

# SMALL BUT MGHTY

BAKER PLUMBING MADE A CONSCIOUS
DECISION TO CURTAIL ITS GROWTH IN FAVOR
OF A LEAN OPERATION THAT HAS PROVEN
TO BE A SUCCESSFUL FIT / 12

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# CONTENTS

# **MARCH 2024**

# 12 COVER STORY: SMALL BUT MIGHTY

Baker Plumbing made a conscious decision to curtail its growth in favor of a lean operation that has proven to be a successful fit. // By Ken Wysocky

# **FEATURES**

### 24 PROFILE:

# QUALITY CONTROL

Pipeline Plumbing employs a straightforward approach to business success by hiring qualified workers and doing good work. // By Giles Lambertson

# DEPARTMENTS

# FROM THE EDITOR: IS IT TIME FOR A BUSINESS

# **SPRING CLEANING?**

Maintaining a constant growth trajectory and getting bigger isn't always the right fit for a company. // By Kyle Rogers

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# MONEY MACHINES: **COMING INTO FOCUS**

Opticam push cameras help drain cleaner and his customers see the big picture inside pipelines. // By Ken Wysocky

### 32 SAFETY FIRST:

## THE DANGER OF COMPLACENCY

Don't let the little things slip in the name of saving time and money. // By Ronnie Freeman

### 34 LEGAL ADVISER:

### KNOW YOUR EMPLOYMENT LAW

Here's a look at three recent labor regulations affecting today's workplace, including treatment of pregnant workers, Al in hiring and noncompete clauses. // By Joan Koehne

## PRODUCT FOCUS:

# CHEMICAL AND MECHANICAL **ROOT CONTROL**

// By Craig Mandli

### **PRODUCT NEWS**

Spotlight: Camera system streamlines cleaning and inspection process. // By Craig Mandli

### **INDUSTRY NEWS**



ON THE COVER // When Bob Baker assumed ownership of Baker Plumbing, his family's well-established business in Calgary, Alberta, he kickstarted an aggressive growth strategy, guided by the concept that getting bigger was better than staying small. It was until suddently it wasn't. "You think that if you keep hiring more guys and buying more trucks, you're going to make more money," Baker says. "But it doesn't always work out that way. I was stressed out beyond belief." Today, the company is still staying plenty successful as a leaner operation. (Photography by Jeremy Klager)







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Aries Industries15
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BLACKH#WK
Blackhawk Tech31
CAM
Cam Spray31
Winnelson'
Central Oklahoma Winnelson 47
A RESE
Coast Manufacturing47
CUES 🦄
CUES, Inc21
DURACABLE
Duracable Manufacturing Co11
Dynamic Repairs
Easy-Kleen
Pressure Systems Ltd51
ENVIROSIGHT
Envirosiaht LLC 5

FORBEST
Forbest Products Co49
CapVax
GapVax, Inc55
General PIPE CLEANERS
General Pipe Cleaners,
div. of General Wire Spring2
<b>HotJe</b> tusa <sup>*</sup>
HotJet USA51
IPP Solutions, LLC29
Ken-Way Corporation49
PRODUCTS
Lansas Mfg. by
Vanderlans & Sons Inc16 &17
MRP
Milwaukee Rubber
Products, Inc 41
MyTana
MyTana LLC27
nuflow
NuFlow Technologies3
PEARPOINT 38
Pearpoint (USA)43

JOIN US	
f L You in C	9

PICOTE	
	_
Picote Solutions30	U
ralech	
Ratech Electronics, Ltd39	9
Reline America	7
CUP CACELLES	
Root Rat49	9
ROOTX	
RootX3	5
SewerProShop, LLC4	1
SPARTAN TOOL	
Spartan Tool LLC50	6

T&T Tools, Inc43, 51
The Cable Center23, 39
TR JAN WORLDWIDE INC.
TROJAN WORLDWIDE INC33
TruGrit Traction Inc51
USB-USA45
VIVAX METROTECH
Vivax-Metrotech Corp9
<b>Classifieds</b> 52-53

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# THE EDITOR

// Kyle Rogers

# IS IT TIME FOR A BUSINESS SPRING CLEANING?

Maintaining a constant growth trajectory and getting bigger isn't always the right fit for a company



Email me with comments, questions or opinions at

# editor@cleaner.com

# AM ON A CONSTANT QUEST to downsize.

That's not to say I don't ever buy new things. But for every new shirt that goes in the closet, two go into the Goodwill donation pile. I keep this mindset with everything. It's a gradual process. I'm not about to have a mass exodus of all my possessions in order to embrace the van life anytime soon. But I do try to generally operate under the concept of "less is more," wherever that may lead me. I often think about a surf instructor I once met in Australia who literally lived out of a duffel bag and how freeing that must've felt.



This type of mentality is often at odds with the business world. A "bigger is better" line of thinking usually trumps "less is more." If you're not on a continuous growth trajectory, adding employees, customers, equipment and services, it's easy to think that you're doing business wrong. But is it always better?

One of the companies profiled in this month's issue, Baker Plumbing out of Alberta, Canada, used to be on that journey of constant growth. When owner Bob Baker took control of the company from his father in 2006 he immediately started scaling the company larger, different from his father's approach that had kept the business a smaller operation. By 2014, Baker Plumbing employed 18 people and was running 12 service trucks. But for Baker it wasn't necessarily "better."

"You think that if you keep hiring more guys and buying more trucks, you're going to make more money," Baker says. "But it doesn't always work out that way. I was stressed out beyond belief. It was just awful. We had all these high-end jobs, working on big, beautiful restaurants and \$50 million hotels — the kind of customers that had far higher expectations for customer service and craftsmanship. And with that many employees, there always was someone not meeting those high expectations. I just got tired of apologizing every day for not meeting the expectations of customers who were extremely important to our cash flow."

In 2015, Baker decided to shift the company in the other direction and today it numbers six employees, half of which are Baker and his two sons.

"I was stressed out beyond belief. It was just awful." Those are the comments from Baker that stuck out to me.

The concept of growth is sold as the business ideal, but at what cost? More of everything — employees, customers, revenue — can also mean more headaches.

It's March and that means the spring season (or close to it as I'm sure winter is lingering in many places) is here and all that is associated with it. A time of decluttering and organizing for many people. Spring cleaning can apply to a business as well. Going smaller is the antithesis of how we typically view running a business, but sometimes it is the right move.

Enjoy this month's issue. c



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# SKILLS SHARPENING Add Role-Playing to Your Training Toolbox

In this industry, superior technical skills alone aren't enough to guarantee success. Things like effective communication, customer relationship management, and the ability to successfully upsell services also play pivotal roles in a company's growth. One of the most impactful training tools to sharpen such skills is role-playing as Dave Bailey of Service Nation Inc. explains in this online exclusive.

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# SHOW STOPPER

# Operator Picks Up Company's Eye-Catching Hydrovac at WWETT

When we were at the WWETT Show in Indianapolis in January, one of the best-looking trucks we saw on the show floor was a Tornado Hydrovac unit, on display in the Custom Truck One Source booth, that was a sharp matte black color with a wrap on it dedicated to the U.S. military branches. We spoke a little with Beau Ferrick, an operator for Louisianabased Hydrovac Solutions, who helped some with the design and was at the show to drive the truck back home for his company. >> cleaner.com/featured



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# SMALL BUT MGHTY

BAKER PLUMBING MADE A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO CURTAIL ITS GROWTH IN FAVOR OF A LEAN OPERATION THAT HAS PROVEN TO BE A SUCCESSFUL FIT # By Ken Wysocky



hen Bob Baker assumed ownership of Baker Plumbing, his family's well-established business in Calgary, Alberta he kick-started an aggressive growth strategy, guided by the concept that getting bigger was better than staying small.

"My father was always very conservative," says Baker, referring to the late Gerry Baker, from whom Baker inherited the company. "For most of his career, it was just him and me. But I decided to take the company in a different direction."

As it turned out, bigger was better — until it wasn't.

That point came in 2015 when Baker decided to drastically downsize the family business, established by his grandfather, Ralph Baker, in 1956. Today, the company employs only six people, including three technicians: Baker and his two sons, Isaiah, 26, and Pete, 24.

Baker's roughly decade-long roller coaster ride from small business to big business to small again offers some important lessons for contractors about the risks of fast, exponential growth; the benefits of offering diverse services; the value of carefully selecting a specific

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market niche and providing great customer service; and the merits of embracing new technology that improves productivity and profitability and opens up new markets.

It also underscores the importance of a little thing called resilience, which helped Baker, age 53, weather what essentially amounted to a complete rebuild of his company that often required 100-hour work weeks for several years.

"It was a lot of work," he says. "But in the end, it was all worth it."

### **DEEP PLUMBING ROOTS**

Baker initially had no interest in becoming a plumber. While he worked for his father throughout his teenage years, Baker told him after graduating from high school that he never wanted to hold a pipe wrench again.





"MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS ARE GREAT BECAUSE THEY'RE REALIZED REVENUE — GUARANTEED MONEY. AND CUSTOMERS ARE HAPPY BECAUSE THEY AVOID DISASTERS. THERE'S NOTHING LIKE WHAT WE CALL A FRIDAY NIGHT FLOOD TO GET A BUSINESS TO SIGN A MAINTENANCE CONTRACT."

**BOB BAKER** 

Instead he earned a computer science degree at Mount Royal College and got a job after graduation in 1992. But his career in computers was short-lived.

"After one week of sitting in a cubicle, I decided there was no way I was going to do this for the rest of my life," he says. "So I went back 《Pete Baker uses a Milwaukee Tool sectional machine on a drain cleaning job.

