

# Cleaner®

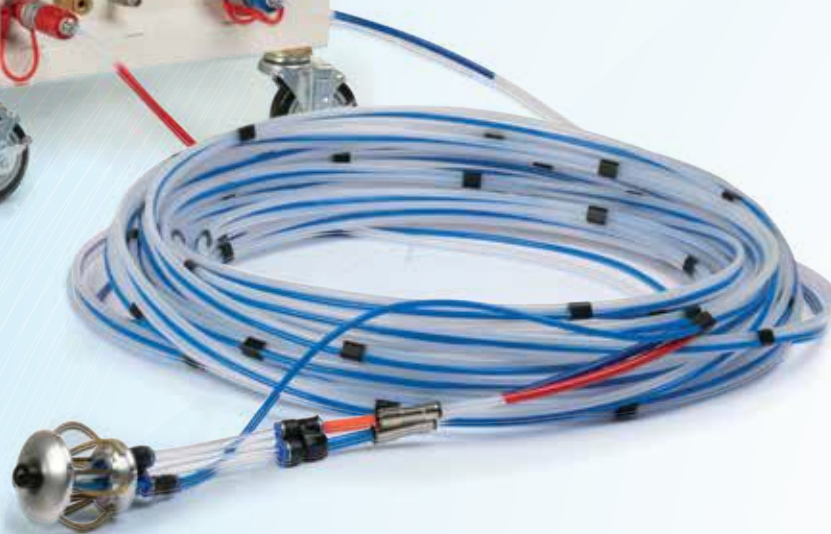
FOR DRAIN AND PIPE CLEANING,  
INSPECTION AND REHABILITATION  
PROFESSIONALS



## THE FUTURE OF TRENCHLESS TECHNOLOGY

DON'T MISS THE NEXT PHASE OF  
PIPE REHABILITATION / 12

TECH  
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## HUNGRY FOR SUCCESS

FOUR DECADES INTO BUSINESS, STEVE ALLEN  
CONTINUES TO LOOK FOR WAYS HE CAN  
EVOLVE TO BETTER SERVE CUSTOMERS / 16

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# “THE PROFITABILITY OF PIPE LINING HAS BEEN A HUGE PART OF OUR SUCCESS.”

## PROFILE NuFlow Certified Contractor

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**“The biggest reason why we went with Nuflow is because of the support that we got from the very beginning.”**

Now entering their third year in business, the duo couldn't be happier with their choice.

**“The profitability of pipe lining has been a huge part of our success. It's allowed us to invest in more equipment and hire more people.”**

While adding pipe lining was a great tool to add to their portfolio, they agree that choosing the right partner was also an important factor.

**“Absolutely do it, but make sure you do it with a company like NuFlow because of the support they offer. We wouldn't have landed some of the bigger jobs and wouldn't be as successful getting the projects done if it wasn't for their support. The most valuable thing about NuFlow is contacting someone directly and getting a response right away.”**



Greg Copas and Spencer Drake,  
Big Cat Plumbing, Southern Colorado

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**ON THE COVER** // IPP Solutions believes innovative technology must be used to constantly push boundaries and find new solutions for pipe rehabilitation. It specializes in providing high-quality, cost-effective trenchless repair methods that meet the unique needs of its clients, such as its spray-in-place pipe rehab offerings. (Photography by IPP Solutions)

coming next month: March 2023

focus: Chemical and Mechanical Root Control

Safety First: Tool ergonomics // Behind the Gear: Easy-to-repair inspection cameras // Money Manager: Dealing with employee theft



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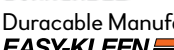








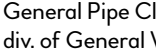





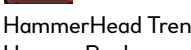





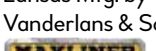
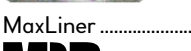

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

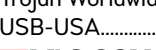




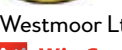
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## Cleaner

FOR DRAIN AND PIPE CLEANING, INSPECTION AND REHABILITATION PROFESSIONALS

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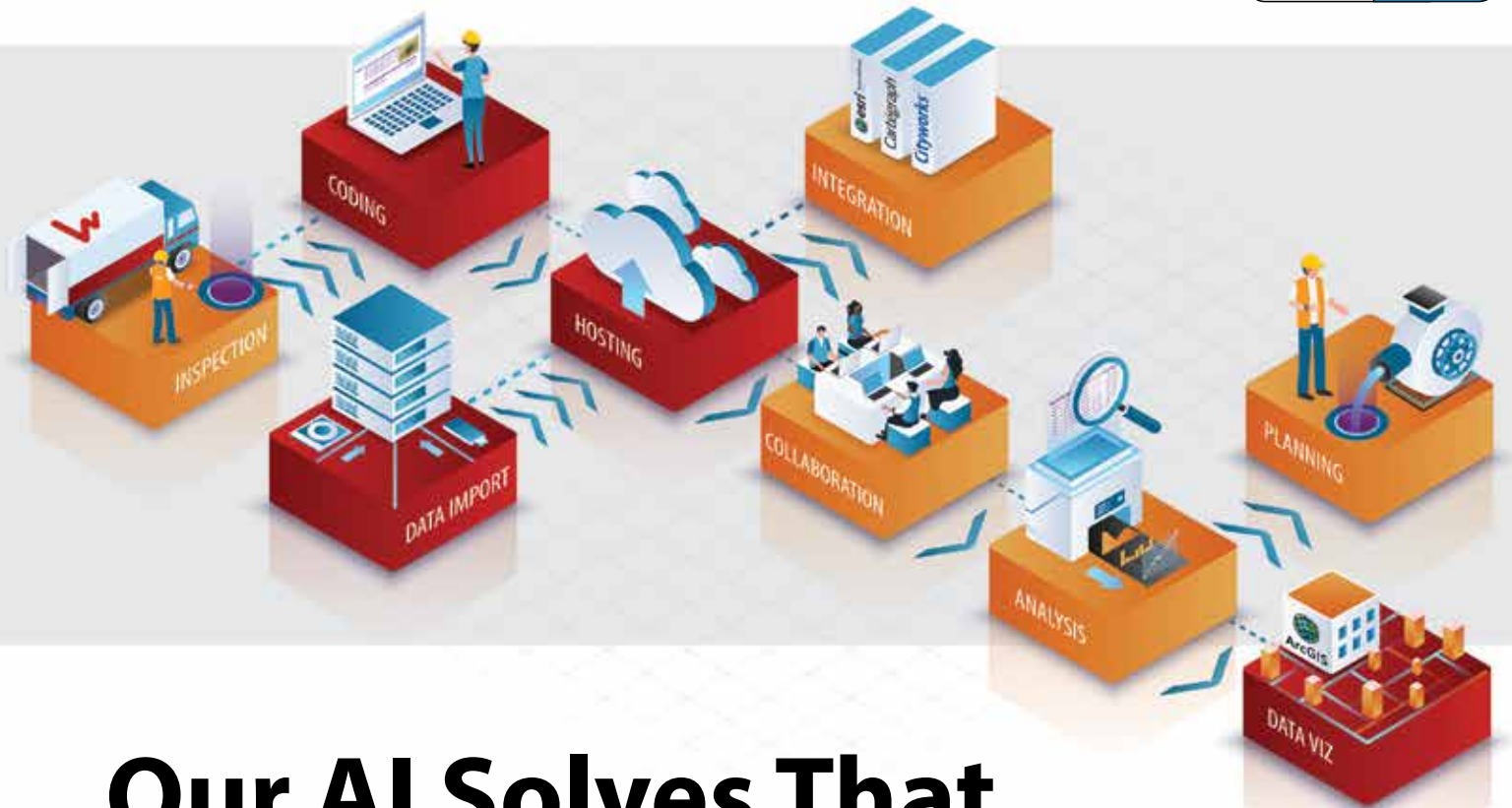
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## ALL WORK, NO PLAY

Even when you love your work, the goal is to not have it consume your entire life

**IN THIS INDUSTRY**, work can consume you.

Maybe you started out as a one-person operation, grew accustomed to doing it all out of necessity and then had difficulty delegating once you grew your staff and had the opportunity to finally lighten your workload. Perhaps you chose to remain a solo operation and that keeps you constantly busy with work. Promoting 24/7 emergency service to customers is common and is yet another thing that can create that feeling of always being on the clock.

But even when you love your work, the goal is not to have it

consume your entire life. Work to live, as the adage goes. Don't live to work.

Matt Mertz is someone who has a newfound appreciation for a healthier work-life balance. Mertz's company, Matt Mertz Plumbing in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was racking up annual revenue of \$6 million and running 27 service trucks when it was profiled in *Cleaner* in March 2015. Mertz grew the company even larger in the subsequent years. But being the boss and maintaining an ever-increasing growth trajectory came at a cost — long workweeks and less time at home with his family. In the fall of 2021, Mertz decided to sell his business to Armstrong Comfort Solutions. He stayed on as the director of plumbing operations but no longer has to put in the hours he once did.

"Now I work 50 hours a week, not 80," Mertz says. "I sleep a lot better. I feel a lot of guilt about things I missed out on with my wife and daughters. I let the business consume me. I was hyper-focused on winning and making more money and lost sight of what's really important. My goal now is to be a better husband and father. Now my nights and weekends are mine — they don't belong to Matt Mertz Plumbing anymore."

In this month's issue, we catch up with Mertz and look at the decision he made to scale back on the work side of his life.

Work-life balance is also a theme of this month's Better Business feature, which examines the concept of service fatigue and the malaise that can surface at any time from the standard rigors of work. It keeps you from being your best for customers, even if you try hard to hide it, and that can be detrimental to a business over the long run.

It's great when you enjoy and have a passion for your work, as so many in this industry do. And you often hear words like "family" used by companies with a great employee culture. So it's easy to see how the work can become all-consuming. That's OK sometimes. The oft-used term work-life balance is a bit of a misnomer. It's not necessarily about achieving perfect equilibrium between the two. It's more about skillfully navigating the give and take. Sometimes work will be more of a priority and require extra time. Other times personal matters need to be center stage. If you have this delicate dance down, congrats. But if you're struggling, take a moment to think about steps you can take to fix what's failing you.

Enjoy this month's issue. **c**

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## WORKFORCE

### Promoting Industry Careers

GapVax recently partnered with Forest Hills High School as part of a program that connects schools with area businesses and hosted students for a tour of its Johnstown, Pennsylvania, facility. With such a small hiring pool in the area, GapVax has struggled to find employees, so it was a valuable opportunity to connect to the younger generation, says Mike Leonard, GapVax purchasing manager. Read more in this online exclusive. >> [cleaner.com/featured](https://cleaner.com/featured)



SCAN ME

## WEB SURFING

### Sharing the Best Content

We're always on the lookout for relevant and interesting plumbing and drain cleaning content across the internet and social media. In our e-newsletters, we regularly highlight that and share what else out there we're reading and watching. For example, this story out of Missouri about a plumber who turns old water

heaters into meat smokers. Be sure to sign up for *Cleaner* e-newsletters if you haven't already. >> [cleaner.com/featured](https://cleaner.com/featured)

## OVERHEARD ONLINE

"Automation is not suited for things that need to be discussed. Using bots to diagnose issues, resolve a problem of some type, or handle any type of creative input should be avoided."

— Don't Overuse Automated Processes in Your Business  
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## SELF-CARE

### Staying Healthy on the Job

Your health is at risk every time you step onto a job site, with some of the most frequently reported injuries coming from routinely used tools and equipment. Don Embree, industrial design manager at RIDGID, provides some tips about staying safe and healthy on the job in this online exclusive.

