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*Alabama plumber creates
a new business model built
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Profile: Supply & Command

Alabama plumber creates a new business model built for efficiency and productivity.

By Ken Wysocky



ON THE COVER

Josh Jackson (left) and Jamarcus Hughes of Fayette Drain & Sewer Service prepare to set a new sink in place during a complete plumbing system installation at a rural Alabama cabin. (Photography by Jeff and Meggan Haller)

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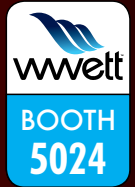
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THE MAGAZINE YOU REQUESTED

Plumber gives a voice to the people who are moving this industry forward

Written by Luke Laggis

We officially launched *Plumber* as an online-only publication in January 2015. After receiving a lot of positive feedback and continually being asked if we were going to launch a print edition, we're doing just that.

In the publishing world, that's backward — completely contrary to the current trend. Print is supposed to be dead, but you're proving that's absolutely not the case.

As tradesmen, you've certainly seen trends come

and go in the plumbing world, too. But through all the trends — new tools, equipment, system configurations and market demands — a few things will never go out of style or fade in value: quality work, ethical business practices, and great customer service. Those are the attributes we at *Plumber* value and will highlight for you in these pages every month.

Plumber, like everything we do at COLE Publishing, is about people. It's about plumbers — not pipes and fixtures. Sure, we feature the latest tools and equipment, but we give them context and explain how plumbers are using those tools to build their businesses and solve customers' problems.

It starts with our monthly contractor profile, giving you direct insight into how your peers have built their businesses and what they're doing to move them forward. No one gives you a better look at real success stories and how those lessons translate to your own business. And make no mistake, we're here to help you grow your business.

Our other regular features — Industry Insider, On the Road, In the Shop, First Responders and Smart Business — follow the same mission: providing clear examples of what's worked for other plumbing contractors, what hasn't, and how you can make those lessons work for you.

Of course, there are other pieces of the *Plumber* puzzle, from this column to case studies and industry news. There's also a wealth of complementary content at Plumbermag.com, along with a public forum where you can seek advice, offer opinions, or just comment on what you're seeing in the field and on these pages. Think of it as an online watercooler where conversation is welcome.

Most importantly, I hope this magazine connects with you on a level that makes you want to comment and get involved. To that end, I'm always interested in what you have to say. If you have questions, comments or suggestions, feel free to send them my way. You can email me at editor@plumbermag.com.

I hope you enjoy the magazine. ■

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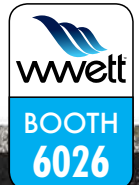
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A Bigger Role

APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM HELPS WOMEN STAKE BIGGER CLAIM IN PLUMBING INDUSTRY

Tasha Lawrence started off by answering phones and scheduling calls for a small service plumbing shop. After doing that for four years she entered a plumbing apprenticeship program and is now a journeyworker in the fabrication shop. >> plumbermag.com/featured

Scamming Customers

PLUMBER WHO NEARLY LOST HIS LIFE WASN'T ALONE

An Oregon plumber who came close to losing his life when his boss asked him to break a sewer pipe that turned out to be a gas line wasn't alone. Other former employees have since said they received similar messages. >> plumbermag.com/featured

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On the Road

COOL PLUMBER TRUCKS: TIM O'NEILL

Tim O'Neill, a fourth-generation plumber in Seattle, shows off his 1935 Ford panel van that is identical to the one his great-grandfather worked out of when the company first started. Check out more Cool Plumber Trucks on our website. >> plumbermag.com/featured



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Fayette Drain & Sewer owner Mark Vice outside the company shop in downtown Fayette, Alabama.

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SUPPLY & COMMAND

Alabama plumber creates a new business model built for efficiency and productivity

Fayette Drain & Sewer Service Inc., Fayette, Alabama



FOUNDED	2000
OWNERS	Mark and Melissa Vice
EMPLOYEES	12
SPECIALTIES	commercial and residential plumbing, drain cleaning, septic tank and grease trap pumping, and natural gas pipework
SERVICE AREA	60-mile radius around Fayette
WEBSITE	www.fayettedrainandsewer.com