➤ Bob Baker uses a FieldPiece Dual Port Manometer while testing and adjusting pressure switches.



to my dad and begged him to let me sign up as an apprentice. And here we are."

By 2000, Baker was effectively running the company as his father slowly disengaged from the business. He officially took over as the company owner when his father died in 2006.

Baker initially steered the company, which was focused primarily on installing septic system drainfields and bathroom remodeling projects, into a more lucrative niche: new-construction plumbing for large, 5,000- to 10,000-square-foot homes.

But the recession of 2008 hit the company hard; work on 13 luxury homes suddenly diminished to just one house in a span of about four weeks as building contractors went belly up.

# A NEW MARKET BECKONS

An abrupt U-turn followed as Baker recalibrated and entered the market for commercial service and repair plumbing. Rapid growth continued and by 2014, the company employed 18 people and was running 12 service trucks.

Baker chose to do commercial plumbing because the need is more constant than residential work and not as vulnerable to economic downturns. In addition, it's easier to build long-term relationships with commercial customers because they need service more often. Furthermore, they typically have budgets for things like plumbing repairs, unlike residential customers, who often are more interested in spending as little money as possible, he notes.

"We stayed busy even during the pandemic," Baker says. "There's no real offseason for commercial service. Most people we work with now, we've worked with since around 2010. Many of them are on scheduled maintenance contracts where we jet out and inspect their lines every three months. Maintenance contracts are great because they're realized revenue — guaranteed money. And customers are happy because they avoid disasters. There's nothing like what we call a Friday night flood to get a business to sign a maintenance contract."

"YOU THINK THAT IF YOU KEEP HIRING MORE GUYS AND BUYING MORE TRUCKS, YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE MORE MONEY, BUT IT DOESN'T ALWAYS WORK OUT THAT WAY. I WAS STRESSED OUT BEYOND BELIEF."

**BOB BAKER** 

### **AN ABRUPT STOP**

Nonetheless, things didn't work longterm as planned. The main cause? Employees who couldn't provide the kind of high-level customer service Baker and his customers expected, not to mention all the associated headaches that come with more employees, more bills, more vendors, more service calls and so forth.

"You think that if you keep hiring more guys and buying more trucks, you're going to make more money," Baker says. "But it doesn't always work out that way. I was stressed out beyond belief. It was just awful. We had all these high-end jobs, working on big, beautiful restaurants and \$50 million hotels — the kind of customers that had far higher expectations for customer service and craftsmanship. And with that many employees, there always was someone not meeting those high expectations. I just got tired of apologizing every day for not meeting the expectations of customers who were extremely important to our cash flow."

Baker says he woke up one morning in October 2015 and decided that enough was enough. When he got to work, he called a meeting and informed employees he was letting all of them go.

"It was ridiculously hard," he says. "It was one of the hardest things I ever had to do."

# **STARTING OVER**

Baker hired one employee and kept working with preferred customers while deciding to no longer work for others.

After a couple of years, Isaiah came aboard, and Pete joined the company in 2020. Today the company focuses on a core clientele of hotels and restaurants and bolsters its

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business with scheduled-maintenance contracts for drain cleaning. Baker added drain cleaning to the company services when he started managing its operations in 2000.

The company also does pipe coating, using the Brush Coating System from Picote Solutions; gas-fitting for boilers, furnaces and the like; and pipe lining.

"I don't know how you can provide only one service and be profitable at it," Baker says. "In fact, we'll do just about anything for customers as long as we have the knowledge and the tools to do it. I've fixed door hinges and hand railings for customers just because it provides another layer of value for customers."

Of course, providing multiple services requires a large inventory of equipment. For drain cleaning and pipeline inspections, the company relies on three RIDGID K-5208 sectional



drain machines, RIDGID K-45 hand-held units, RIDGID SeeSnake inspection cameras (standard, Compact C40, Mini Reel and microReel models); a RIDGID KJ-3100 cart-mounted jetter (3,000 psi at 5.5 gpm); and two JM-1450 cart-mounted mini-jetters (1,500 psi at 1.7 gpm) from General Pipe Cleaners.

Technicians also rely on RIDGID 300 pipe-threaders, a RIDGID RP351 ProPress gun and RIDGID and Milwaukee Tool power tools. The company runs four service vehicles: two GMC Savana cargo vans, a GMC Astro van and a GMC Sierra pickup truck.

#### **INVESTMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY**

Embracing new technology is critical to success. It not only improves productivity, it can open up new markets as well as make a business a one-stop shop for customers, Baker says.

"Our motto is if we can't do it, it can't be done, so we have to back that up by having the equipment to fix problems and fix them right," he says.

# DINING ON DRAIN CLEANING

t doesn't bother Bob Baker that many plumbers don't want to do drain cleaning in Calgary, Alberta, because it leaves more work for his company, Baker Plumbing.

But at the same time, the veteran plumber doesn't understand why plumbers wouldn't want to clean drains.

"I don't know how plumbers don't do it," Baker says. "There's so much money to be made. It's said there are two ways to make money: do things no one else can do and do things no one wants to do, and this falls under the latter. For us, drain cleaning leads to so much other business (such as pipeline coating and pipe lining). Drain cleaning helped us get our foot in the door with commercial clients.

"When you can clean drains as well as fix a \$10,000 boiler and provide other services, too, you become the go-to company for everything they need. Being a one-stop shop definitely has been an advantage for us."

The company's go-to drain-cleaning tool is the compact but powerful RIDGID K-5028 sectional machine, which Baker says he bought during an emergency service call because other machines weren't getting the job done. The company was called into a shopping mall to clear a 6-inch-diameter cast iron sewer line that, as it turned out, was clogged by chunks of wood and other debris that built up behind them.

"We ground away on that clog unsuccessfully for about five hours," Baker explains. "So I went out and bought the K-5028 for about \$6,000. It unclogged the line in less than an hour. The mall owner was very grateful. That machine made us heroes, for sure. And I charged \$10,000 for the job, so the machine paid for itself the same day I bought it.

"I was shocked at how well it worked," Baker adds. "I was as impressed with that machine as our customer was with the results. I can't think of a machine with a better return on investment."



>>> Bob Baker uses a Milwaukee Tool Air Snake in an attempt to clear a drain.

A good example is the Picote epoxy brush-coating system, which Baker says he learned about by reading *Cleaner* magazine.

"Then I looked it up on Instagram and watched a contractor coat pipes," he explains. "I thought to myself, 'I can do that.' So I made some phone calls and ended up buying the Picote system in fall of 2021."

Baker recently used the Picote system to fix leaking PVC pipes buried under concrete near an outdoor pool and a hot tub at a resort hotel. One contractor offered to jackhammer the concrete and replace the pipes for \$80,000, which would've put the pool and hot tub out of service for weeks.

But Baker came in and coated the leaking pipes for about \$10,000. And he did the job over one weekend, with minimal pool and hot tub disruption, he notes.

"The customer was absolutely delighted," Baker says.

To cover the cost of such specialized equipment, Baker explains that he usually includes the price of the equipment in a job bid.

"Then we have it on hand for the next time we need it," he says.

"I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU CAN PROVIDE ONLY ONE SERVICE AND BE PROFITABLE AT IT. IN FACT, WE'LL DO JUST ABOUT ANYTHING FOR CUSTOMERS AS LONG AS WE HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE AND THE TOOLS TO DO IT."

**BOB BAKER** 



As Baker looks back, he says that as painful as the downsizing was, it was the best move he could've made. It enabled him to better control job quality and minimize stress and headaches.

"Our profit margins are exactly where I want them to be and we're really busy," he says. "And I'm very involved with everything and can help the boys with problems. And because they're family, they're invested in the business at an entirely different level than a regular employee would be. So I feel like I'm able to ask more of them to get a job done and done right."

As for what the future holds, say, five years or so down the road, Baker envisions his sons carrying on the family legacy while he steps aside and "throws in some sage advice here and there."

He concedes that any kind of growth is constrained right now, with only three technicians. But he says he thinks Isaiah and Pete could very well decide to take the business to another level.



But whatever they do, Baker says he is extremely gratified his sons are interested in carrying on the family name in the industry.

"It'll be awesome — I love it," he says. "It gives me a wonderful sense of accomplishment and pride that they've taken such a keen interest in the business and will continue what my grandfather started way back when." c

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# MONEY **MACHINES**

# COMING INTO FOCUS

Opticam push cameras help drain cleaner and his customers see the big picture inside pipelines // By Ken Wysocky

AN KALSCHEUR IS ALWAYS focused on investing in technology that can clinch job sales, increase productivity, enhance customer service, and boost his reputation as an honest contractor who operates with integrity.

That's where the Opticam push camera from Insight Vision comes in, checking off all those boxes and more for Kalscheur's company D & D Drain Service, based in Lodi, a small rural town in south-central Wisconsin.

Kalscheur owns two Opticams — one that he bought in 2020 and another purchased two years later. That's one Opticam each for him and his son, Dylan, who's been working with his father for four years.

"We use the cameras multiple times a day," says Kalscheur, who established his company in 2007.

He runs two service trucks: a 2016 Chevrolet 1-ton dually cutaway van with a box body from Utilimaster (a brand owned by The Shyft Group) and a 2021 Freightliner 2500. The Chevrolet truck

carries a Water Cannon jetter mounted on a slide-out rail and equipped with a General Pump (3,500 psi at up to 8 gpm) and a 70-gallon water tank and the Freightliner features another Water Cannon jetter with a General pump (3,000 psi at up to 12 gpm) and a 100-gallon water tank.

"A LOT OF TIMES, CUSTOMERS WILL COME AND LOOK OVER MY SHOULDER WHILE I CAMERA A LINE. THEY'RE USUALLY AMAZED AT THE TECHNOLOGY."