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# THE FUTURE OF TRENCHLESS TECHNOLOGY IS HERE

**IPP SOLUTIONS IS A LEADING PROVIDER** of rehabilitation services for piping systems, septic tanks, manholes, grease traps – and more – for water, sewer, industrial, commercial and storm drains. IPP specializes in providing high quality, cost-effective solutions that meet the unique needs of its clients.



Pipe relining is a trenchless pipe repair method that doesn't require excavation, meaning less downtime and costs, while preserving properties, landscapes and infrastructure. Spray-in-place pipe rehabilitation is a quick and efficient way to repair pipes with tees and wyes – no reinstatement required. IPP's resin mixes come in a variety of materials, each with different uses and fast-cured properties. Whether you need to fix a small leak or want to extend the life of your pipes, SIPP rehab is a great option.

There is no one-size-fits-all answer when it comes to trenchless pipeline rehabilitation. Instead, innovative technology must be used to constantly push boundaries and find new solutions, like the state-of-art PipeCaster Pro SIPP system from IPP Solutions. PipeCaster Pro is designed with efficiency, longevity and cost-effectiveness in mind. It's a pipe coating and repair system that applies a resin lining that creates a pipe inside an old pipe. When properly executed, PipeCaster Pro can provide an invaluable solution for pipe rehabilitation.

IPP Solution's goal is simple: to improve, repair and restore your pipes without the need to remove the pipe. Trenchless techniques are becoming increasingly popular for rehabilitating damaged pipelines, as they offer many advantages over traditional methods. SIPP can be used for a variety of pipeline diameters and applications, including water mains, wastewater pipes and storm drains, and is gaining popularity due to its numerous benefits compared to other trenchless methods. SIPP can repair pipelines that are corroded, leaking or damaged, and the technology can be used on freshwater, wastewater, storm drain, fire hydrant lines, ductile iron pipes, septic tanks and grease traps. And there's no need to access pipes buried in the walls of a building.

The global market for SIPP is projected to reach \$707.3 million by 2024, according to Stratview Research. This growth is driven by government and municipal spending on infrastructure rehabilitation. In developed countries like the United States, Germany and Canada, many water main pipes, wastewater pipes and storm pipes are reaching replacement age.

The replacement of old dig-and-replace methods with newer trenchless rehabilitation technologies, such as SIPP, is driving the growth of the market. Generally, wastewater pipes and storm pipes require more funds for rehabilitation due to their larger diameter.

**For more information,  
visit [www.ippolutions.com](http://www.ippolutions.com)**

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**1560**  
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**2560/2560BH**  
16 GPM | 3000 PSI



**3560**  
20 GPM | 4000 PSI  
25 GPM | 3000 PSI



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Pete Lawonn, far left, with Bob Kendall, far right, at the 1981 Liquid Waste Haulers Tradeshow.



## Tributes: COLE Publishing Lost Key Contributors in 2022

By Bob Kendall

**T**HE PAST YEAR, 2022, was a sad year for me personally and for the COLE Publishing family. To begin the year, we found out that Julie Gensler, the love of my life, had cancer. Many of you will remember Julie from her work on the Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo International, now the WWETT Show. She was instrumental in the success of the trade show, arranging and managing the educational program each year.



Julie Gensler with daughter, Holly.

Julie and her daughter, Holly, worked to get continuing education credits from as many states as possible, and organized the times, rooms and speakers to provide the best possible experience for everyone. Julie managed the room blocks at each hotel, personally getting involved to resolve any issue that might arise. The annual appreciation party was always an event to remember because of Julie's efforts from booking the entertainment, coordinating the refreshments, managing room set-up and any detail necessary to truly show COLE's appreciation for the industry.

Julie was only 57 when she passed away March 7. Julie taught me a lot about life, a lot about love. The sadness of her loss is something we deal with every day and something I doubt I will ever really get beyond.



Bob Kendall with Julie Gensler.

Dec. 30 marked the passing of another key figure in COLE Publishing's history. Pete Lawonn, co-founder of the company and inspiration for *Pumper*, *Cleaner* and the trade shows.

Pete and I were friends since I was 16 years old and I can honestly say I never met anyone who didn't like Pete. In 1979 we started a publication for septic tank pumpers because Pete, who owned a septic business, wanted to sell a vacuum tank and install a larger one he had built for his truck.

The thought was, if he listed it in the local paper and someone bought it, he would be starting his own competition. Instead, he wanted to sell it to someone already in the business that needed a tank for a second truck. The more we discussed the idea, the more we realized there was no communication between people doing the same type of work. From that first issue of *Pumper*, we developed a camaraderie between manufacturers of equipment and end users, which were the seeds to becoming an industry.

I remember those early days fondly as Pete and I struggled without equipment to get the publications out, and somehow we always did, never missing a deadline. One day we received a letter telling us how great *Pumper* was, while suggesting we have a winter gathering so people could come together and share ideas. There was no hesitation as we started figuring out how to host a trade show.

Much of what we did with the publications and the trade show was different from other publications or events. Everything Pete ever did was based on a sense of fairness, not on what someone else had done before.



Pete Lawonn with wife, Debbie.

As with many partnerships, our goals for the future differed and Pete decided we should end our partnership. Typical Pete, he had an easy and equitable solution. He made me an offer. If I wanted to take it, he would buy me out, but if I didn't want to take it, I could buy him out for the same offer. Simple and equitable.

Pete taught me a lot about business, a lot about life.

I hope many of you reading this will remember Pete and Julie, two wonderful people who shared their lives with me. For that I am eternally grateful and will always consider myself so lucky, but will likewise never quite be whole without them. **C**

*Bob Kendall is owner and co-founder of COLE Publishing.*

# 5

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# HUNGARY FOR SUCCESS

STEVE ALLEN HAS SPENT FOUR DECADES BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL PLUMBING AND DRAIN BUSINESS IN HAWAII, BUT HE CONTINUES TO LOOK FOR WAYS HE CAN EVOLVE TO BETTER SERVE HIS CUSTOMERS

// By Giles Lambertson

Steve Allen arrived in Hawaii in the summer of 1981 at age 26, hoping to find a job. He says he “banged around” for a few months, then worked for a solar company before realizing that the plumbing skills he had carried to the islands from his Southern California home were in demand.

“I got on top of that real fast,” Allen says of the work opportunity he spotted. On Sept. 15, 1982, he officially completed his first plumbing job in Hawaii on his own. Four decades later, Allens Plumbing is an established part of the commercial community on Oahu and Maui islands, producing millions of dollars in business volume each year under the watchful eye of the man who founded it.

Although the company indisputably is an entrepreneurial

success story, the plain-spoken Allen isn’t all that impressed by such terminology.

“Entrepreneur is a nice word, but if you just get up and work hard all the time, you’ll be OK,” he says. “I started out of hunger and stayed hungry.”

## BUILDING A BUSINESS

Plumbing is the focus of business for Allens Plumbing, but drains, sewers and other underground infrastructure together constitute almost half of the firm’s business activity. That’s poetic, because Allen actually started his Hawaii adventure in 1982 by cleaning drains. He lacked certification for plumbing work, not having been a resident for at least a year.



« Allens Plumbing owner Steve Allen poses with his Piper Saratoga aircraft that he uses to transport equipment and supplies between the islands of Oahu and Maui.

» Allens Plumbing project supervisor Preston Gannon guides a polymer-coated sleeve into place while coating a sewer line at a condominium on the island of Maui.

Photography by Matthew Thayer



A friend with whom he had apprenticed in California visited him while Allen was still finding his way and suggested he clean drains under the name of “drain surgeon.” Allen readily agreed and, four decades later, Allens Plumbing still is “Home of the drain surgeon.”

The company is also home to a complete lineup of plumbing services, from sump pumps to bathroom remodeling to backflow services. All those services intersect with the drain and sewer work, with plumbing service calls helping lead to drain work and vice versa.

“You have to be careful with your company name,” Allen says, speaking of the power of reputation. “When some homeowner has a water heater leaking, we respond to the call and do the plumbing. If we do the job impressively, we then are on their call list for related work like drains. You can reverse that, with drain jobs leading to plumbing jobs.”

## Allens Plumbing

KAHULUI, HAWAII

**OWNER** Steve Allen

**FOUNDED** 1982

**EMPLOYEES** 45

**SERVICES** Complete residential and commercial plumbing services, drain cleaning and repair including trenchless repair (CIPP lining, pipe bursting and pipe coating) and sewer repair/restoration

**SERVICE AREA** Maui and Oahu, Hawaii

**WEBSITE** [www.allensplumbinghi.com](http://www.allensplumbinghi.com)

In the beginning, Allen set up shop in Maui, undertaking an array of drain and plumbing tasks. Today, company headquarters is in Maui’s retail center, Kahului. From the office

» An Allens Plumbing crew attaches a bursting head to a cable while replacing a sewer line at a condominium on the island of Maui.

» Gannon activates a hydraulic ram while pulling a bursting head through a sewer line at a condominium on the island of Maui.



“I STARTED OUT OF HUNGER AND STAYED HUNGRY.”

STEVE ALLEN

at 360 Papa Place, Ken Davis manages the plumbing division and generally oversees the drain division. Josh Kamauna is full-time manager of the drain division but, as needed, is also project foreman on Maui.

In an office on Iwaena Street on the bigger island of Oahu, Darren Kenny is the company’s general manager and Kane Coyle manages operations in both locations. Which is to say, Allen is fully staffed to keep tabs on the business.

“These are my key people that make it all go,” he says. “They are doing a great job.”

The managers have about 45 people working under them, a crew that Allen characterizes as “very young.” That is not to suggest it is an inexperienced crew. He cites employees with job tenures of 12, 16, 21 and 24 years.

“They work for the satisfaction of doing a good job, but we pay them well and make sure it is a home for them,” Allen says.

While skilled plumbers can be hard to find, Allen says he learned a long time ago that finding a plumber isn’t necessarily the answer anyway.

“You have to create them and keep them for a long time. That’s been the way to go for us,” he says of the company’s apprenticeship and other in-house programs.

On the other hand, Allen notes, people who can be trained to clean and repair drain and sewer pipe are relatively easily found.

“That’s the thing, more education is required for plumbing, but I can take a guy out of a pizza place and turn him into a pipe lining technician with some training,” he says.

### EMBRACING TRENCHLESS SOLUTIONS

Allens Plumbing got into trenchless repair work in 2000. Specifically, the company began offering pipe bursting. Allen relies on TRIC Tools and Roddie Underground bursting systems for the work and once pulled a new pipe through 220 feet of

➤ Allens Plumbing maintains a diverse equipment fleet to handle all the work it takes on.



8-inch failed pipe. The story is similar with his MaxLiner CIPP equipment: He successfully lined a 250-foot vertical length of pipe in a building.

Not all of Allen's trenchless jobs are "monsters" of that magnitude, of course, but after two decades of doing it, Allen still finds the technologies very satisfying.

"Every time we pipe burst and I see that pipe come out of that hole, it's very exciting. It's exciting to see what we can do," he says.

How does his project manager decide which pipe repair methodology to employ when a pipe has cracked or otherwise begun to fail?

"It is whatever a customer wants, but at the end of the day, the contractor makes the call," Allen says.

