers Garmin Route Updates

Clear Computing's Total Activity Control management system has added route updates to vehicles equipped with Garmin navigational devices and StreetEagle GPS systems. The feature enables route drivers to start their day from any location, receiving fixed service routes from their Garmin device, along with visual and verbal driving instructions (multiple-language supported) and an e-mail copy of the route. For companies using work orders, the TAC will send the work order list or next work order to the vehicle, and the Garmin will take the driver from the current location to the service location. The TAC also can e-mail full-color PDFs, which the driver can print, should written customer service forms be needed. **For more information: 888/332-5327; www.clearcomputing.com.**

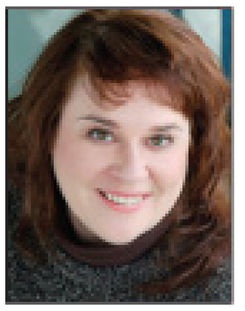
Water Cannon Releases EXTREME Line of Washers

The EXTREME line of continuous-duty pressure washers from Water Cannon features an aircraft-grade aluminum frame with epoxy powder-coated finish, 50 Mesh inlet filter, E-Z Start unloader valve, oversized pneumatic tires and dual-padded shock absorbing feet. It also has a triplex heavy-duty low-speed pump with thermo sensor and 3/4-inch, cold-rolled steel axle for durability. Accessories include gun/wand assembly with quick connects, 50-foot hose, and Maxi-Flo chemical injector. **For more information: 800/333-9274; www.watercannon.com.** ■

The Big Rig

Successful contractors tell how vacuum or combination trucks helped them open doors to projects beyond those they bought the equipment for

By Mary Shafer



Comments may be directed to Mary Shafer in care of Cleaner. You may also e-mail pipelines@cleaner.com.

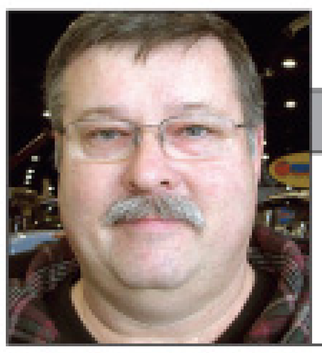
There's no question that an industrial vacuum loading rig is a major investment for a cleaning contractor. By the time the buying decision is made, most have significant work lined up to keep the new truck busy.

However, some make their purchase on faith that other jobs will come once potential customers know the new cleaning muscle is onboard. But does it actually work that way once the truck is in the yard? Three contractors shared their experiences.

Ryan's began as Modern Sewer Cleaning and still does that work, but the company has now launched **Ryan's Municipal Services** as a new business unit offering municipal and industrial cleaning, hydroblasting and hydroexcavating.

The company was targeting municipal markets when it bought a combination truck because its jetting work had already won some contracts that made the purchase financially viable. But there was another reason to buy the truck.

"We were beginning to have some issues with confined-space entry," says **Steve Ryan Sr.** "We'd been doing some work for the City of Grand Rapids, but with the combination truck, we're now serving as a subcontracted department of public works for Ada Township. We're doing work now for about 50 cities in Michigan."



Steve Ryan Sr.
Owner
Ryan's Municipal Services,
Grand Rapids, Mich.
Employees: 15
Years in Business: 43

After 43 years, the firm gets most of its work on referral, but the new truck definitely opened some doors. "We use it for water main repairs, using hydroexcavating to expose the mains rather than having to locate all the other utilities," says Ryan.

In an emergency, that time saved is important. The truck's functionality alone has helped Ryan's win many jobs it otherwise would have missed. "That part of our business has been growing by working with other smaller communities around Grand Rapids," Ryan says. "They like it because with one call we can both vacuum out any wet debris and expose their pipes for repair work. They appreciate that."

Having an industrial vacuum truck has definitely opened the market for **MJM Sanitary Ltd.,** which performs industrial cleaning, municipal sanitary sewer cleaning, sanitary waste holding tank pumping, and waste hauling for customers in southeast Wisconsin.

"We originally bought the vacuum truck to handle the sanitary liquid waste," recalls **Kevin Haefs,** vice president. "When I came on, I brought in the industrial work. Now we've branched out."

MJM's industrial vacuum truck allowed the firm to get permitted for solid waste hauling. "Now we can handle more sludge and other industrial waste," Haefs says. "It has given us a broader vision about a way to make it easier to make a living. We're also now handling more oils and coolants, nothing hazardous."

Kevin Haefs
Vice President
MJM Sanitary Ltd.,
Lomira, Wis.
Employees: 2
Years in Business: 15

Haefs sees the vacuum truck as an investment in the company's future and a sound strategic move. "With the truck, we're looking to expand more into industrial," he says. "More cities are laying more city pipe in areas once served by septic systems and taking over their own cleaning jobs, so we wanted to diversify. We're definitely going to be getting more customers with it."