**DAN KALSCHEUR** 



△Dan Kalscheur, owner of D & D Drain Service in Lodi, Wisconsin, uses an Opticam push camera from Insight Vision to inspect a residential sewer line.

D & D Drain Service's work generally centers on cleaning 3to 6-inch-diameter residential sewer laterals and 12-inch sewer lines that carry manure from barns out to lagoons on dairy farms, Kalscheur says. The company also relies on two RIDGID K9-102 and two K9-204 FlexShaft drain cleaning machines.

### THE CAMERA DOESN'T LIE

The Opticam cameras help the company sell jobs because customers can see visual proof of exactly what's clogging their pipes.

"They can see what they're getting for the money they're spending," Kalscheur says. "A lot of times, customers will come



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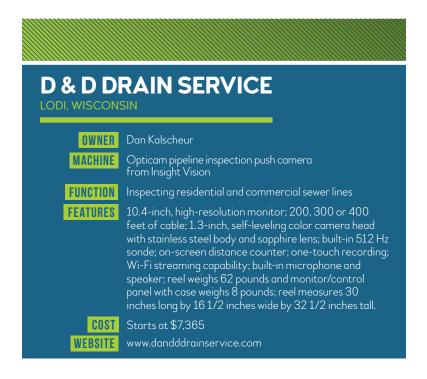


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and look over my shoulder while I camera a line. They're usually amazed at the technology."

Kalscheur says the high-resolution, roughly 10 1/2-inch LCD screen allows him and customers to see details inside a pipe.

"It's a great picture," he notes. "Some cameras give you an OK picture, but this one is really sharp, which is important because you want to be able to see exactly what you're looking for. That's not always the case with cameras."

Kalscheur used to charge an extra fee for inspecting sewer lines, but too many people didn't want to spend the extra money. That put him at a disadvantage in terms of diagnosing problems. So now he inspects all lines, typically before and after they're cleaned.

"I stopped asking customers if they wanted to pay for it and just made it an automatic part of my service," he says. "I just don't want to be guessing about what's wrong. I adjusted my price accordingly and no one has ever balked at paying the higher price. If customers want a job right so that they don't have to call you back, it's worth the extra money to camera a line."

Always televising lines also provides the company with an insurance policy of sorts because if customers call back in, say, a couple of months because their line is clogged again, Kalscheur can show them before-and-after videos that prove a problem was fixed correctly and that something else must be causing the current problem.

# **MULTI-FUNCTIONAL MACHINE**

The Opticam camera features a multitude of features, including 200 feet of 0.475-inch-diameter cable; a 1.3-inch, selfleveling color camera head with a stainless steel body and a sapphire lens; a built-in 512 Hz sonde (Kalscheur pairs it with a RIDGID NaviTrack Scout pipe locator); on-screen distance counter; one-touch recording; Wi-Fi streaming capability; and a built-in microphone and speaker. The reel weighs 62 pounds and the monitor/control panel with a case weighs 8 pounds. The reel measures 30 inches long by 16 1/2 inches wide by 32 1/2 inches tall.

Kalscheur also notes that he can download videos onto a memory stick and give it to customers. And the Wi-Fi streaming capability, which links the camera to either an Android or an iOS smartphone, allows him to watch inspections on his phone.

"That comes in handy when I'm putting a camera down into a roof vent and the monitor and reel are on the ground with Dylan," he explains. "I can watch the inspection on my phone without carrying the entire unit up there. We don't do that very often, but when we do, that's a very useful feature."

The camera head's modular design also makes for easy swapouts if it needs a repair.

Kalscheur says he also likes the unit's optional battery-power adapter, which enables operation with a Milwaukee Tool M18 battery — a big help when electrical outlets aren't readily available.

"We just did a job recently at a home that was being remodeled and no power was available," he says. "So we just grabbed the battery and went to work."

#### **REVENUE GENERATORS**

Overall, the two cameras have been a great investment at roughly \$7,500 apiece. The units also help the company generate more revenue because they help forge mutually beneficial working relationships with area plumbers who don't do drain cleaning.

"I get a lot of referrals from plumbers that don't like drain work," Kalscheur says. "And if we find broken pipes, which we don't fix, we refer work back to them."

The cameras also amp up productivity because Kalscheur doesn't waste time trying to figure out what's clogging a line, which enables him and his son to do more jobs per week.

"They've been a good investment, for sure," Kalscheur says. "When you stop and think about all the sewer jobs we do in a year, those cameras make us a lot of money." c

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# 

PIPELINE PLUMBING EMPLOYS A STRAIGHTFORWARD APPROACH TO BUSINESS SUCCESS BY HIRING QUALIFIED WORKERS AND DOING GOOD WORK

**//** By Giles Lambertson





hen Pipeline Plumbing owners Adam and Lori Faren went hunting for a promotional phrase that would reflect the core values of their Portland, Oregon, metro area business, they came up with "Where quality meets integrity." Beyond being catchy, it turns out the phrase actually describes how the company operates.

"We have a good reputation," Adam says.

The reputation pays dividends, including with inspections.

"I feel like when an inspector comes to a job we are on, they know it is Pipeline Plumbing doing the job and that everything is being done properly," he says. "We fail very few inspections."

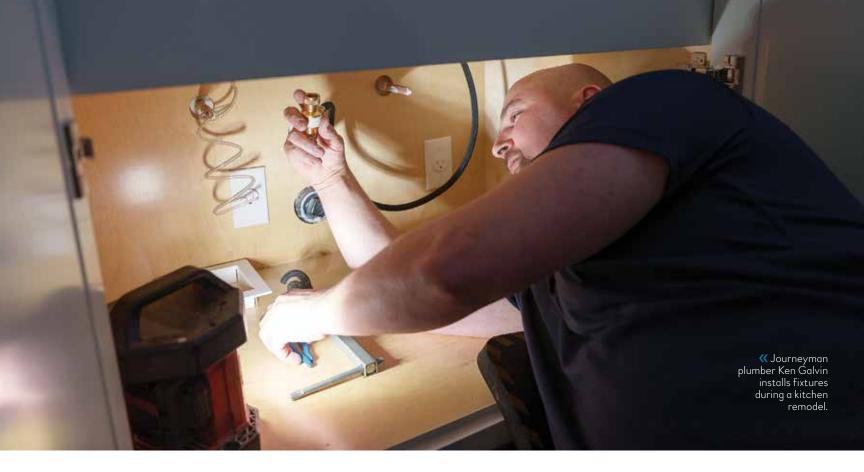
Such respect was earned, of course, and didn't just happen. The company has methodically followed a business plan pegged to a simple formula: Assemble a good team, do good work and stand behind it.

#### **PROVIDING A VITAL SERVICE**

How long has Adam Faren been plumbing? His father was a Southern California plumber who took his son along on service calls. He was all of 18 years of age when he completed his first plumbing job on his own. Except for one year when he ventured into marine maintenance work — which he says mostly was plumbing — the 52-year-old tradesman has been working with pipe and plumbing fixtures all his adult life.

In 2004, the Farens decided to parlay Adam's skills into a business. They set up shop in the garage of their home in the Portland suburb of Lake Oswego and Pipeline Plumbing was born. Notably, the





address of the company's Instagram account is Pipeline.Plumbing. Drains. The almost afterthought reference to drain cleaning was a nod to customer demand for the service.

"I didn't want to exclude drains, but it wasn't the main focus," Adam says.

Rather the focus broadened to include it. His customers sometimes would say something like "Oh, I wish you did drains," or "I had a bad experience with a drain cleaning company." In response, the Farens stepped up and offered the service.

"PEOPLE WHO DON'T FIT INTO THE ORGANIZATION. WE AVOID HIRING. THIS CAN BE A BIT OF A HINDRANCE IN THE HIRING PROCESS, BUT IT'S IMPORTANT THAT SOMEONE COMING IN IS A GOOD FIT."

**ADAM FAREN** 

Though drain cleaning still isn't reflected in the company logo, one of the company's 18 employees exclusively works on drains and sewers. As needed, he has at his disposal a Spartan trailer jetter that produces 3,000 psi at 12 gpm.

"He stays busy every day," Adam says.

Less than a year after starting the company, the Farens moved it 6 miles away to Tigard, a city of about 50,000 people that sits next to Interstate 5. The office location provided the company more public exposure than the garage afforded and gave its service techs ready access to a network of state highways.

It seemed like a good start, and was. Then the 2008 recession arrived. But the economic downturn had little impact on the 4-year-old company, which is when the business owners realized that service plumbing is not very susceptible to vagaries in the economy.

"We learned how vital the business is, that plumbing is a central service," Adam says. "It withstood the recession of 2008-09 and then the COVID disruption. We slowed down our remodel plumbing for about a month when COVID struck, but that's all."

#### **BUILDING A TEAM**

Pipeline Plumbing has two categories of crews — service plumbers and remodeling/new construction plumbers. Crosstraining? Forget it.

"We started off with everybody doing everything," says Lori, who brought to the company her business office experience. "It was not efficient at all. Stocking the work truck for each type of plumbing can be very different because they are two different types of work. We quickly learned it was better to separate the teams so they could focus on their specialties. It's worked out very well."

Three remodeling crews and five residential and commercial service teams roll out each day — plus the drain cleaning tech. Among these tradesmen are eight journeyman plumbers and four apprentices. Revenue that rolls in from this fieldwork is split about 50-50 between the divisions, according to Lori.

The company relies on Spartan for hand-held pipe cleaning equipment, says Adam, that being the brand that he grew comfortable with over the years, while inspection cameras guiding the techs through pipes are from RIDGID.

"RIDGID cameras are a little more expensive, but they are user-friendly and the company keeps coming up with easier ways of doing things," he says.