A CIPP repair can cost more. Each method takes about as long as the other to install. Everything considered, Allen prefers pipe bursting.

"I like it for the product and for the customer. Bursting is cheaper and more durable," he says.

Yet pipe lining seems to be the preferred solution in today's market.

"Lining is faster, somewhat easier, more easily sold. It can solve a lot of problems, but I still think bursting is a better product," Allen says.

### GAINING CONTRACT WORK

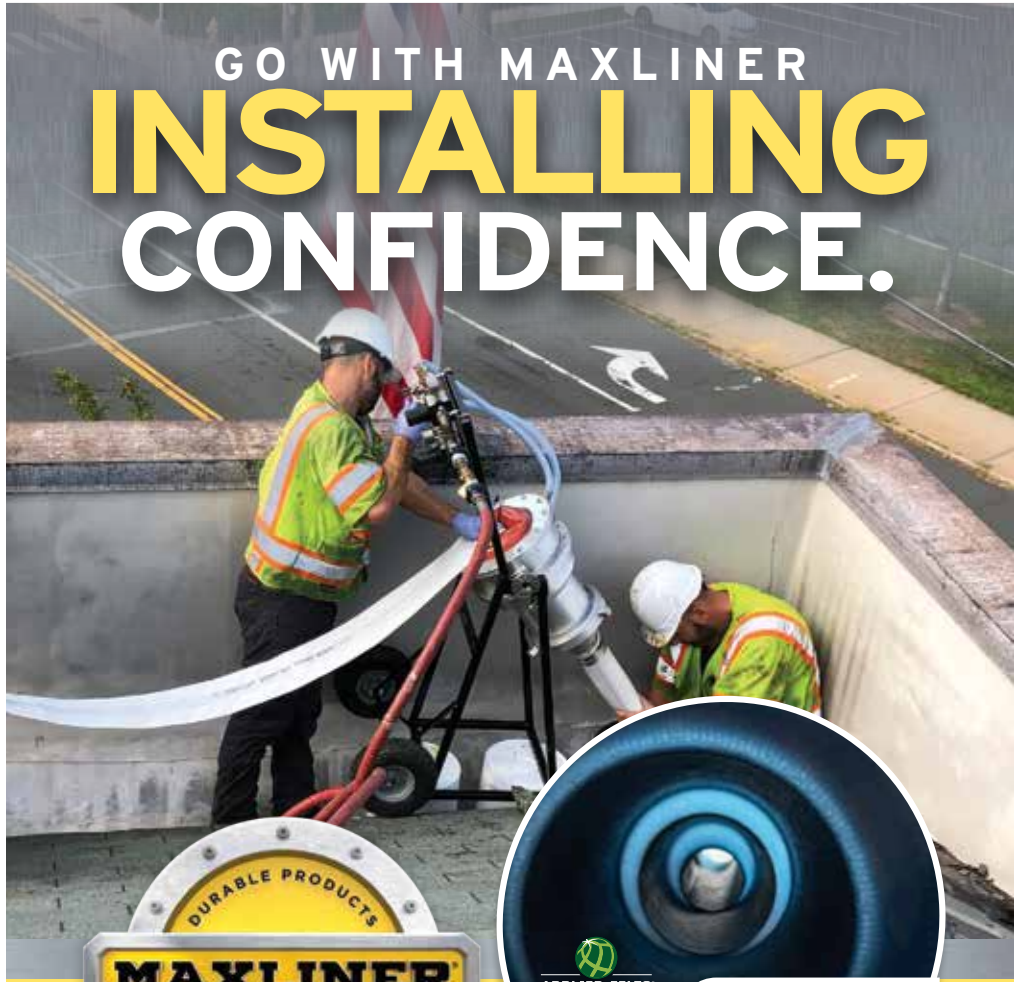
The variety of Allens Plumbing's services is helping the company's push into contractual work on multistory buildings. An example is a current \$465,000 contract to upgrade pipes without tearing out the walls and floors of a six-building Oahu condominium.

The project involves lining horizontal sewer lines beneath the buildings as well as vertical stacks serving upper floors, bursting pipes running to the buildings, and redoing aboveground plumbing. The company's diverse expertise lets it undertake such projects. That has been enhanced by its embrace of new joint lining products by Repiper, which produce seamless T-connections between vertical and horizontal pipes.

Allen says his crew is becoming more efficient at multitasking projects.

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◀ Allens Plumbing crew members prepare to coat a sewer line on the island of Maui.

▶ Allens Plumbing division manager Ken Davis sets up a hydraulic ram while preparing to pull a bursting head and new section of pipe through a sewer line at a condominium on the island of Maui.



## CUSTOMER CARE

To Steve Allen, customers are grandmothers. Well, not exactly, but the owner of Allens Plumbing in Maui, Hawaii, cites grandmothers sometimes in explaining his attitude toward those who call his company for help.

He recalls a new employee who came to work for him after leaving a build-out plumbing contractor, who chided his departing worker: “You’re going to quit here and go work for a guy who installs water heaters?”

Allen dismisses such put-downs.

“Hot water is one of the funnest parts of my industry,” he says. “Sure, there are guys that build dams, but grandmothers still need hot showers. I want my grandmothers to have hot water.”

He says he manages his service crews with customers in mind.

“Years ago, I discovered something and it’s paramount to me: The customers in the houses and businesses we enter are not my customers. They are my technicians’ customers,” Allen says.

Consequently, he says he treats his technicians as family so they will stay around and take care of their customers.

“The people we hire care,” Allen says.

He also views his customers as average Joes just trying to get by the same as he is. Allen says when someone calls the shop after having been told that a pipe needs replacing and an Allens technician discovers the pipe is only clogged, it makes his day.

“When you call us up, we won’t rob you,” Allen says. “I realize everyone we work for is trying to make a mortgage payment and trying to get the kids through school. I don’t want to contribute to robbing them.”

That his customers appreciate this approach seems reflected in customer feedback, probably not all of it from grandmothers. On the company website, more than 2,200 reviews are cited with a cumulative 4.9 out of 5-star rating.

“That’s a wonderful thing,” Allen says.

“EVERY TIME WE PIPE BURST AND I SEE THAT PIPE COME OUT OF THAT HOLE, IT’S VERY EXCITING. IT’S EXCITING TO SEE WHAT WE CAN DO.”

STEVE ALLEN

“These vacation condominiums produce revenue, so the longer they’re down, the greater the loss of revenue,” he says. “Consequently, the faster we get the work done, the more property owners are attracted to us for other jobs.”

Lining of vertical water or sewer-bearing pipes is increasing because stacks in many of the high-rise buildings are aging out. When such pipes catastrophically fail, insurance and damage costs can run high. Lining them is an appealing option, even though Allen advises property owners to totally replace the pipe if possible.

“Most of the time we tell the condo owners that they shouldn’t line, that they should do tear-outs,” he says. “But lining a vertical pipe is about 25-30% the cost of a tear-out, so they usually opt for lining.”

### DIVERSE EQUIPMENT ARRAY

A busy company operating on two Pacific Ocean islands 90 miles apart necessarily has redundancy in its equipment yards and fleets. In all, Allens Plumbing operates 43 service trucks and vans that make between 600 and 800 calls a month. It has 10 cart hydrojetters from Jetters Northwest that produce 9 gpm and 4,000 psi, and four jetters at 18 gpm and 4,000 psi — two of them from Sewer Equipment Company of America, one US Jetting machine and a custom-made unit. The company’s heavy-duty jetter that pushes out 60 gpm at 2,000 psi is also a Sewer Equipment unit.

High-speed drain machines and pipe-coating equipment are in one corner



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▲ The variety of Allens Plumbing's services is helping the company's push into contractual work on multistory buildings.

"I TREAT THE BUSINESS LIKE THE GYM. YOU GET UP EACH DAY AND YOU GO. YOU MIGHT NOT WANT TO GO, AND SOME DAYS YOU ARE STRONGER THAN OTHER DAYS, BUT YOU NEED TO SHOW UP EVERY DAY."

STEVE ALLEN

of the company shops, a variety of pan-and-tilt inspection cameras in another, or in work vans. A trio of excavators and a dump truck stand ready for open-trench work. The company's latest equipment acquisitions are two job site trailers built on the mainland and shipped to the islands.

Now Allen is contemplating investing in UV equipment to speed the T-liner joint-sealing process. Cost and durability are his concerns.

"I once was told, if you spend a dollar, make sure it will be sent back with a friend. You can't touch the UV stuff for less than \$30,000. Is the investment going to be worth it? I don't know yet," he says.

The company also has a Piper Saratoga single-engine, fixed-gear aircraft parked at the Kahului airport. Allen became licensed to fly it 17 years ago. Recently, he flew the roomy workhorse aircraft to Oahu "absolutely packed" with fittings needed for a project on the big island.

### LOOKING AHEAD

Piloting a private plane at 67 years of age isn't as remarkable as still running in United States Track Association masters division sprints. Allen started the sprinting regimen 10 years ago and

» Allen loads equipment and supplies into his Piper Saratoga before a flight from Maui to Oahu.



has at least one bronze medal to show for his efforts. He is, in a word, competitive.

“I’m not the fastest guy on the track, but I am thankful I can do it. From a child, I never liked being in second place, if I could help it,” he says.

The attitude has carried over into his career.

“I treat the business like the gym,” Allen says. “You get up each day and you go. You might not want to go, and some days you are stronger than other days, but you need to show up every day.”

Allens Plumbing is nominally a family-owned company. It may not remain as such. Allen has a 46-year-old daughter who is a successful tax lawyer and is uninterested in running a plumbing business. His other child is a 10-year-old son.

“He flies the plane with me, likes the trucks and plays with the tools. I have no idea if he will be interested in the company someday,” Allen says.

Here’s the more interesting rhetorical question asked by the founder of the 40-year-old company: “When the company celebrates 50 years, will I still be at the helm? I like to think I’m working my way out of this position. When that actually is going to happen, though, I don’t know.” c

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Laurie Guest

# COMBATTING SERVICE FATIGUE

Even if you try to hide it from customers, service fatigue left unchecked can negatively affect your business // By Laurie Guest

**D** OES IT FEEL LIKE no matter how hard you try to please your customers, it isn't enough? Are you in charge of leading others and the faster you train teams and build energy, the quicker it seems to fade? Are you a business owner feeling hopeless about the never-ending needs of staff and customers while trying to achieve a profitable bottom line? You're exhausted, right?

This exhaustion is what's called service fatigue, defined as that feeling that keeps you from delivering the excellent customer service your staff and clients have come to expect. Left unchecked, this weariness can impact your business in many negative ways, from short tempers to lost business.

Let's unpack the what, where, why, and how of service fatigue and get on the path to busting out of it.

## WHAT DOES SERVICE FATIGUE LOOK LIKE?

You know what customer service should look like. Attentive. Proactive. Genuine. Service fatigue is "less than," and it presents in many forms. It's when your customer experience is less than you — or they — expect. It's a lack of energy, elevated stress, constant ambivalence, difficulty concentrating, missed deadlines, frequent mistakes or safety compliance issues.

The trickiest kind of service fatigue to spot is the kind the team thinks they can hide from customers. It's still there, lurking beneath the surface, threatening to bring everyone down in its undertow.