> **"More cities are laying more city pipe in areas once served by septic systems and taking over their own cleaning jobs, so we wanted to diversify. We're definitely going to be getting more customers with it."**
>
> **Kevin Haefs**
> **MJM Sanitary Ltd.**
> **Lomira, Wis.**

Grand Bend Sanitation has been in business for 35 years, providing septic and holding tank installation, pumping, inspection and repair, sewer line location, inspection and flushing, and drain cleaning in Ontario just north of Lake Erie.

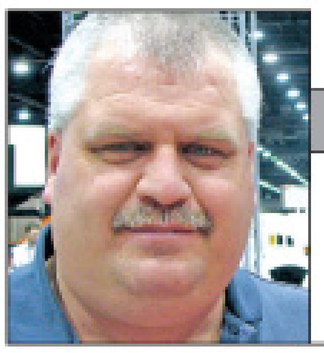
Two years ago, owners **Andy** and **Cheryl O'Brien** launched the new division, O'Brien Environmental. The business handles sanitary and storm sewer cleaning, catch basin and car wash pumping, hydroexcavating, and utility locating.

> **"Once we got the vacuum truck and were on a job, we were already there, so getting the bigger projects became just an extension of something we were already doing."**
>
> **Andy O'Brien**
> **O'Brien Environmental**
> **Grand Bend, Ontario**

The O'Briens originally bought their combination truck for sewer flushing. "Then we got into hydroexcavation and sewer pump station work," O'Brien recalls. They got those jobs mostly through word-of-mouth but also distributed business cards and flyers, letting potential customers know of their new equipment and its capabilities.

"In doing septic tank work, we had already been performing sewer flushing on a small scale for the municipalities," O'Brien says. "They would call us for emergency work, but they were hiring the big guys to do the bigger jobs." It frustrated O'Brien to know his company was losing jobs to other firms for lack of equipment.

"Once we got the vacuum truck and were on a job, we were already there, so getting the bigger projects became just an extension of something we were already doing," O'Brien says. So, besides widening the firm's capabilities, the big rig helped make the business more efficient.



Andy O'Brien
Co-Owner
O'Brien Environmental,
Grand Bend, Ontario
Employees: 3
Years in Business: 2

Logistically, O'Brien became the default vendor just by being on the spot when a customer realized that a project's scope had to grow. That saves cold calling and other sales and marketing efforts and helps create more productive — and billable — hours. ■

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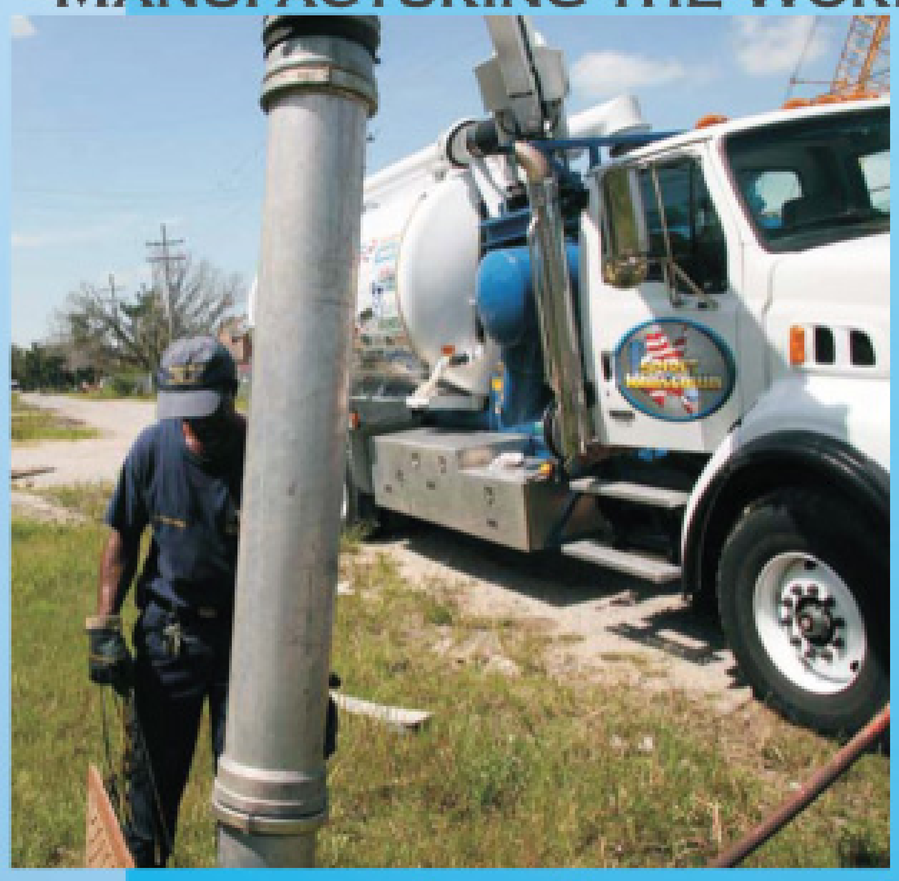

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