If a water or sewer line requires digging up to repair, the company rents a mini-excavator. If the line is buried quite deep — that is, 4 feet down or farther — and shoring will be required, Pipeline Plumbing subs out the work.

"WE DON'T TRY TO TALK SOMEONE INTO BUYING SOMETHING THAT IS UNNECESSARY. WE TRY TO TREAT OUR CUSTOMERS AS WE WOULD WANT TO BE TREATED." **ADAM FAREN** 

# **SLOW GROWTH APPROACH**

Houses dating from the early 1900s are common throughout the Portland metro area, so failure of cast iron infrastructure is not unusual. Pipeline Plumbing regularly cuts out and replaces failed pipe on commercial and residential properties. But lining the failed pipe is something else.

Portland proper has not yet approved a patch or lining system for use inside structures in the city. Until municipal approval of lining or patching comes down from City Hall, the Farens are holding back from investing in the technologies for use in their surrounding service areas.



Apprentice Joshua Reyes and journeyman plumber Ken Galvin work on a kitchen remodel. Pipeline Plumbing maintains two categories of focus for plumbing crews service plumbers and remodeling/new construction plumbers.



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"We really are thinking about lining and patching," Adam says.

For guidance on what system to adopt, they are looking to drain cleaning specialist, Brent Steele, who has worked at Pipeline Plumbing for seven years.

"He's a really good researcher and has dug into what product is working best. I'm leaning on him," Adam says.

The caution the owners demonstrate in investing in technology illustrates a



↑ Drain technician Brent Steele goes over the details on an invoice with a client

business philosophy they openly state on their website, where it says, "Pipeline Plumbing is all about slow growth ..." More than anything else, the growth of the company is pegged to the people wearing the Pipeline Plumbing shirt, Lori says, and the quality of work they perform.

"We kind of only grow as fast as we have the people, because we have the work. We probably turn away four or five calls a day," she says. "We could be 10 times the size we are if we didn't take the time to surround ourselves with good people."

"People who don't fit into the organization, we avoid hiring," Adam adds. "This can be a bit of a hindrance in the hiring process, but it's important that someone coming in is a good fit."

That means the person is skilled and teachable and, frankly, congenial.

"We get applicants who are cranky or

grumpy and obviously are not going to be much fun to work around. They need to fit in," Adam says.

When they do hire someone, the person tends to stick around. Adam ticks off the years of his employees -18, 17, 13, "a couple of 10-year employees, lots of five-year employees. Our retention is really good. People who do leave are leaving for opportunities we can't provide. They want to start their own business or move into management, but we already have management in place."

Adam gives credit to the people he has hired through the years for making the company successful.

"Our veteran employees are a key part of the success of our company. We could not do what we do without these good people," he says.

Congeniality aside, the bottom line is not how convivial company meetings are, but how effective company employees are in accomplishing the work in the field. Adam says hiring capable people is more of a challenge on the remodeling and new construction side of the business. For one thing, they must meet the expectations of the company's longtime building partners.

"We have really good relationships



# SEPARATION OF BUSINESS AND HOME

usband-and-wife business teams are not rare. Many are successful. Adam and Lori Faren are among the success stories.

Adam is a journeyman plumber, licensed in California and Oregon, with over 30 years of experience. Lori has no plumbing credentials - unless being married to one counts — but she worked for years in the office of a family fishing company in Canada. She knows ledgers and bottom lines and depreciation. Says Adam about his wife: "Lori's strength is numbers and systems."

Two decades ago, the couple decided to pool their experience and start their own Portland, Oregon-area company, Pipeline Plumbing. Today they are presiding together over a successful plumbing house that is steadily growing at the pace they want. Their service area covers the Portland metro area, including Vancouver, Washington.

Looking back, to what do they attribute their entrepreneurial success?

"One of the reasons we have succeeded is that our strengths are in different areas," Adam says. "I definitely was the field person, working outside the office, communicating with customers, while Lori was in the office. We complemented one another and let each do what the person was good at."

They also instituted a rule that Adam says helped them get away from the business at the end of the workday.

"We had sort of a seven-to-seven rule around the house, 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. We tried real hard not to talk about the business between those hours. It's all worked out pretty well."

Looking ahead, with the couple having turned much of the day-to-day operations to a team of managers, what do they see for the business in the next 10 years?

"I wouldn't say we have a 10-year plan in place, but it's on our minds," Adam says. "I'll be in my 60s and we need to think about how to pass on the company and both exit it. The thing is, we both like what we do and don't want to exit."

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Pipeline Plumbing's office staff includes (left to right) Samantha Hill, service coordinator; Lori Faren, owner; and Terra Steele, office manager.

"WHETHER IT'S THE DISPATCHER, THE APPRENTICE ON THE SHOVEL OR THE LEAD TECHNICIAN, CONSTANT TRAINING IS STRESSED HERE. OUR CUSTOMERS KNOW THAT NOT JUST ANYONE IS WALKING INTO THEIR HOMES WHEN OUR TECHNICIANS ARRIVE - THEY'RE WELL-TRAINED AND WELL-EDUCATED PROFESSIONALS."

**ADAM FAREN** 

with our builders, some of whom we've been working with for 17 years. We don't want to jeopardize that," Adam says. "We're not even taking on any new builders so we can make sure that we can keep up with the work our builders are giving us now."



#### THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

Quality and integrity, in hiring, in service rendered and product delivered. Adam was asked how those concepts actually play out day to day. First, he says, "We definitely own our mistakes. No one is perfect. If something is wrong, we never try to point a finger at someone else."

Second, gouging a customer is a no-no. "We don't try to talk someone into buying something that is unnecessary," he says. "We try to treat our customers as we would want to be treated. Overselling somebody, doing work that doesn't need to be done, we would terminate someone who did that."

Third — and this is the quality piece — Adam says, "We want the work done right. That never varies, even if we lose money because we didn't bid correctly. Too many companies operate from a profit standpoint, instead of turning out good product. Builders use us because of our quality work, but they also know the integrity piece is there."

All of the above is topped off by being considerate of customers in their homes or workplaces.

"We put tarps down and clean up afterward like we were never there. We don't leave cigarette butts all over the job site," Adam

says. And such courtesies are recognized at the end of the workday.

It follows that Pipeline Plumbing customers are return customers — and the source of referrals. In fact, aside from "a little ad" on Angie's List (which now calls itself Angi) that generates several calls a day for the company, the Farens largely depend on word of mouth and referrals to stay busy. And busy they are. c

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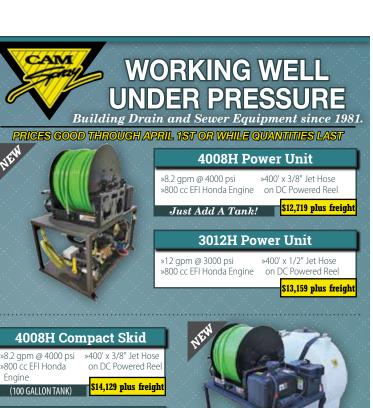
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# SAFETY FIRST

# THE DANGER OF COMPLACENCY

Don't let the little things slip in the name of saving time and money /// By Ronnie Freeman

**HAT IS COMPLACENCY** in the workplace? It can be defined as self-satisfaction, especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies.

Complacency is extremely dangerous in the workplace. We get so used to things being done the same way that we do not always look at the hazards in our surroundings. One of the dangers of being complacent is becoming so accustomed to being around hazards that they no longer seem to pose a threat to our safety. Many workers are aware of the risks they are exposing themselves to but have accepted the risk and don't feel threatened by the risks. This is a dangerous mindset and a reason for many workplace injuries.

There is a reason complacency is called the "silent killer." At the workplace the name fits. When our minds are not on the task at hand and the hazards that exist, we can drift into thinking about other things. This is when the real danger can emerge. It just takes a split second, in many cases with little to no time to react.

Part of human nature is that we become "creatures of habit" and we get comfortable doing the same thing day in and day out. We perform the same job tasks over and over, and when nothing bad happens, we begin to believe we are in a good place and think nothing of the hazards we have exposed ourselves to.

# **OVERCOMING COMPLACENCY**

How do you fight the creep of complacency? Here are some things to think about:

- Get back to how safely you once worked at a time when you recognized the hazards around you, prior to complacency setting in. That time when you always wore your personal protective equipment and always followed the safety policies in place to protect you.
- Ask co-workers if there are areas in which you may be complacent when it comes to working safely. You might be surprised by the responses you get.

WHEN OUR MINDS ARE NOT ON THE TASK AT HAND AND THE HAZARDS THAT EXIST. WE CAN DRIFT INTO THINKING ABOUT OTHER THINGS. THIS IS WHEN THE REAL DANGER CAN GET YOU. IT JUST TAKES A SPLIT SECOND.

- Refuse to take the easy way out, which is often the case when you get into a hurry or feel the pressure to get the job done. Safety policies are in place for a reason. Follow them for your protection.
- Fight the desire to rationalize why you should cut corners, which can leave you open to hazards. Saving costs or time are usual rationalizations that may sound like good ideas in the moment but are not worth the risks in the end.
- Be willing to take the extra steps to make being safe a habit that will keep you from becoming complacent in the first place. Once it becomes a habit you are less likely to become complacent when a hazard exists.

## **STAY VIGILANT**

We all must fight complacency at different times whether it is at work or some other areas in our lives. The best way to combat complacency is to self-monitor and see if there are areas where you can improve, especially when it comes to workplace safety. The good news is complacency can be overcome. With enough effort you'll always be working in a safe environment. **c** 

# ARDUT THE AUTHOR

Ronnie Freeman is safety director for Mount Pleasant Waterworks and Safety Committee chair for the Water Environmental Association of South Carolina.