## WHERE DOES SERVICE FATIGUE COME FROM?

After a stressful few years, various challenges have caused service fatigue levels to skyrocket. But the truth is, service fatigue

can strike at any time, and much of it is really nothing new. It's short-tempered customers who escalate to anger quickly. It's trying (and usually failing) to juggle multiple priorities at a time. It's navigating ever-changing business policies. It's responsibilities that outnumber hours in the day. It's one bad attitude draining a team's morale. Service fatigue can come from anywhere and knowing how to identify it is half the battle.

## WHY DOES SERVICE FATIGUE MATTER?

The short answer: It matters because it impacts your bottom line. When service fatigue takes over at your business, everything is at risk.

You can play a huge part in lessening that burden for your team and your customers. If it's possible, make work a welcoming, encouraging environment for your staff so they can give your customers a reason to crow about the great experience they had. By recognizing service fatigue and equipping your team with the tools to bust out of its grip before it's too late, you'll ensure that everyone's experience is that much better.

## HOW DO WE MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF SERVICE FATIGUE?

There are countless ways to bust out of service fatigue, and no two businesses will adopt exactly the same solution. Decades of experience in the customer service industry prove that there's no silver bullet to finally overcoming exhaustion. Rather, it takes a combination of strategy, patience and commitment to bolster your team and get them back on track to deliver the kind of remarkable customer service you and your customers expect.

Here are a couple strategies for busting out of service fatigue:

### - *Build better boundaries*

Professional boundaries can be the single best tool to help with service fatigue, whether you need to put them in place with your boss or you need to ensure your team knows that work/life separation is a good thing. Unless it's imperative, do

WE ALL CAN AND SHOULD GO ABOVE AND BEYOND TO DELIVER CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE. BUT WHEN YOU'RE DOING FAR MORE THAN IS EXPECTED, YOU MAY BE BRINGING SERVICE FATIGUE ON YOURSELF.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Keynote speaker and author Laurie Guest is an authority on customer service excellence. She blends real-life examples and proven action steps for improvement. She is the author of two books and is writing a third on the topic of service fatigue. To learn more or connect with Guest, visit [www.laurieguest.com](http://www.laurieguest.com).

you really need to reply to emails at 8 p.m.? Is that gap or hiccup in a process at work really yours to lose sleep over?

We all can and should go above and beyond to deliver customer service excellence. But when you're doing far more than is expected, you may be bringing service fatigue on yourself. Be honest: Are you guilty of your own boundary breakdowns? Are there honest conversations you can have to get those boundaries — and your energy levels — back on track?

Re-evaluate your boundaries today and find where you can firm them up. You'll soon see what a difference they make in boosting your energy and positive attitude.

### - Grant yourself rest

While some have mastered the art of taking breaks, others tend to do things fast — and often multitask. We like the concept of rest, but the demands on our time often get in the way of our ability to truly take a break.

There are as many as seven types of rest, from physical and emotional to creative and spiritual. The truth is, they're all important, and giving ourselves the space to breathe when things get stressful is imperative. Rest can mean putting down your phone an hour early and reading a book instead, or using a work break to do a brief silent meditation.

When we prioritize rest and start to see it as doing good for ourselves, we are more energized to deliver customer service excellence.

### WHEN DO I NEED TO ADDRESS SERVICE FATIGUE?

No surprises here: If you recognize the signs of service fatigue, now is the time to bust out of it.

Start by identifying what's causing the fatigue, then set aside time to plan for change, including both big and small steps to reinvigorate your team and return to delivering customer service excellence. When you commit to the change, the hardest part is already over.

All it takes from there is digging in to bust out of service fatigue once and for all. **c**



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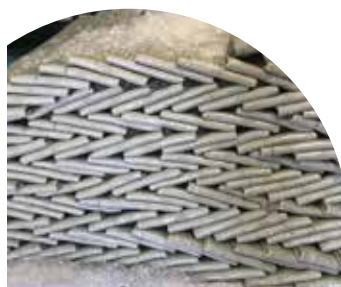
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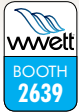
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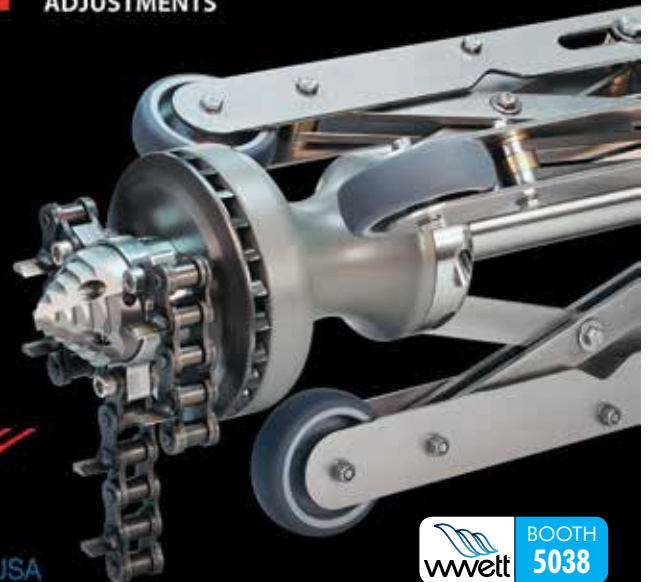
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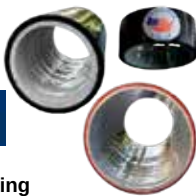


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## GOING VERTICAL

Robotic cutters open the door to profitable stack-pipe lining for Florida contractor

// By Ken Wysocky

**I**N WEST PALM BEACH, Florida, there's a lucrative market for lining aging cast iron stack pipes in condominium buildings.

For years, Pipelining Technologies wanted to tap into this niche market but couldn't — until it invested in a Dancutter robotic reinstatement machine in 2012.

Now the company, which was established by Michael Wilson in 1984 and focuses on trenchless pipeline rehabilitation, owns five Dancutter machines — all DC Super Flex models. And it gets about half of its revenue from lining vertical stack pipes, which amounts to millions of dollars in annual revenue, says Loren Wilson, Michael's son and the company's operations manager.

"It definitely was a game-changer," Wilson says. "We couldn't have entered the vertical-stack market without the Dancutter machines."



▲ Loren Wilson, operations manager for Pipelining Technologies in West Palm Beach, Florida, stands behind four of the company's Dancutter DC Super Flex robotic cutting machines.

The company, which employs 40 people and serves customers throughout southeastern Florida, didn't line stack pipes before it bought the Dancutter machines because the process was too inefficient. Crew members could use tools to reinstate the stack pipes, but that typically would require pulling a toilet and P-trap in each condo unit, inserting the mechanical tool, reinstating the connection, and then resetting the trap and toilet.

"That process could take anywhere from two to three days," Wilson says, noting that a typical condo unit that the company works on requires 25 to 50 reinstatements, depending on how tall the building is. "But now we can do it in three to four hours. In fact, if we're reinstating just 2-inch-diameter drainlines, it might take as little as two hours. We just go on the roof and start from the top and work our way down. The robotic Dancutters drastically improve our productivity."

### PIPELINING TECHNOLOGIES

WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

**OWNER** Michael Wilson

**MACHINE** Pneumatic DC Super Flex robotic cutting machines from Dancutter

**FUNCTION** Reinstating tie-in lines in condominium stack pipes after pipe lining

**FEATURES** Designed for 3- to 6-inch-diameter pipes made of any material, from concrete and steel to cast iron and PVC; negotiates 45- and 90-degree pipe bends; stainless steel alloy cutting head that rotates 360 degrees; 12-inch color monitor; 82- or 164-foot-long hose; built-in spray nozzle to keep camera lens clean

**COST** About \$60,000 each

**WEBSITE** [www.pipelnt.com](http://www.pipelnt.com)

## FOCUS ON PIPE LINING

Pipelining Technologies does mostly commercial work centered around condominium buildings, but the company also lines sewer laterals — and even interior pipes connected to the laterals — in residential homes.

“We line the whole system, except for tub, shower and sink waste lines, and the Dancutter definitely makes it possible to do that efficiently because the main trunk line in a house will have five to seven reinstatements,” Wilson says.

The company used to only line the lateral to keep things affordable for customers. But the cast iron pipes in the rest of the home are the same age as the lateral, and customers would get angry when they encountered problems with those pipes later on, Wilson notes.

“So we started to offer whole-house lining as an option,” he says.

Nonetheless, the company primarily uses the Dancutter machines on pipe lining projects in condominium buildings. Wilson estimates that the company performs between 3,000 to 5,000 liner reinstatements a year.

“We just finished a project where we lined 5,850 feet of vertical stacks — 117 stack pipes in all, with a total of 1,170 reinstatements,” he says. “It took us about five months to complete the project and the Dancutters were invaluable.”

To line pipes, the company relies on two inversion drums made by Perma-Liner Industries and Sacpro AB; T-liners made by Repiper AB; and liners from RSM Lining Supplies Ltd., MaxLiner USA, Hammerhead Technologies and Brawo Systems. To inspect vertical stack pipes, the company primarily uses Agilios push cameras from IPEK International GmbH.

The pneumatic machines are designed to work in cast iron, steel, PVC and concrete pipes from 3 to 6 inches in diameter and to negotiate 45- and 90-degree pipe bends. Features include a stainless steel alloy cutting head that can rotate 360 degrees, a 12-inch

“IT DEFINITELY WAS A GAME-CHANGER. WE COULDN'T HAVE ENTERED THE VERTICAL-STACK MARKET WITHOUT THE DANCUTTER MACHINES.”

LOREN WILSON



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# MONEY MACHINES

color monitor built into the lid of the control panel, an 82- or 164-foot-long hose and a spray nozzle for cleaning the camera lens.

Pipelining Technologies uses Viper air compressors from Vanair to power the Dancutters.

## EASY TO USE

Wilson says the Dancutter machines are very user-friendly. They're basically operated with two joysticks on a frame-mounted control box, one that controls forward and reverse motions and another that controls left/right and up/down movement. Similar to playing a video game, Wilson says.

To properly train technicians, the company has pipe systems set up in a warehouse where technicians can practice and learn how to operate the machines.

"If you overcut while reinstating connections, you can damage the pipe and the liner," Wilson says. "So we like our guys to get in a lot of practice time before letting them do reinstatements in real-world situations."

The machines are durable and reliable. Even if one breaks down, which happens occasionally because of the rugged work environment, the company owns three back-up replacement "arms" (extensions that hold the cutting tool) that are easily replaced, Wilson says.

"We just swap out the broken arm with a new one and our repair technician takes the broken one back to the shop to fix it," he explains. "You can swap out an arm in only a few minutes — there's just three screws, four air hoses and a wiring harness to remove."

## GREAT ROI

Wilson says the company paid about \$60,000 for each machine. But the Dancutters have been an excellent investment for the company, especially since they enabled access to a booming and lucrative market niche.

"For sure, they've provided a good return on investment," Wilson says. "There are a lot of projects we'd never be able to tackle without the Dancutters. They're ideal for the kind of work we do." **c**

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# FINDING BALANCE

AFTER BEING HIGHLY FOCUSED ON BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS FOR 17 YEARS, MATT MERTZ IS ENJOYING TAKING A STEP BACK TO MAKE MORE TIME FOR HIS PERSONAL LIFE // By Ken Wysocky

**MASTER PLUMBER MATT MERTZ SPENT 17 YEARS** building his company, Matt Mertz Plumbing, into a \$12 million-a-year business with 50 technicians, over 50 service vehicles, and a large roster of equipment that enabled the firm to provide a wide range of services.

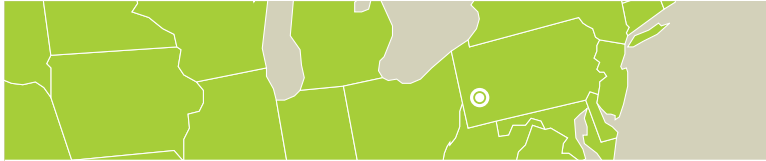
But in November 2021, Mertz sold his Pittsburgh-based business to Armstrong Comfort Solutions, a division of the Armstrong Group, and slid into a new role as the company's director of plumbing operations.

The arc of Mertz's swift rise and subsequent departure from the rigors and stress of running a large plumbing outfit offers two important lessons for owners of plumbing and drain cleaning companies. The first takeaway: Never underestimate the power of a sustained, well-funded and creative marketing blitz. And second: Be aware of the toll exacted by putting in mega-hours and doing almost everything required to run a company.

Looking back, Mertz, 41, says he is extremely proud of what he built but also glad that he tamed his ambitions.

"Now I work 50 hours a week, not 80," he says. "I sleep a lot better. I feel a lot of guilt about things I missed out on with my wife and daughters. I let the business consume me. I was hyper-focused on winning and making more money and lost sight of what's really important.

"My goal now is to be a better husband and father," adds Mertz, whose company was racking up annual revenue of \$6 million, employed 20 people and ran 27 service vehicles back when it was last profiled in the March 2015 issue of *Cleaner*. "Now my nights and weekends are mine — they don't belong to Matt Mertz Plumbing anymore."



**Matt Mertz Plumbing**  
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

- OWNER** Armstrong Comfort Solutions
- FOUNDED** 2004
- EMPLOYEES** Around 60
- SERVICES** Residential service/repair, drain cleaning, pipe lining
- SERVICE AREA** 60-mile radius around Pittsburgh
- WEBSITE** [www.armstrongcomfort.com](http://www.armstrongcomfort.com)

✓ Mike DiSanto and Dylan Belfiore of Matt Mertz Plumbing complete a trenchless sewer repair in Pittsburgh.



# PIPE LINING SOLUTION SAVES THE DAY — AND MONEY — FOR CUSTOMER

Technicians at Matt Mertz Plumbing had their work cut out for them three years ago when they tackled a badly clogged cast iron sewer line that ran under the kitchen of a popular steakhouse in Pittsburgh.

The 50-foot-long, 4-inch-diameter pipe was roughly 50% clogged with scale that was causing repeated backups in a kitchen-and-bar area located on a lower level of the restaurant, says Matt Mertz, former owner of the company. (Mertz sold the business to Armstrong Comfort Solutions in 2021 and now is that company's director of plumbing operations.)

"They had a plumber there almost every week to jet or snake the line," Mertz recalls. "The owner was getting bids of around \$100,000 to manually excavate and replace the line, which would've shut down the restaurant for months."

The fact that the pipe was 10 feet under the kitchen area, which was already 8 to 10 feet lower than the rest of the restaurant, only added to the cost.

But Mertz offered the owner a solution for half that price: line the pipe using a system from Perma-Liner Industries.

The only excavation required was a 5-by-5-foot, 10-foot-deep hole in the kitchen floor that provided access to clean the line and shoot the liner. The job took 2 1/2 days.

On the first day, a Wednesday, a four-man crew spent about 10 hours descaling the line with a Warrior trailer-mounted water jetter (4,000 psi at up to 18 gpm) equipped with a Warthog nozzle from StoneAge. The objective was to restore the pipe as close to its original condition as possible to prepare it for lining.

"The scale buildup was bad — about 2 inches thick in about 45 feet of the pipe," Mertz says. "We removed about five or six 5-gallon buckets full of scale. We used a jetter instead of a chain knocker because the pipe was very old and brittle, so we didn't want to get too rough with it."

On the second day, the crew lined the pipe with a steam-cured felt liner. About a half dozen 45-degree bends made the job, which took about 14 hours, even more risky and complex.

"All those bends made it harder to install the liner so it was smooth, with no wrinkles," Mertz says. "But we made it happen. We were there from about 7:30 in the morning to nearly midnight because we didn't want to disrupt business any more than needed."

The crew then completed the job by using a MICROpremium robotic cutter from IMS Robotics EN to reinstate six tap connections, then patched the kitchen floor.

"You'd never even know we were there," Mertz says. "The client was thrilled because the problem was fixed in days instead of months, with minimal disruption to the business. And he never flinched at the price because it was about half as much as the bids for manual excavation to replace the pipe. We basically charged a premium price for taking on the risk. If a job like that goes sideways, it would've been a nightmare — very expensive to fix. Failure wasn't an option. I credit our success on that project to our equipment and our guys. We had the confidence and experience to get the job done. It was the kind of job where you definitely had to know what you were doing."



▲ Belfiore and DiSanto use a RIDGID SeeSnake pipeline inspection camera on a trenchless sewer repair job as Matt Mertz looks on.

## BIG AMBITIONS

A fourth-generation plumber who struck out on his own in 2004, Mertz was always ambitious about growing the company. His goal was to run 50 service vehicles, something he achieved by 2018 at age 37.

The main driver of that growth? Large investments in marketing, particularly radio advertising. Mertz estimates he spent up to \$1 million annually on advertising.

"To get to 50 service trucks, I realized I had to really get into advertising and market myself more creatively than anyone else," he says.

Mertz tried everything from print and TV ads to direct mail campaigns, but he didn't see a great return on investment. He then tried radio ads in 2012, which turned out to be a game-changing marketing strategy.

Despite having no marketing experience, Mertz developed the ads himself. Most of them were 60-second ads supplemented by 15- and 30-second ads.

The ads ran on about eight local radio stations between 30 and 50 times a day, typically during the morning and afternoon drive times. Mertz changed the ads every three months. Sometimes he



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MATT MERTZ

hired the most popular DJs on each of the stations to narrate the commercials.

“I started with \$4,500 a month and found that wasn’t enough to move the needle,” Mertz says. “Eventually we did \$40,000 worth of radio ads a month and covered every demographic during the morning and afternoon drive times, when the most people are listening. We basically owned the airwaves — we drowned out everyone else because they weren’t willing to spend as much as I spent.”

The company also tracked which ads worked best by asking customers how they heard about the company, Mertz says.

### THE POWER OF BRANDING

Mertz firmly believes that when people constantly hear about a company, they develop a comfort level and affinity with said company — even if they haven’t yet been a customer. As such, he capitalized on every advertising opportunity that made sense.

“There’s great value in getting there first and

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« DiSanto and Nate Cookerly prep supplies on a trenchless sewer repair job.

✔ Matt Mertz Plumbing uses a system from Perma-Liner Industries for pipe lining jobs.



establishing a place in the market,” Mertz says. “To really dominate, you have to gain peoples’ trust. And the best way to gain their trust without actually working with them is through effective branding.”

A good example is so-called Radio Data System technology, which enables radio stations to send digital information along with their program signal. In this case, Mertz paid about \$7,000 a month for the right to continuously scroll the company name along the bottom of vehicles’ dashboard monitors, right below where the name of whatever song is playing and the artist who recorded it is displayed.

That \$7,000 included scrolls on five radio stations, 24/7.

“As soon as that became available as an advertising option, I locked it in and renewed it every year,” Mertz says. “It cost about \$84,000 a year, but it was worth every penny. People are always reminded about you. Even employees from other plumbing companies are constantly seeing our name. It’s a really good branding piece.”

The company also paid to advertise on six billboards located throughout Pittsburgh; since merging with Armstrong, that number has increased to 12, Mertz says.

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“Trying different things is the only way to find out whether or not they work,” he says. “You can’t be afraid to get out of your comfort zone with your advertising spend because at the end of the day, advertising is what brings large volumes of people to you. Word of mouth isn’t enough. If you want to set yourself apart, you have to do things differently.”

### EQUIPMENT MATTERS

Of course great advertising campaigns aren’t very effective without great customer service to support the branding efforts. Along with solid hiring and training practices, Mertz ensures great customer service through significant investments in productivity-enhancing equipment.

For drain cleaning services, the company owns about two dozen RIDGID K-60 and K-1500 sectional drain machines; a trailer-mounted Warrior water jetter (4,000 psi at 18 gpm) made by Spartan Tool; a Model 184 trailer-mounted jetter from Mongoose (4,000 psi at 18 gpm), a brand owned by Sewer Equipment; a MICROpremium robotics cutter built by IMS Robotics EN; and more than a dozen RIDGID SeeSnake pipeline inspection cameras and NaviTrak Scout pipe locators.

Technicians also rely on a variety of jetter nozzles: Warthogs made by StoneAge, Lumberjack and Ice Bears from NozzTeq, and Root Rats made by Chempure, plus cables and cleaning attachments

“I DIDN’T WANT TO SELL THE COMPANY TO A PRIVATE-EQUITY FIRM THAT WOULD ONLY RESELL THE COMPANY AGAIN. ... I WAS LOOKING FOR A COMPANY THAT WOULD PROVIDE GREAT PAY AND BENEFITS TO OUR TEAM AND TREAT THEM WELL.”

MATT MERTZ

from Picote Solutions.

“It’s always nice to have options,” Mertz says. “If one doesn’t do the job, you have something to fall back on.”

For installing new sewer lines, the company relies on roughly a dozen excavators made by Caterpillar, Bobcat and Kubota.

The company also owns a pipe lining system from Perma-Liner Industries; two SC-75 tracked concrete buggies made by CanyCom USA; a pneumatic horizontal boring tool from Grundomat (a brand owned by TT Technologies); and trailer-mounted air compressors from Ingersoll Rand and Kaeser Compressors.

In addition, the company runs 114 service vehicles that include Ford Transit vans, GMC Savana cut-away vans, Chevrolet Express vans and Nissan NVs. Some of those vehicles are equipped with truck bodies made by the Unicell Body Company, Monroe Truck Equipment, Reading Truck and Knapheide Manufacturing Co.

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📍 Over two decades of running his own business, Matt Mertz says he let it consume him, eventually leading to his decision to sell it and take on a smaller role.

## EFFICIENT OPERATIONS

Another factor in the company's success has been extreme efficiency. To Mertz, that includes matching the right technicians with the right jobs and dispatchers that route trucks in the most efficient manner.

"It's not complicated — just be efficient," he says.

The strategy worked, he says, noting the company was generating a 42% profit margin when he sold it to Armstrong Comfort Solutions. Part of that substantial profit margin was generated by lean staffing; Mertz preferred to do most things himself rather than hire managers, estimators and so forth.

"But I did too much — wore too many hats," he concedes. "So when I turned 40, I took a long look at my life. My mother had died young at age 39, and with that in mind, I decided I didn't want to run a 50-employee business anymore."

Mertz had heard that Armstrong Comfort Solutions, a member of the Armstrong Group, was moving into the home services industry in western Pennsylvania, providing sewer line repair/replacement, heating, cooling and plumbing services.

"It's a big company with vast resources," Mertz says. "I felt that if they figured things out, they'd be difficult to compete with. So I reached out to them. I didn't want to sell the company to a private-equity firm that would only resell the company again because I didn't want my team to go through that. Instead, I was looking for a company that would provide great pay and benefits to our team and treat them well."