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Joan Koehne

# KNOW YOUR EMPLOYMENT LAW

Here's a look at three recent labor regulations affecting today's workplace, including treatment of pregnant workers, AI in hiring and noncompete clauses /// By Joan Koehne

MPLOYMENT LAWS CHANGE over time. Employers and human resource leaders who follow the latest directives not only avoid lawsuits and fines, but also maintain a healthier, happier workplace.

Over the past year, there has been action on three labor regulations that affect U.S. employers. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission enacted the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act of 2023 and published a technical assistance document regarding artificial intelligence's impact on employment discrimination. And the Federal Trade Commission accepted public comments regarding the potential elimination of noncompete agreements.

# PREGNANT WORKERS FAIRNESS ACT

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act of 2023 took effect last June. This law requires employers with 15 or more employees to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified employees and job applicants with temporary physical or mental limitations due to pregnancy, childbirth or related conditions.

Brian Bean, executive claims consultant at R&R Insurance in Waukesha, Wisconsin, says the new law builds upon the coverage of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, which prohibited discrimination based on pregnancy, childbirth or other related medical conditions.

"This act is just a step further and requires an affirmative right for accommodation. It's not just discrimination but providing reasonable accommodations," Bean says.

Examples of pregnancy accommodations include flexible work hours; a parking space located close to the work entrance; opportunities to sit down; additional break time to rest, eat, drink water or use the bathroom; appropriately sized safety apparel and uniforms; leave or time off to recover from childbirth; and the ability to be excused from strenuous activities or activities that involve exposure to compounds not safe for pregnancy.

Bean says that many employers were already offering these accommodations, and the 2023 law now simply legalizes these common practices.

"YOU WANT TO PUT PROCEDURES IN PLACE AND LEARN ABOUT DISCRIMINATION AND OTHER EMPLOYMENT ISSUES TO AVOID PROBLEMS."

**BRIAN BEAN** 

"It treats pregnancy like a disability," he says.

Pregnant workers are subject to the same analysis as an Americans with Disabilities Act reasonable accommodations request.

### **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

Another change in 2023 was the EEOC's anti-discrimination guidance publication related to the use of software, artificial intelligence and algorithms in employment selection procedures. Current labor law prohibits the use of discriminatory selection procedures and employment tests. The EEOC's guidance on this matter doesn't carry the weight of federal law, but employers are smart to take note of it.

"You better believe, if there are lawsuits, courts are going to look at this document," Bean says.

AI can streamline the hiring process by more easily advertising jobs, reviewing applications, screening candidates and testing.

"AI is supposed to be an excellent tool to help overworked people narrow down and screen employees," Bean says. But AI becomes problematic if it disproportionately screens out a protected class, like women, minorities or people with a criminal record.

"If you have a very legitimate business reason for the selection criteria that excludes people that might be discriminatory, it's OK," Bean says. For example, recent drunk driving convictions might exclude job candidates from being hired as service technicians if the technicians would be driving a company van or truck.

However, employers without a legitimate reason for using selection criteria that excludes a protected class can get in legal trouble. For example, facial recognition software can be deemed discriminatory if it's used to analyze job candidates' emotions for desirable traits and assign more negative emotions to minority candidates.

Bean cautions against implicitly trusting technology and AI shortcuts. He tells employers who want to purchase AI products and services to carefully screen the vendors first. Evaluate all businessoperating software before purchasing. He also advises employers to audit their hiring practices or hire a third party to conduct employee selection audits.

"Ultimately, the buck will stop with you, no matter what data you use, what program you use, no matter what," he says.

Labor laws apply to AI processes just as they apply to traditional employee selection procedures.

"Is AI the savior of HR? Well, maybe," Bean says. "It's a great tool in some areas, but it's going to require some oversight, a lot of audits and a lot of reviews. You better proceed with caution."

#### **NONCOMPETE AGREEMENTS**

A final labor regulation to look at is a proposed, nationwide elimination of noncompete agreements. Noncompete agreements restrict workers who leave a job from starting a competing business or working for a competing employer. Traditionally, state governments have determined the scope of noncompete agreements. Some business leaders argue that noncompete clauses should remain under state governance. They contend that the federal government would overstep its bounds by enacting a U.S. law prohibiting the widely accepted practice.

In a Notice of Proposed Rule Making published in 2023, the FTC says noncompete clauses are an unfair method of competition. The FTC accepted public comment in 2023 on its proposed ban of noncompete clauses. According to the FTC, the clauses significantly reduce workers' wages, stifle new businesses and ideas, exploit workers and hinder economic liberty.

"The argument is these noncompete agreements have gone too far. They affect workers that they really shouldn't be used against or restrict where they go or what they do," Bean says.

Whether the FTC's proposed rule will take effect remains uncertain.

"Just because they draft it doesn't mean they'll enact it," Bean says.

He encourages employers to submit their comments to the FTC and keep an eye out for what's happening on the federal level.

"Make sure you're at least compliant with the state you're in," Bean says.

# STAY EDUCATED ON CURRENT LAW

Remaining compliant with labor laws protects workers' rights

and safeguards businesses against legal challenges. When labor law and business practices align, employers save time, money and their reputation.

Some employment law is easy to understand, while other regulations are more complex. Bean says a common mistake employers make is not asking for help in complicated employment matters. He advises employers to check with an attorney or insurance agent for guidance when faced with confusing employment regulations and governmental guidance.

"You want to put procedures in place and learn about discrimination and other employment issues to avoid problems," he says.

Employers are subject to at least two sets of rules related to fair employment: federal and state laws, and potentially local municipal labor regulations. Education is the key to keeping up with the latest employment rulings and legal precedents, Bean says. c



# PRODUCT FOCUS



# CHEMICAL AND MECHANICAL ROOT CONTROL

By Craig Mandli

# >>> CABLE MACHINES

# 1 // DURACABLE DM55

When up against a sewer line that's been infiltrated by tough tree roots, the DM55 machine from Duracable can be used. With the versatility to clear obstructions from 2- to 10-inch lines, it is suitable for municipal, commercial and residential work. The direct-drive 10-1 gearbox ratio provides all the torque needed to tackle heavy roots. A power cable feed and return on this machine makes it easy to use. It comes standard with 110 to 150 feet of 11/16-inch hollow core cable in a 26-inch reel, but the user can switch to 3/4-inch cable when needed. Duracable's lineup of tough, heat-treated and coated blades make it ready for any root removal job. 800-247-4081; www.duracable.com



The Model C dual-cable sectional drain cleaner from Electric Eel runs up to 200 feet of 1 1/4-inch, self-feeding dual cable in 8- or 10-foot sections that require no handling when rotating. It spins cable at twice the revolutions per minute of a continuous cable machine for cleaning 3- to 10-inch lines for distances up to 200 feet. One-person operation means less time and labor expense. A heavy-duty, 1/2 hp motor comes standard, and 3/4 and 1 hp motors are also available. A custom-designed gearbox ensures higher quality, lower cost and parts availability. The heavy-duty, fully adjustable safety clutch keeps cable and tool breakage to a minimum and provides overload protection. A fold-down handle allows for easy transport, storage and use in crawl spaces. Its carry handle allows for balance and easy transport. 800-833-1212; www.electriceel.com

#### 3 // MILWAUKEE TOOL M18 FUEL SEWER SECTIONAL MACHINE

Milwaukee Tool's M18 FUEL Sewer Sectional Machine with CABLE DRIVE automatic feed and retract has the power to clear tough blockages in 2- to 8-inch sewer lateral lines. The POW-ERSTATE brushless motor and REDLINK PLUS Intelligence deliver the power to clear roots up to 200 feet out, providing full power at the maximum capacity of the machine. The sewer cable machine features the CABLE DRIVE automatic feed and retract system. This system reduces user fatigue by eliminating the need to manually pull back the heavy cable from the pipes. An enclosed cable carrier ensures the best protection and mess containment during transportation and can be stacked for easier storage. The sewer sectional is compatible with ONE-KEY, so it can be wirelessly tracked, managed and secured. 800-728-3878; www.milwaukeetool.com

#### 4 // RIDGID K-4310 FXP DRUM MACHINE

The K-4310 FXP Drum Machine is RIDGID's most powerful drum machine, featuring a cable counter that provides real-time, in-pipe cable distance for faster locating and diagnostics. Ideal for residential and commercial plumbing and drain cleaning projects, its powerful brushless DC motor spins at 230 rpm and provides long-lasting runtime with less required maintenance. Clearing 3- to 10-inch lines, it is powered by the FXP Technology Platform, which provides cordless freedom and powerful performance. The cable distance tracking feature allows professionals to always know where their equipment is located within the line,

















simplifying cleaning. The enclosed quick-change drum is easily removed, allowing for easier setup and transport, while the rotating inner drum efficiently dispenses cable and reduces the chance of cable flip over. Integrated AUTOFEED Technology advances and retrieves cable up to 28 feet per minute with zero tools. 800-769-7743; www.ridgid.com

### >>> CUTTING NOZZLES

### 5 // ARTHUR PRODUCTS CNT-R-KUT G2 ELITE MAX

The Cnt-r-KUT ELITE max kit from Arthur Products is a complete rotating nozzle pipe cleaning system. Manufactured from high-grade stainless steel and an aerospace elastomer, it is designed to clean pipe using a rotating head that can be equipped with linked chain, roller chain, cable or just water jets. Three flexible lightweight centering guides in 3-, 4- and 6-inch diameters can quickly be changed in the field to stabilize and center the rotating head, yielding an excellent 360-degree internal cleaning. An optional deicing/degreasing head further enhances the tool's capabilities. 800-322-0510; www.arthurproducts.com