Mertz is proud of the fact that every employee stayed on board after the merger. He credits Don Tacik, the president of Armstrong

Comfort Solutions, for making all employees feel at ease with the transition.

## EYEING MORE GROWTH

As Mertz looks back on the nearly 20 years he ran his own company, he says he's not surprised at how well things worked out.

"I don't want to sound arrogant, but I think I'm usually a step ahead of everyone else," he says. "And I was always out working — no one was going to outwork me. I also am blessed to be smart and good at marketing. And I've always held myself to a high standard, which is reflected by my success."

Now Mertz is busy helping management at Armstrong Comfort Solutions figure out how to expand its geographic service area.

"We want to have a plumbing footprint everywhere that Armstrong has a cable footprint," Mertz says, noting that one Armstrong Group division provides cable television, internet and phone services. "I'm looking forward to being part of the next chapter in their story." **c**

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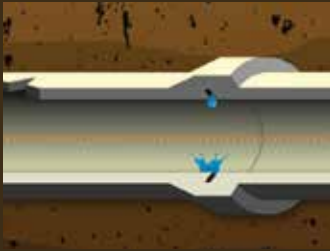
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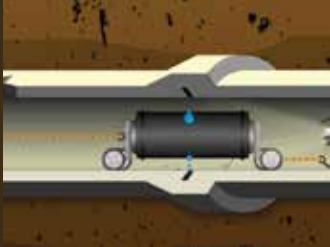
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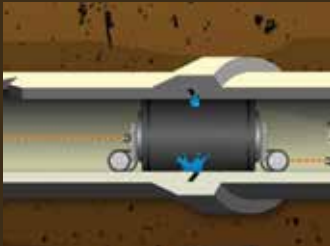
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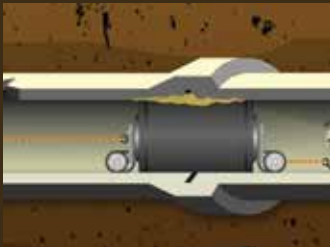
1 CCTV locates defect in pipe



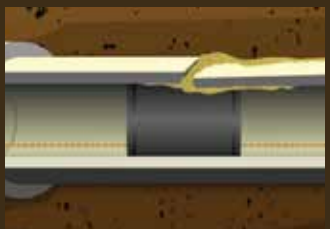
2 Packer and repair sleeve pulled into place



3 Packer inflated and sleeve installed



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# CUSTOM-MADE JETTING SOLUTIONS

Arthur Products prides itself on providing cleaning nozzles fit to customers' exact specifications  
// By Kyle Rogers

**A**RTHUR PRODUCTS GOT ITS START in May 1946 when two brothers bought several World War II surplus lathes and set up a machine-to-print business in their father's garage.

The company eventually evolved into a product venture with the core business being jetting nozzles. That continues to this day. Richard Rauckhorst, president of Arthur Products, and his business partner acquired the company in 2006. Rauckhorst previously worked in the aerospace industry, his specialty being aircraft wing deicing. Just prior to purchasing Arthur Products, he served as director of engineering for a BE Aerospace business unit.

*Cleaner* recently spoke with Rauckhorst about Arthur Products' history and the approach it takes to the jetting nozzles it provides customers.



Arthur Products regularly introduces new innovations such as the Cnt-r-KUT product family, the industry's only flexible centering system for nozzles, enabling users to tackle the tightest bends and turns.

and a nose for business trends. He identified a market need for industrial cleaning nozzles used with pressure washers. There were other nozzle manufacturers out there, but Al brought his unique applications and styles to that industry. It's a very niche industry where everybody wants their nozzle their way, and Al was able to adapt to that demand and give the customers what they were looking for beyond the off-the-shelf type of nozzle. His designs and quality product made Arthur Products an established nozzle source. The company has been an ongoing entity since that time.

## **CLEANER:** What differentiates your jetting nozzles from the competition?

**Rauckhorst:** There are two sides to the market. There are the off-the-shelf, prepackaged nozzles that are already drilled,



**RICHARD  
RAUCKHORST**

President and co-owner of  
Arthur Products

YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY: 17  
YEARS WITH COMPANY: 17

## **CLEANER:** Tell us a little about the history of Arthur Products.

**Rauckhorst:** Arthur Products was established in 1946 by two brothers, Paul and Al Abramoska, who had acquired World War II surplus machinery and started machining in their father's garage. In the 1950s, Al became involved in the beverage industry and designed and patented fill/vent tubes for beverage filling machines. In the late 1960s, Al's inquisitive mind led the company to industrial cleaning. He had an engineering degree

» Rather than off-the-shelf, prepackaged nozzles that are already drilled, Arthur Products focuses on providing custom nozzles fit to customers' exact specs.



so you get what you get. Then there's the custom market, where blanks are manufactured and then drilled to a specific pressure and flow for the customer. Arthur Products doesn't pre-drill nozzles. We stock blank nozzles and then drill each nozzle based on the customer's specifications. The thing that makes us unique is that we not only drill the nozzles for pressure and flow, we also manufacture the nozzles, all in the same building at our Medina, Ohio, location. We are most likely one of a few manufacturers who does that completely in-house. For nozzles, we are like the Burger King slogan: Have it your way.

**CLEANER: What's the most common problem you see your customers facing?**

**Rauckhorst:** Every customer's situation is unique. We typically ask our customers five to seven questions to determine how to best drill their nozzles. It's an interview process where we try to determine what that specific application is. Then we'll make a recommendation based on the information the customer gives us. There's no one answer for every single application. If you're trying to break a solid blockage, you'll use one type of nozzle. Depending on how far you want the nozzle to travel — many nozzles are designed with rear-facing ports that propel them through a pipe — we might drill it differently. If you want to pull the material out or push it back, we'll drill it differently. We even go as far as to ask if you're using hot or cold water, which can make a difference.

**CLEANER: What are some recommendations for customers shopping for jetting equipment?**

**Rauckhorst:** For jetting equipment in general, our advice is to strongly consider the types of jobs you envision accomplishing. Does the equipment meet that need? For nozzles, always remember the nozzle is a tool at the end of a system.

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# BEHIND THE GEAR

## **CLEANER:** What is an example of a success story one of your customers has had using your jetting nozzles?

**Rauckhorst:** Bill Rager, a plumber in Medina, Ohio, purchased an Arthur Products Alpha Kit with three specialized jet nozzles for his personal use. His nephew was running a farm and had somebody out to try to clean out a drain in the middle of winter. It was frozen. They tried to snake it, but that didn't work. The nephew called Bill and said, "The landlord will pay you whatever you want if you can get this drain open." Bill had the drain open and flowing within an hour using the Alpha Kit. It was able to melt the ice a snake just couldn't grind its way through. The owner asked Bill what he wanted for the job. Bill told him what he paid for the Alpha Kit, and the owner said OK. Bill's Alpha Kit paid for itself in one job.

## **CLEANER:** What's new for Arthur Products in 2023? What can customers expect in the future?

**Rauckhorst:** Don't get the impression little has changed at Arthur Products since the 1960s. The company regularly introduces

"FOR NOZZLES, WE ARE LIKE THE BURGER KING SLOGAN: HAVE IT YOUR WAY."

RICHARD RAUCKHORST

innovations such as the Cnt-r-KUT product family, the industry's only flexible centering system for nozzles, which enables users to tackle the tightest bends and turns. These centering devices for jetting nozzles can be modified for custom applications.

## **CLEANER:** What do you want your customers to think of when they hear the name Arthur Products?

**Rauckhorst:** Quality, value and customer service. From bar stock to shipping a nozzle, Arthur Products controls the nozzles we sell. We do our best to treat our customers in the manner that we as individuals want to be treated. In the years since the Abramoska brothers pursued their dreams in their dad's garage, Arthur Products has had four different owners, but its commitment to excellence has remained constant. **c**



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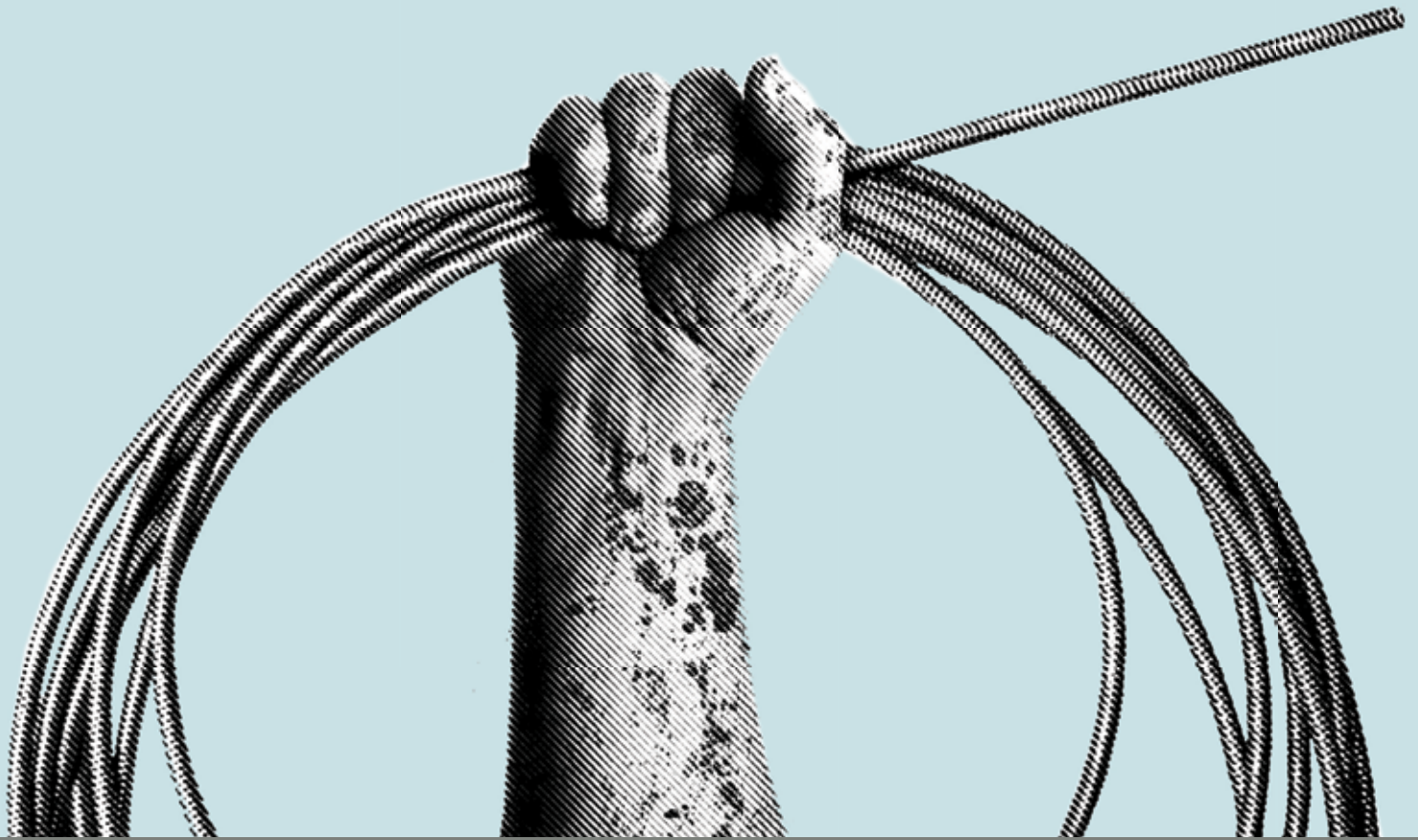
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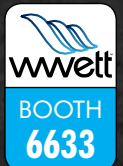
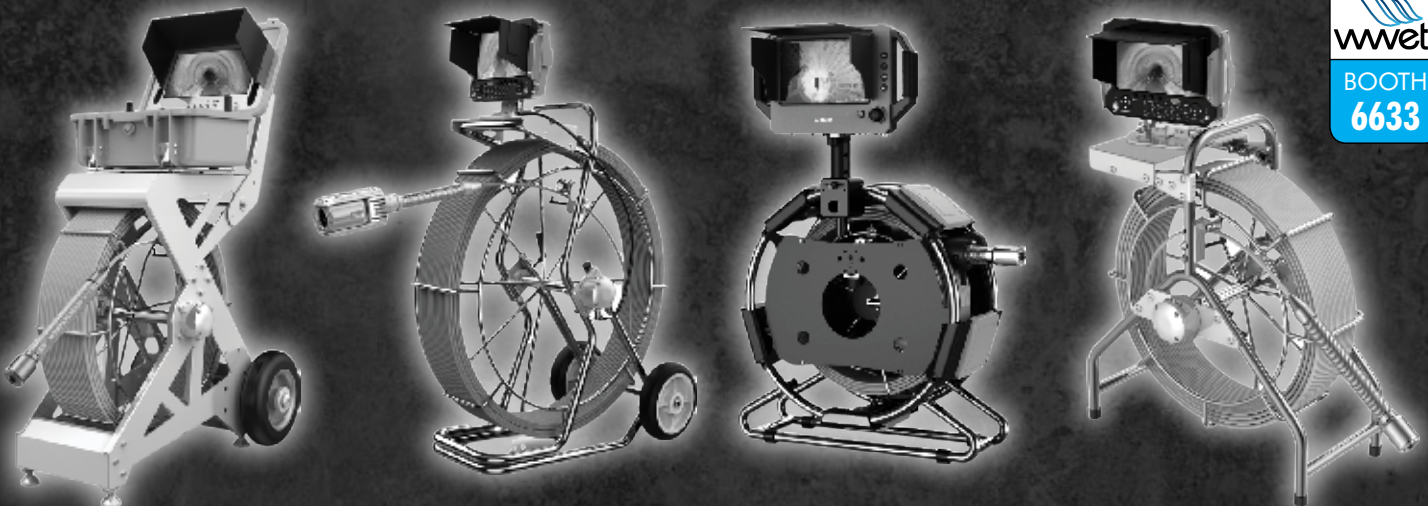
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## STREAMLINING PIPE INSPECTION

Artificial intelligence provides efficiency and accuracy benefits for inspection programs

// By Joshua Ford

**YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED** at how little has changed in sewer pipeline inspection over the past 60 years. Closed-circuit television, first introduced in the 1940s, was adopted in the 1950s to determine pipe conditions and line defects. While equipment updates and new standards improved pipe inspections over the years, very few improvements were made to the process of identifying pipeline defects ... until now. Artificial intelligence offers a real breakthrough for more accurate, efficient and unbiased inspections.

### OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Utility owners and contractors benefitted from the standardization of pipeline observations by the National Association of Sewer Service Cos. in the early 2000s. The Pipeline Assessment Certification Program meant that pipe segments could be compared within the collection system, regardless of location and who conducted the assessment.

However, standardization did not eliminate variances in observations stemming from subjectivity, bias and experience. For example, an operator with just a few years of experience is likely to capture information differently than an industry veteran; experience levels greatly impact the time the camera is in the pipe and the ease of documentation. Another challenge is how time-intensive the pipeline assessment is both during the inspection and while conducting a quality assurance/quality control review. Operators are expected to manage and review the video recordings of more than 200 NASSCO codes.

The traditional approach typically includes the following four steps:

1. Person-operated camera moves down the sewer
2. Camera captures footage of the sewer's current state
3. Individual codes defects based on camera footage
4. After results are reviewed, a QA/QC is conducted

These steps often result in the inefficient use of time and dollars. Coding is a very time-consuming step, and because two different people may view a code differently, it is open to interpretation. Enter AI.



AI streamlines the pipe inspection process by pairing machine learning algorithms with computer vision to detect and classify sewer defects.

Even with AI technology, high-quality CCTV with a high resolution remains essential for providing quality data outputs.



### STREAMLINED INSPECTION

Using AI in sewer inspection does not replace the work of field staff. Instead, it supplements their work by providing reliable input that helps them work smarter. Like the human eye, AI depends on quality images to accurately predict what's in the sewer line, especially when debris and water so easily obscure footage. High-quality CCTV with a high resolution remains essential to providing quality data outputs.

Mimicking the traditional inspection process, AI utilizes existing data and equipment, but with more detailed analysis. Artificial intelligence streamlines the pipe inspection process by pairing machine learning algorithms with computer vision to detect and classify sewer defects that are precursors to backups, overflows and problems that lead to collapses. It captures 80% of PACP codes for structural defects (cracks, fractures, break and holes), O&M (roots and deposits) and construction features (taps).

The artificial intelligence processes both perpendicular and longitudinal views, which provides a more detailed analysis and makes it less likely that defects and other observations will be missed or miscoded. It can also decipher whether the camera is in a manhole or a pipe.

With an AI tool, there is a substantially higher degree of certainty that all incident codes are correctly identified and captured. The AI tool works by utilizing a robust dataset of each computer vision model that is constantly supplemented with inspection data through a supervised learning environment that increases the AI's accuracy over time. Removing bias from the equation allows the AI tool to reduce errors and boost accuracy rates by identifying if a defect is present and classifying the defect code — all relieving the burden on the operator.

### MORE ACCURATE FUTURE

One of the greatest benefits of working with an AI tool is that it gets smarter the more it is used. Each time a contractor or designated QA/QC finds an incorrectly coded defect or defect

ONE OF THE GREATEST BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH AN AI TOOL IS THAT IT GETS SMARTER THE MORE IT IS USED.

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## TECH PERSPECTIVE

that has a low probability score, they correct it and retrain the AI. With time, the program gains a deeper understanding of what each defect looks like. The more it's used, the smarter it becomes, reducing the time required for reviewing sewer inspection data.

Combining AI with human intelligence results in far more reliable and useful datasets, freeing the engineer to make informed decisions and advancing the process of pipeline inspections for the first time in more than half a decade.

Looking ahead, watch for AI efficiencies to cut CCTV video review time in half. The end goal is to enable utility providers to rely on an AI-verified database to make fast, transparent and repeatable data-driven decisions. **c**

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joshua Ford is a project engineer with Columbus, Ohio-based engineering firm Burgess & Niple.



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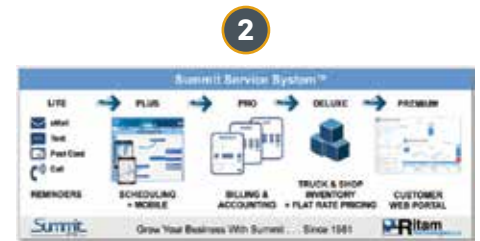
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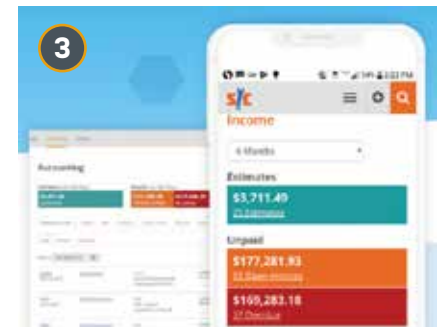
The **Summit Service System** from **Ritam Technologies** provides five editions, addressing various business needs, including Lite, which offers simplified work order entry and emphasis on either reminders for repeat business, or scheduling and dispatching; Plus, which includes both Lite options; Pro, which adds work order details, billing and accounting; Deluxe, which adds commissions, parts inventory tracking, and QuickBooks tie-in; and Premium, which adds an account web portal for online customer payments, account settings and service requests. Adding Summit Mobility allows the user to create mobile schedules with job history access, with the desktop showing Google map tracking of schedules, current location and job status. The system provides Cloud data storage and automatic data backup protection. Customer/job site information leads to work orders, where drag-and-drop calendars manage scheduling. Three technicians/crews are allowed per job with different arrival times and durations. It also includes job site diagrams, progress photos and clean-out location(s). **800-662-8471; www.ritam.com**



2

#### 3 // SERVICECORE SOFTWARE

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3

#### 4 // SUCCESSWARE TRACK

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## » INSPECTION/MAPPING SOFTWARE

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# FIELD AND OFFICE TECHNOLOGY

// By Craig Mandli

## SEWER INSPECTION CONTRACTOR CUSTOMIZES WORKFLOW WITH OPERATIONS SOFTWARE



**PROBLEM /** From November through April, much of Canada experiences freezing temperatures. During that time, low temperatures frequently reach subzero. Uni-Jet Industrial Pipe Service conducts cleaning and inspections for pipes from 6 inches to more than 10 feet. Much of this work is done in Winnipeg, but the company services a territory ranging from Nova Scotia to the Northern Rockies of British Columbia, meaning inspection teams need to be ready for anything.

**SOLUTION /** Since investing in WinCan Office VX, Uni-Jet crews have been able to tailor their inspection workflow to seasonal challenges, relying on the software's remote collaboration features and custom overlay tools to optimize field time and minimize downtime.

**RESULT /** "Post-coding allows the job to run quicker," says Ryan Slagerman, operations manager for Uni-Jet. "And our guys can spend less time out in those freezing temperatures." Slagerman and his team post-code all lines, first collecting CCTV footage, then coding it at a later time. "All the guys are really supportive and really get to work with WinCan. It's very easy to import the videos, go in and edit or enter codes. The integrated text overlay has made things a lot simpler for us, so we can post-code and then post-overlay." Uni-Jet hopes to move to a cloud-based inspection solution like WinCan Web, where inspections can be completed, shared and stored completely online. This would allow the team to further limit time in subzero temperatures and effortlessly drop all inspection footage onto the web. 877-626-8386; [www.wincan.com](http://www.wincan.com) c

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## PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

### CIPP 'COLD CURE' UV SYSTEM TOUTED FOR FAST, HIGH-DENSITY LINING

By Craig Mandli

Light curing technology is a game-changer for CIPP lining contractors. Not only does it cut installation times dramatically (from several hours to just minutes), a virtually unlimited pot life and the ability to wet-out liners offsite ensures that technicians are not racing the clock to get the lining material in place before it cures.

In developing the NuCure Cold Cure UV system, the NuFlow Technologies engineering team calculated the specific requirements needed to cure three-layer fiberglass material. According to Grant Whittle, technical director for NuFlow Technologies, optical power density was measured as a function of different voltages applied to the LED strips, and differential scanning calorimetry determined the percentage of liner cured as a function of irradiance. This resulted in a precise calculation of the micro-watts per square centimeter required to ensure complete irradiance and a full and dense cure along the length of the liner.

"It is imperative that the resin and the wavelength of the light be precisely calibrated to ensure a full and dense cure," Whittle says. "The research and development that went into NuCure Cold Cure UV has resulted in an extremely high density of cure, which not only means no uncured resin left in the pipe, but also means it can be used in high-temperature applications."