#### 6 // HYDRA-FLEX REVOLUTION

Cut, jet and clear pipes with the Revolution from Hydra-Flex. This all-in-one sewer jetting tool is built to cut through tough roots and blockages with its 30-degree rotating front stream. Its eight rear jets have a 10-degree angle that provides intense thrust power to seamlessly glide the nozzle through the pipe while offering a bonus clearing component along the way. The 360-degree rotating center is what sets this nozzle apart from the Reaper line. The center, rotating sub-head contains dual 57-degree rotating jets that work together to completely descale pipe walls. The sub-head maintains a consistent speed throughout its life which means you won't lose clearing power as the nozzle ages. This tool is made for 6- to 36-inch pipes. 952-808-3640; www.hydraflexinc.com

### 7 // ROOT RAT CUTTING NOZZLE

Root Rat cutting nozzles are used with jetters from 11 hp to large truck-mounted models. The cutters are made of hardened stainless steel and come with a toolbox with two interchangeable rotors — one with cables and the other with chains. The combination kit includes extra chain, cable and bearings. They need no repair or rebuilding other than bearing replacement, which can be completed in less than two minutes for under \$10 in parts. 800-288-7873; www.rootrat.net

### >>> PORTABLE JETTERS

### 8 // GENERAL PIPE CLEANERS JM-1000 MINI-JET

The combination of General Pipe Cleaners' portable JM-1000 Mini-Jet and highperformance stainless steel braid jet hose offers drain cleaning power in a small package. The jetter is available with stainless steel braid hoses with Teflon core in a variety of lengths. The durable hose also works well with the JM-1450 electric jet. It can be used to clear grease, sand and ice from small lines, sinks and laundry drains with high-pressure, wall-to-wall water spray. It packs 1,500 psi of cleaning power in a compact package, yet weighs only 23 pounds. Its rugged diamond-plate metal case safely shields the pump and motor assembly from common job site abuse. The stainless steel braid hose design smoothly slides the jet nozzle down 1 1/2- to 3-inch drainlines and more easily navigates tight bends. The 3/16inch Teflon core also reduces flow resistance, further improving small-line cleaning power. 800-245-6200; www.drainbrain.com

#### **9 // MYTANA MV84**

The MV84 jetter from MyTana efficiently cleans and clears 3- to 10-inch lines. It has a robust 800 cc Honda engine that lets the super-duty triplex pump deliver 8 gpm at 4,000 psi. With a dual-cart design and remote throttle control, it lets you jet indoors or access hard-to-reach cleanouts. The jetter cart houses the engine, super-duty triplex pump and supply buffer tank. A separate hose cart is connected with a 50-foot jumper hose and has ball valve flow control. It comes fully equipped with 250 feet of 3/8-inch jetter hose. Attach a specialty nozzle and take on roots. It is easy to load, maneuver, maintain and use. 800-328-8170; www.mytana.com

### >>> ROOT CHEMICALS

### 10 // OATEY HERCULES R-D ROOT DESTROYER

Hercules R-D Root Destroyer from Oatey is a slow-dissolving, nonacidic, noncaustic herbicide formulated to eliminate and prevent root growth in sewer lines. By preventing sump and ejector pump root damage, it eliminates overflow damage, sewage flow restriction and backup odors. It is safe to use in lines leading to septic tanks, cesspools and dry wells, and is harmless to the environment. 800-321-9532; www.oatey.com



### **11 // ROOTX**

The RootX formula foams on contact with water, which places the active root-killing ingredient on the top of the pipe where 90% of root growth occurs. Once on the roots and pipe walls it eliminates blockages caused by live roots for up to 12 months requiring annual treatments. The company supports annual treatments by sending reminder letters to the service provider's customers to contact them for another treatment. 800-844-4974; www.rootx.com



### >> ROOT CUTTERS

### 12 // SEWERPROSHOP BLUE STAR RAPTOR AND VIPER

Blue Star Raptor and Viper chain cutters from SewerProShop are made of high-grade stainless steel and are furnished with ceramic nozzle inserts. With the Raptor, choose from 4- and 6-inch rigid skids or a 6- to 12-inch flexible guide skid, along with cutting chains and carbide bits to achieve quick solutions. Viper chain cutters are designed to remove heavy obstructions caused not only by roots but also grease, mineral deposits and other solid organic material. The unit is driven by a high-performance turbine, which doesn't require any lubrication. Chains spin at speeds of 4,000 to 12,000 rpm. Multiple guide skids available in various sizes provide a service range of 4 to 48 inches. The Viper can be operated with recycled water. Chain root cutters are free from lubrication, low maintenance and have continuously adjustable guide skids for various pipe diameters and different obstructions. 877-864-9394; www.sewerproshop.com



# 13 // SHAMROCK NOZZLES BY TRITON HYDROTOOLS **CONTRACTOR DUTY ROOT SAW**

The Contractor Duty Root Saw from Shamrock Nozzles by Triton HydroTools is an improved version of the classic internally-ported, heavy-duty hydraulic power unit. This upgraded version includes ceramic-coated internal wear surfaces. This coating extends the service life of the motor and helps prevent corrosion that can degrade performance over time. This high-performance unit operates at 2,250 ft-lbs of torque in order to prevent stalling, and provides a blade rotation speed of 300 to 350 rpm for extended tooth life. This is a versatile tool



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that can be outfitted with circular saw blades, spring blades or cable rooters. It cleans pipes 6 to 18 inches in diameter and is available for 3/4-, 1- and 1 1/4-inch hose sizes. The motor operates on jetters capable of at least 50 gpm. Kits are available that provide skids and blades that can be changed to operate the root saw in multiple pipe sizes. 800-633-7696; www.shamrocktools.com

### 14 // USB-USA TURBO CHAIN CUTTERS

Heavy-duty Turbo Chain Cutters from USB-USA are tough and powerful. These cutters continuously adjust from 8- to 15-inch (Turbo S200) or 12- to 24-inch (Turbo S600) and easily fit into the pipe. Turbine technology powers the durable chain retainer on a robust body to remove roots, concrete, calcium deposits, hardened grease and tuberculation from sewer lines. They are designed to be very aggressive for the hardest materials. The beefed-up, heavy-duty cutters have double the amount of turbines driving water jets as the company's other cutters, generating tremendous cutting power. Easily adjust the cutter to within 1/16 inch by spinning the rear to make it larger or smaller. Internal 3D fluid mechanics in conjunction with one-piece ceramic nozzle inserts allow the cutter to be used with recycled or clean water. 844-285-5770; www.usb-usa.com



### >>> TRUCK/TRAILER JETTERS

### 15 // AMERICAN JETTER 58 SERIES INFERNO BURNER HOT JETTER

The 58 Series Inferno Burner Hot Jetter from American Jetter offers up to 67% more efficient heat over traditional burners, according to the maker. This fuel-saving hot water system provides power for grease cutting and deicing, utilizing a 38 hp EFI Kohler gasoline engine with flows up to 20 gpm and pressure to 5,000 psi. The rear speed control reel provides precise cleaning speeds and easy access to the jet hose with the included hose guide. Low-water shut-off stops the engine if the 220-gallon tank runs low. The optional 1-mile open-range wireless remote option features water ON/OFF, engine shutdown and hose reel control. The heavy-duty square tubing trailer has a 2-inch ball coupler and standard electric brakes. 866-944-3569; www.americanjetter.com

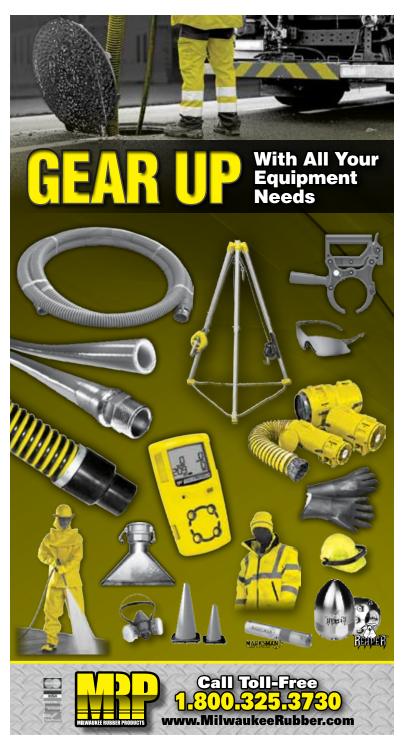


### 16 // CAM SPRAY STB3012H

The 3,000 psi STB3012H trailer-mounted drain jetter from Cam Spray includes a Honda 800 CC EFI gasoline engine with oil alert and hour meter, powering a gearbox-driven plunger pump with ceramic plungers, stainless steel valves, pressure gauge and 80-mesh water filter. The pump is protected by an unloader valve and secondary pop-off. The jetter has a power pulse feature for navigating longer runs and elbows. A DC-powered reel with jet hose has 2-1 clutch for perfect retraction speed and a foot switch for hands-free operation. The industrial coated trailer has 15-inch aluminum wheels, a 5,000-pound axle, electric brakes, 2-inch ball hitch, retractable tongue, rear-mounted lockable tool storage boxes, and a 50-foot washdown hose with pressure wash gun and nozzle. A safety strobe light, tiger tail, bullet and milling nozzle with storage box and tip cleaner, toolbox, safety vest, gloves, backflow preventer and safety glasses are included. 800-648-5011; www.camspray.com

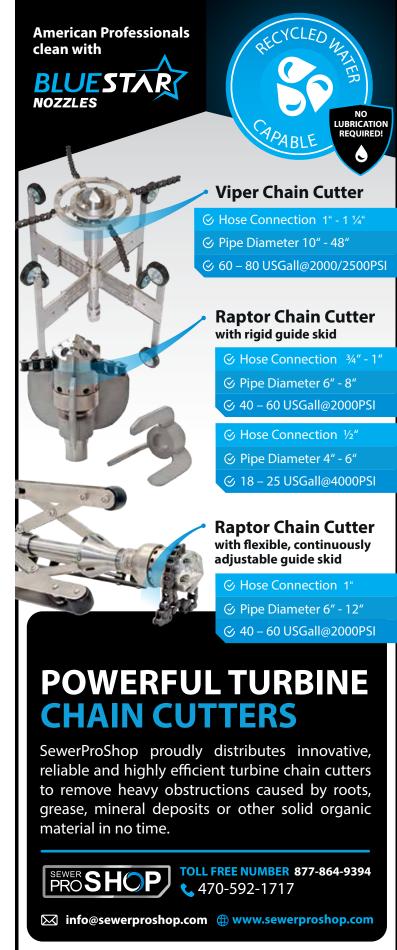


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#### 17 // GAPVAX G7 JETTER

The G7 Jetter from GapVax is built on a heavy-duty, contractor-grade NATM-certified trailer. Several engine choices, including Cummins diesel, are certified and sized appropriately for the water pump combinations. The unit's hose reel is hydraulically powered with a directdrive gearbox and variable-speed control. The hose reel offers a 3-foot (curbside) articulation from center of bearing, 180-degree rotation and a capacity of 800 feet of 3/4-inch jetter hose. The polyethylene plastic water tank is available in 300, 500, 600 or 700 gallons. The water pump is center-fed for optimum performance. The controller is interlocked with safety features that will show low fuel levels and low water, and is capable of a complete engine shutdown in an emergency. 888-442-7829; www.gapvax.com



### 18 // HI-VAC O'BRIEN 7000 SERIES HYDRO JETTERS

Hi-Vac O'Brien 7000 Series Hydro Jetters feature a robust frame and a 190-degree rotating hose reel, ensuring convenient access regardless of the trailer's parking orientation. The Tier 3 Kohler diesel engine stands out for its quiet operation, enhanced torque and extended lifespan. They include a durable and high-capacity rotomolded polyethylene 700-gallon water tank. With flow rates from 18 to 65 gpm and pressures up to 4,000 psi, these jetters excel in tackling tough lateral lines and culvert cleaning projects. The extended jetting capability on a single tank, powerful engine-pump combinations and resilient construction benefit municipalities, industrial site operators and contractors. 800-752-2400; www.obrienmfg.com



### 19 // HOTJET USA TURBO DIESEL TRAILER JETTER

HotJet USA is offering a turbo diesel-powered trailer jetter powered by Yanmar. It features 59 hp of power with true 20 gpm at 4,000 psi output in a compact, affordable package, offering 10% more power than regular 18 gpm units. Yanmar-powered units are Tier 4 compliant, are fuel-efficient and use an XL Radiator. The engines are water cooled for maximum efficiency and are easily maintained by a network of service centers nationwide. The jetters may be mounted on 5-by-12 to 5-by-16-foot decks with a choice of single or tandem axle. They are available in cold or hot/cold operation and will clean drainlines up to 24 inches. 800-624-8186; www.hotjetusa.com



### 20 // JETTERS NORTHWEST EAGLE-200/4010-DWR

The Eagle-200/4010-DWR midsize trailer jetter from Jetters Northwest produces 10 gpm, 4,000 psi performance with full wireless remote control or jetting on/off, engine on/throttle/off, and reel-windup functionality. It is an upgraded version of the previous 4009 model and comes with an enclosed Kawasaki 31 hp fuel-injected/liquid-cooled engine on an industrial-duty trailer with brakes for safety and a beefy A-frame tongue, allowing it to be towed when full of water. Flat-top fenders allow for additional mounting surface, and standard aluminum wheels give a sharp appearance. It features a super-duty triplex UDOR USA pump, 12-volt powered hose reel with adjustable windup speed, 200-gallon water tank, large 60-inch lockable tool storage bin, 400 feet of jetting hose on the main 12-volt power reel, 100 feet of 3/4-inch watersupply hose on a second reel, adjustable pulsation-control and four jetting nozzles. Specialty root/grease nozzles and other options are available. 877-901-1936; www.jettersnorthwest.com







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#### 21 // MONGOOSE JETTERS BY SEWER EQUIPMENT MODEL 184

The Mongoose Jetters by Sewer Equipment Model 184 comes with a run-dry pump offering 18 gpm at 4,000 psi, a tubular steel frame, corrosion-resistant prepainted subassemblies, state-ofthe-art controls, strong hose reel and high-quality gas engine. It is suitable for drain cleaning and sewer jetting, remote access locations, mainlines up to 12 inches in diameter, and commercial and industrial lines. The trailer unit comes with a water tank capacity of 300 gallons and standard hose reel capacity of 600 feet of 1/2-inch hose. The trailer setup consists of a 6,000-pound-rated single-axle trailer, and the addition of a wireless remote control system makes this equipment a true one-person operation. It is also available as a van pack or truck-mounted unit. 815-835-5566; www.sewerequipment.com



### 22 // SPARTAN TOOL WARRIOR

With fiberglass casing to protect and silence the entire machine, Spartan Tool's Warrior trailer jetter provides 4,000 psi at 18 gpm to clear almost any line, according to the manufacturer. The 180-degree pivoting hose reel and optional four-function remote control allow technicians to handle the tightest spots. With pulsation and a full antifreeze system, it is designed to remove tough clogs in any weather. Its design includes room to customize it with a company logo and colors, and it provides a 300-gallon towing capacity. 800-435-3866; www.spartantool.com



### 23 // SUPER PRODUCTS SUPERJET

The SuperJet truck-mounted jetter from Super Products is used to blast debris to clear blockages and maintain sewer lines when vacuuming extraction is not required. It uses a strong and smooth single-piston water pump to create consistently high water pressure. Units come standard with rotationally molded polyethylene water tanks in a modular design to accommodate water capacities ranging from 1,080 to 3,240 gallons. They offer standard curbside and street-side fill. The hose reel has 1,000 feet of 1-inch-diameter sewer hose, 200-degree rotation and a digital monitor. This allows operators to work efficiently while positioned out of traffic and away from other hazards. The monitor displays a hose footage count, offers 20 saved settings for hose reel payout, and is designed with LED panel lights to enable readability in a variety of environments. 800-837-9711; www.superproducts.com



### 24 // TROJAN WORLDWIDE TWW3000D DIESEL TRAILER JET

The TWW3000D Diesel Trailer Jet from Trojan Worldwide comes mounted on a tandemaxle trailer with a steel diamond plate deck and braking system. The power unit consists of a diamond-plate enclosed 60 hp Perkins diesel engine with a PTO-style transmission and an AR water pump pushing 22 gpm at 3,000 psi. The rear of the unit includes a hydraulic hose reel with 500 feet of 3/4-inch hose and includes a speed control for the forward/reverse function. Water is supplied by a 525-gallon tank that is fed from a 100-foot fill hose or the included hydrant fill application. The open trailer layout makes accessing all of the components easier and less timeconsuming. 800-392-4902; www.trojanworldwide.com C O N T | N U E D >>









Information •

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#### 25 // VAC-CON VJ SERIES

The VJ Series of jetters from Vac-Con is designed to provide operators with an economical, portable and powerful system in two configurations. The VJ375 offers a 375-gallon water capacity on a single-axle trailer. The VJ750 boasts 750-gallon water capacity on a tandem-axle trailer. Standard features include Tier 4 diesel engine, cold-weather recirculation and air purge system, hydraulically driven hose reel and a reel-mounted, weatherproof electronic control panel. Units are available in multiple water pump pressure and flow configurations. Optional features include gas engine, wireless remote and an antifreeze tank system for cold-weather use. 904-284-4200; www.vac-con.com



### 26 // VACALL ALLJET

Vacall's AllJet truck-mounted jetter is an easy-to-operate, efficient sewer root maintenance machine. The hydraulically powered triplex plunger water pump is capable of 87 gpm at 2,000 psi with other power options available. The hose reel telescopes out 54 inches from a retracted position and swivels 200 degrees to properly direct the 600-foot jetting hose. It uses a single-engine PTO design and a 1,600-gallon UV-resistant polyethylene water tank. Operator-friendly features include four locking aluminum tool storage cabinets, a rear-view camera, roll-up doors and a washdown system with options including LED lighting packages, an extendable rear canopy, and a heating and insulation package inside the all-aluminum rear compartment. 800-382-8302; www.yacall.com



### 27 // VACTOR RAMJET

The newest model Ramjet from Vactor provides greater precision, increased storage options and superior cold weather protection, making jobs safer, easier and more efficient for the operator. IntuiTouch controls provide greater precision and enhanced productivity. Improved water plumbing adds even more storage options. It includes an IntuiTouch control system with one-touch activation, low-maintenance Jet Rodder water pump, Park-N-Clean technology for faster setup at the job site, a Modul-Flex design for maximum capacities and optimum weight distribution, a stainless steel water tank that offers greater strength and corrosion protection, and superior cold weather operation that includes separate storage for wet and dry items. 815-672-3171; www.vactor.com c



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# PRODUCT NEWS



# PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

# **CAMERA SYSTEM STREAMLINES CLEANING AND INSPECTION PROCESS**

By Craiq Mandli

Municipalities are constantly on the lookout for ways to optimize budget and increase efficiency. Can-Ex Technologies provides cities and towns with the means to efficiently monitor and survey sewer system assets by centralizing their inspection data through use of the ZIPCAM 360.