When exposure to light controls the cure, the variable site conditions have far less influence and crews have to make fewer site-specific method adjustments, so light curing results in a much more consistent cure



across installations. The result is a high-quality end product that meets specifications and gives the long-term performance planned.

The NuCure resin/light wavelength calibration results in a more controlled reaction, with a low peak exotherm and a short exotherm duration, resulting in minimal excess heat and a true "cold cure." Cold cure is energy efficient, but just as important, doesn't require additional active cooling techniques or equipment. According to Whittle, the ease of use of the system, along with its efficiency, has made plenty of fans among CIPP installers.

"The feedback has been really positive, particularly in the areas of ease of use and productivity," he says. "The ability to push/pull in place more liners per day is huge for return on investment." 866-430-2134; [www.nuflow.com](http://www.nuflow.com)

#### 1 // PATTERSON DAVIT CRANE AT WWETT BOOTH 4540

The Patterson davit crane will be in action at February's WWETT Show, Booth 4540. Designed for ease of use, durability and reliability, the cranes incorporate the highest-quality components and finishes. The low-maintenance, easy-to-assemble design is portable so multiple locations can be serviced with a single piece of equipment, minimizing upfront investment. Additionally, the crane is designed with adequate reach to lift large loads within tight spaces, and a boom that can be adjusted to nearly 45 degrees to allow for clearance over obstructions such as handrails. It also comes standard with a hot-dipped galvanized finish, stainless steel hardware and steel sheaves, making it ideal for wet work environments. Available in 1/2- and 1-ton capacities, Patterson Davit Cranes are made in the U.S. and deliver on the company's promise of keeping employees safe and positively impacting your business's bottom line. 800-322-2018; [www.pattersonmfg.com/davit-cranes](http://www.pattersonmfg.com/davit-cranes)



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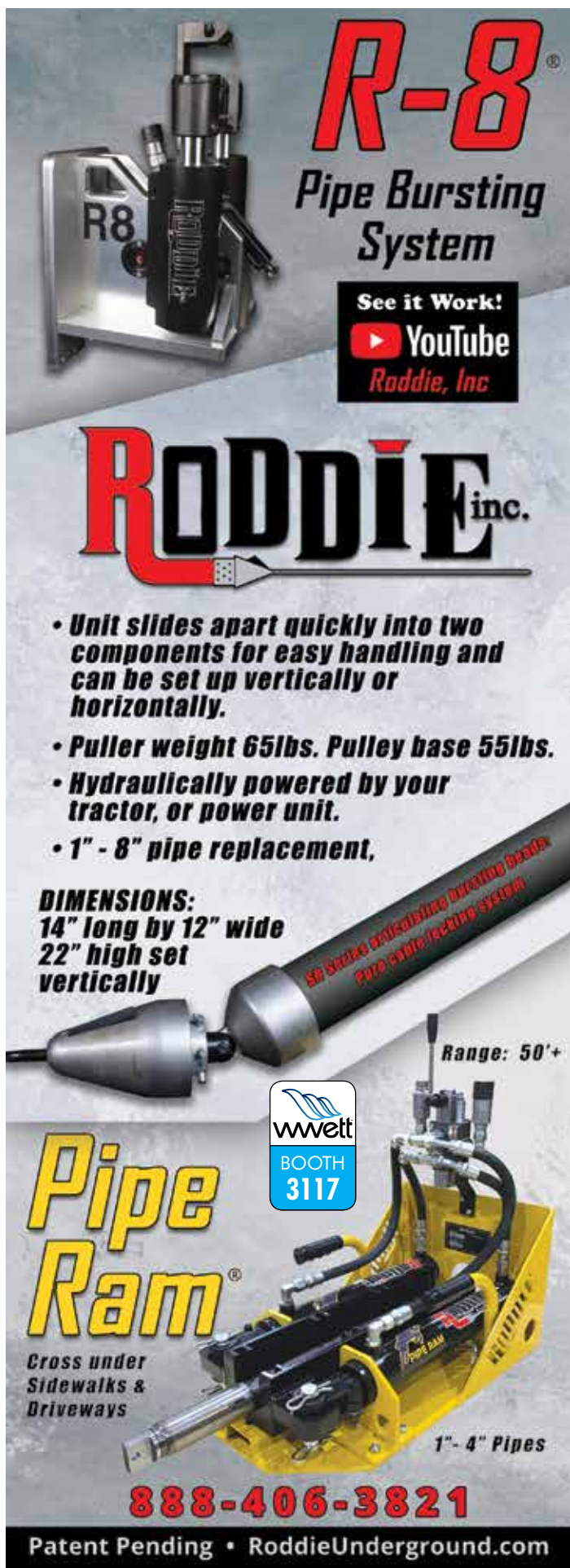
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Battery cradle on the rear of the monitor



## 2 // ELECTRIC EEL UPGRADED ECAM ACE 2 SL INSPECTION CAMERA

Electric Eel's upgraded eCAM Ace 2 SL inspection camera has a display screen that is twice as bright, improving the clarity and definition of viewing images and data. A brighter screen provides better contrast and visibility of inspection, making it ideal in brightly lit environments like full and direct sunlight. There is also a new location on the rear of the monitor for the battery cradle and AC/DC power input. The unit can handle both 18-volt battery and 12-volt AC/DC adapter inputs (not at the same time). Other new standard features include addition of screen shot function in JPG format; on/off function instead of powering up when plugged in; menus in three languages including English, French and Spanish; upgraded keypad to reflect new functionality, including sonde function operated from keypad rather than being switched on 100% of the time; and improved battery life off a single charge. **800-833-1212; www.electriceel.com**

## 3 // TRY TEK OX TRANSPORT SYSTEM

The OX transport system from TRY TEK can be used as a camera transporter or adapt the TRY TEK T150 Reinstatement Cutter to a "tractor-driven" system. The OX was designed to work in 8-, 10-, 12- and 15-inch pipes. It has a robust tractor design to pull/push heavy loads. It features a universal camera cradle for 2 1/4- to 3 1/4-inch-diameter mounting tubes and has free-wheel capability for fast retrieval using a camera cable reel. The system has solid connection hubs with zero hub-to-tire slippage and quick-change durable rubber tires, adaptable wheel configurations and risers that accommodate pipe size variation, from lined or unlined 8 to 15 inches in diameter. The system also features an all eight-wheel drive system with electronic load leveling and a drive speed of 45 feet per minute under a full load. **717-428-1477; www.trytek.com c**

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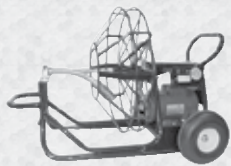
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## OBITUARY

# COLE Publishing Co-founder Pete Lawonn Passes Away

**IT'S WITH HEAVY HEARTS** that we at COLE Publishing and *Cleaner* magazine announce that company co-founder Pete Lawonn passed away Dec. 30. He was 70.

Lawonn had a profound impact on the industry that will be felt for many years to come. He was instrumental in co-founding the company that started with *Pumper* magazine 43 years ago, and he was a key player in

building the International Liquid Waste Haulers Equipment & Trade Show (later the Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo International, now called the WWETT Show).

"This company would literally not exist without him," says COLE Publishing President Jeff Bruss. "Pete will be sorely missed by everyone who knew him, and that list is lengthy. He was extremely kind, always put others before himself, and never spoke poorly or negatively of anyone. A



broad smile and squeaky hello was his typical greeting. He had a dry sense of humor that made everyone laugh when he let it loose, and was a genuinely outstanding person."

Lawonn's pivotal contributions to the company started during a chance conversation in northern Wisconsin back in 1979 when he and his business partner Bob Kendall, a budding entrepreneur, were looking for a way to sell Lawonn's spare vacuum tank. They had been talking to the late John DiVall, who then owned Jay's Waste Equipment. After hearing about the tank for sale, DiVall suggested the industry needed a trade publication to buy and sell equipment.

Lawonn and Kendall thought this was a good idea and soon launched COLE Publishing and the *Midwest Pumper*, envisioning a trade journal that would serve as a classified advertising marketplace for pumping professionals, as well as a resource for shopping for new products and exchanging ideas.

Initially taking the form of an eight-page newspaper mailed to 2,500 contractors in eight states, the publication soon evolved into a full-fledged magazine as Lawonn pledged to provide small business and industry news, along with a question-and-answer column. As advertisers jumped on board and the subscription base grew, the publication added more and more editorial content.

Lawonn moved on to other ventures in 1986, though he intermittently remained involved with COLE, attending shows and interacting with longtime exhibiting and attending friends. **c**



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Industrial

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1" - Inlet Thread  
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RTD 1450 RPM N VERSION 30 x 80MM SOLID SHAFT

| MODEL          | Max GPM | Max L/Min | Max PSI | Max Bar | Power EBHP | Bore Dia mm | Stroke mm | CRANKSHAFT ID STAMP | WEIGHT LBS. |
|----------------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|------------|-------------|-----------|---------------------|-------------|
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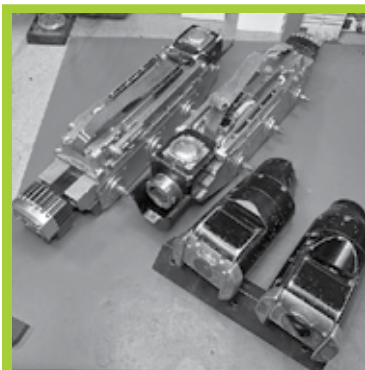
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### Picote opens trenchless training center in Porvoo, Finland

Picote Solutions Oy announced the opening of a hands-on trenchless training center for international customers in the wastewater and water rehabilitation industries. Picote has finalized upgrading the training facilities and hiring full-time employees with extensive in-house lining experience. The Porvoo training center is conveniently located close to Picote CIPP contracting services and Picote manufacturing facilities in Porvoo, Finland, around 45 minutes from Helsinki. The Picote Training Center offers a wide variety of training, including drain cleaning for plumbers and trenchless contractors, cutting/reinstatement, failed liner and concrete removal, connection collar installation and specialty classes focusing on CIPP lining inside buildings.

### \$60,000 raised for Joseph Groh Foundation at Service World Expo

Service World Expo, held in Tampa, Florida, in 2022, raised \$60,000 for the Joseph Groh Foundation. At the show, Ken Goodrich, CEO of Goettl Home Services, set a challenge. If attendees donated \$50,000 to the foundation, he would personally match it. The Joseph Groh Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charity and provides grants exclusively to individuals in the contracting and construction trades who are living with a life-altering disability. The grants fund accessible bathroom remodels, ramps, accessible wheelchair vans, vehicle retrofits, assistive and rehabilitative technology, and more.

### Aries Industries adds Wisconsin-based dealer to network

Aries Industries has added Wisconsin-based JWR Inc. to its dealer network. Based in Johnson Creek, JWR has expanded its offerings to include underground infrastructure inspection equipment, in addition to its core focus on technology and solutions for waste and recycling. The 50-year-old company serves customers nationally with products to address their specific waste management needs, along with installation and service. **c**

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How many employees do you supervise or work with at your facility?  
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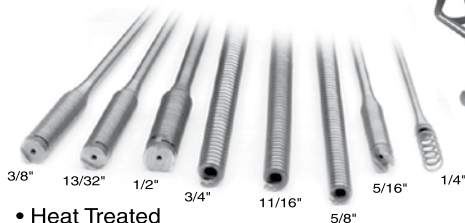
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