"We saw the current process of inspecting sewers as inefficient. Right now, you open the manhole to clean the sewer, jet it, close it, then reopen it to inspect," says Louis Légaré-Lapointe, Can-Ex Technologies cofounder and one of the inventors of

the ZIPCAM 360. "We thought that in the best of worlds, you should be able to do everything in one go, to keep the road closures as short as possible. Not only can the ZIPCAM 360 do everything while only opening the manhole once, it does it at a fast speed, with durability and inspection quality."

The hydrovac nozzle camera produces a high-end inspection at a much faster speed and much cheaper price than traditional methods, according to Légaré-Lapointe. It works by recording a 360-degree panoramic video without needing manual operation inside the pipe. The distance is displayed right on the video file, meaning the inspection videos it produces can be NASSCO PACP-compliant.



"Comparing it to a nozzle cam wouldn't do it justice because it offers features such as pan-and-tilt on the video and is centered in the pipe," he says. "You can't compare it to a crawler either, since it collects the entire pipe in panoramic, 360-degree 4K HD video, is faster and it requires no manual operation and no truckmounted inspection unit. It's the best of both worlds, combining the speed and ease of use of a nozzle camera with the accuracy and quality of a robot crawler."

The unit effectively streamlines the cleaning and inspection process. Inspections are done passively, as a byproduct of regularly scheduled sewer jetting. Inspection footage is compiled for every pipe that gets cleaned, and the workflow becomes even simpler if the user adopts ZIP suite's integrated workflow, with web-based analysis software and PACP coding services.

"Since it is very securely connected to your jetter hose by our quick-connect propulsion nozzle, it can work just fine in heavy flow, high water head and high slope environments without needing to worry about being able to get to where it needs to go and making it back out," says Légaré-Lapointe. info@canex.tech; www.canex.tech

### 1 // HAMMERHEAD TRENCHLESS HELIAM SCRIM LINER

The Heliam Scrim liner by HammerHead is a reinforced liner that minimizes longitudinal stretch and ensures accurate inversion lengths. It is engineered to reduce overshooting, allowing users to hit an exact mark without going into the main or needing to remove excess liner. The product requires lower inversion pressure, making it easier to invert on site. The Heliam can be used with all curing methods, a trait that is reflected in the name: heat (HE), light cure (LI) and ambient (AM). Currently available in diameters of 4-inch and 6-inch, Heliam Scrim is suitable for straight-shot applications and bends up to 45 degrees. The product will be available in either dry rolls or pre-wet-out options and sold in two roll lengths: 165 feet and 330 feet. 800-331-6653; www.hammerheadtrenchless.com 















### 2 // TNEMEC SERIES 108 AND 109 PROBOND PROTECTIVE COATINGS

Themec launched Series 108 and Series 109 ProBond, the newest epoxy penetrating sealers in its family of high-performance coatings. These products are designed as a go-to problem-solving primer in the epoxy sealer arena. The coatings offer new performance and convenience features including extended pot life and recoat windows, low-temperature cure, shipping and packaging advantages, and more. The products were designed to adhere to a multitude of substrates, including old finishes, and are frequently used as an overcoating primer. Series 108 and 109 are solvent-free coatings applied at a low film thickness to reduce stress and weight on old tightly adhered coatings, creating a reliable foundation to accept high-performance epoxy and polyurethane finishes. 800-863-6321; www.tnemec.com

### 3 // JETSTREAM OF HOUSTON 2000 SERIES UNX BARESHAFT PUMP

Jetstream of Houston's 2000 Series UNx Bareshaft pump is the smallest pump in Jetstream's seven-series line. The 2000 Series was developed as a compact option for industrial applications and offers minimal maintenance and maximum efficiency for jobs such as rig washing, petrochemical cleaning, hydrostatic testing, chemical injection, food processing and more. Compatible with up to 75 hp engines, the pump boasts flow capabilities of 6,000 to 15,000 psi and up to 20 gpm. Its triplex plunger design consists of three crankshaft-propelled plungers, offering powerful and smooth operation on the most demanding duty cycles. UNx fluid-end technology offers versatility by enabling a quick and easy three-step valve change process in the field to accommodate different pressure and flow requirements for a wide range of applications. 800-231-8192; www.waterblast.com

### 4 // AQUARIUS SPECTRUM IQ100B WIRELESS ACOUSTIC SENSOR

Aquarius Spectrum's iQ100B is a new wireless acoustic sensor that enables listening to the pipe, performing leak survey and identifying leaks. It seamlessly connects to the AQS cloud via a user-friendly Android or iOS mobile application on a smartphone or tablet. The iQ100B allows you to hear the audio recording in real time using the registered audio speaker (the local speaker or a wireless headset). Collected samples can be uploaded, viewed and analyzed in a designated module in AQS-SYS portal. The recorded audio is sent to the AQS cloud for indepth analysis, which classifies the audio as leak/no-leak. The sensor comes in a robust IP68 rigid plastic enclosure, meeting the safety, radio and environmental standards (UL94, CE/FCC, IP68). The internal rechargeable battery has the capacity to last for five complete survey days between recharges, with an average survey of eight hours/day). A RGB LED indicator visually indicates states of operation by color and sequence. www.ags-systems.com c



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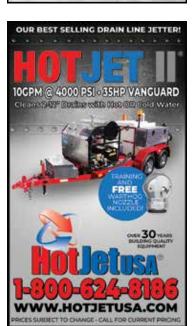
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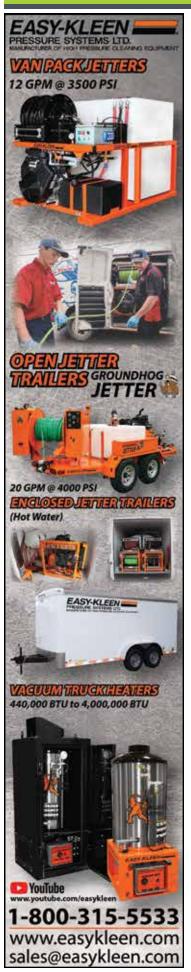








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# INDUSTRY NEWS

# Zoom Drain names Joseph Schneeweis VP of franchise operations

Zoom Drain has appointed longtime franchising management expert Joseph Schneeweis as vice president of franchise operations to lead the company through its next phase of



Joseph Schneeweis

growth. Schneeweis comes to Zoom Drain after several years as the franchise operations manager of ServiceMaster, an umbrella franchisor with seven brands consisting of more than 3,200 franchisees across 4,600 locations.

### Condux International announces new CEO

Condux International announced the promotion of James J. Radous III as chief executive officer and Ryan Schrick as new chief financial officer. Radous previously held the chief revenue officer position at Condux. Before



James Radous

that, Radous served as business unit vice president for Federal Signal Corp. where he provided executive leadership, strategic planning and execution across the \$1 billion publicly traded corporation in the Environmental Safety Group. Prior to Federal Signal Corp., he served as president and CEO of UniCarriers Americas Corp., and as corporate officer of UniCarriers Corp. in Tokyo, Japan.

# Trelleborg opens first manufacturing facility in Vietnam

Trelleborg Sealing Solutions started production at its first manufacturing facility in Vietnam, an advanced 86,111-square-foot facility located in Long Thánh. It produces O-rings and customdesigned engineered molded components in a wide range of elastomer materials using the latest compression and injection molding technology and plate heat exchanger gaskets. The manufacturing facility in Long Thánh joins the existing Customer Solution Center which supports local requirements from offices in Ho Chi Minh City.

# Reline America partners with East Coast Infrastructure

Reline America has partnered with East Coast Infrastructure, a certified Micro SWaM business. Founded in 2016, East Coast Infrastructure has established itself as a partner for municipalities and general contractors in the Tidewater region. With a focus on providing high-quality infrastructure solutions, the company has now decided to expand its services by becoming a certified Reline America Alphaliner installer.

### PPI names new committee chairs, releases new technical document

Joshua Goldberg, business development manager of Asahi/America, has been appointed chair of the Technical Committee of the Plastics Pipe Institute. PPI is the North American trade association representing the plastics pipe industry, and Asahi/America is a member company of PPI. Goldberg has nearly 25 years' experience and has earned a master's degree in polymer chemistry from the University of Oregon. PPI also appointed Jason McKinnon, director of engineering services, Viega, as the chair of its Education Committee. McKinnon has more than 20 years' engineering



Joshua Goldberg



and training experience developing new curriculum and training modules and holds a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering technology plus an MBA from the University of Massachusetts.

PPI announced it has also published a new document that provides the technical basis for comparing PE 100-RC to PE4710 pressure pipe. Called PPI TN-68, Historical Review of the PE 100-RC Concept - How PE4710 Compares to PE 100-RC, it provides a perspective on the slow crack growth resistance requirements for the PE 100-RC designation in comparison with the North American PE4710 designation. TN-68 can be found on the Technical Notes page of the PPI website: www.plasticpipe.org.

### APS partners with Rich Galgano and Jake Galgano

American Pipelining Supplies announced the acquisition of a minority ownership stake by Rich Galgano and Jake Galgano of Carefree Capital. In a release, Jake Saltzman, CEO of APS, says, "We are thrilled to join forces with the Galganos. Our combined vision and leadership will introduce a new dynamic of innovation and growth at APS. Leveraging the Galganos' manufacturing, sales and support expertise, coupled with our strong focus on industry education and training, positions us to elevate our client services to unprecedented levels. We are excited for what the future holds as we embark on this transformative journey together."

# Super Products signs new dealer agreement

Super Products has signed with Cleveland-based MTech as a new dealer partner. MTech will serve the municipalities and contractors for the Camel, SuperJet and Mud Dog vacuum truck and hydroexcavation truck product lines in Ohio and Michigan. RNOW of West Allis, Wisconsin, will retain responsibility for municipalities in the western half of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. c





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