Written by Ken Wysocky

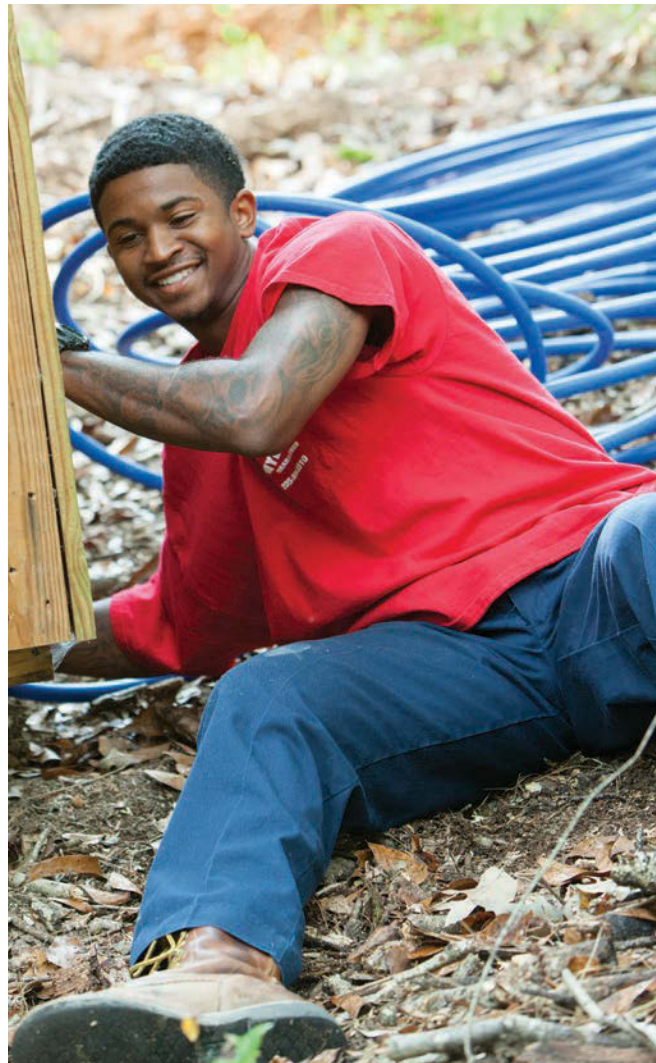
Photography by Jeff and Meggan Haller

Master plumber Mark Vice likes to do things on his own terms. That independent streak is vividly reflected in Vice Plumbing Supply, a store he opened in downtown Fayette, Alabama, to boost efficiency and reduce operating expenses at the other business he co-owns: Fayette Drain & Sewer Service.

In one respect, Vice is a lot like any other plumber: He hates to see his technicians waste precious time waiting for repair parts at plumbing supply houses. He also dislikes paying retail prices for those parts. But unlike most plumbers, Vice decided to do something about it. So several years ago, he took a radical step, buying land and building a 5,100-square-foot plumbing supply store. The building includes service bays in the rear for servicing and repairing Fayette Drain vehicles and equipment.

“It came to the point where we had two or three trucks sitting at a local hardware store every morning for 30 minutes,” says Vice, whose company does residential and commercial plumbing, excavating, drain cleaning, and septic and grease trap pumping, plus natural gas pipework. “Not only were we losing all that time at the store, we’d also waste time running back and forth to it to get parts during the day. I’m guessing it was costing me at least 30 minutes every time a service technician had to run to get, say, a 50-cent part ... and in most cases, you can’t charge a customer for that lost time.”

Vice also estimates he was paying about \$150,000 to \$200,000 a year for plumbing parts, thanks to a 40 to 50 percent markup compared to the wholesale prices he now pays for parts. He says he also sells repair parts to do-it-yourself homeowners and some local contractors.



Jamarcus Hughes of Fayette Drain & Sewer feeds a new PEX waterline under the floor of a cabin outside Sulligent, Alabama.



Shawn Leonard (left) and Justin Simmons install the plumbing on a new sink before setting it in place.

“We’ve been running the store for four years now and it’s paying for the mortgage and the land,” Vice says. “It’s been a great investment for us. It’s a great location. Now we have a quick (employee) meeting every morning, then they get their parts, get in their trucks and head out to their jobs.”

DRIVEN TO SUCCEED

Vice says running what effectively amounts to his own private supply depot reflects his upbringing as a country boy who was raised to do things on his own. “I don’t like to wait for someone else to do things,” he explains. “If you depend on someone else to do things and you have to wait, you’re losing money.

“I look at it as being self-sufficient,” he continues.

“I’m guessing it was costing me at least 30 minutes every time a service technician had to run to get, say, a 50-cent part ... and in most cases, you can’t charge a customer for that lost time.”

“Before this, if I needed a water heater on a Sunday morning, for instance, I’d have to call the hardware store and see if the owner could meet me and get me one. Sometimes he could and sometimes he couldn’t. Now I just run out to the shop, grab one, throw it on the truck and go. It all goes back to convenience. I like things ready to go and right there when I need them, especially since this business is so unpredictable.”

Currently, the store is only marginally profitable, but Vice looks at it as an investment. He says the money he used to spend at supply shops now covers the mortgage for the new building. “When I put a pen to it and calculated the wholesale costs versus the retail costs, it has worked out great,” he says. “And after we pay off the note in about five or six years, the store will be more profitable.”

For tax purposes, Fayette Drain and Vice Plumbing operate as separate corporate entities. And because the store sells supplies to the general public, it has to pay state and local sales taxes. “Vice Plumbing charges Fayette Drain for all the parts,” Vice explains, which also cuts into the profits. “But we needed a shop, too. So now we have a situation where Vice Plumbing pays for the mortgage and Fayette Drain lives rent free in the building. Basically we built a shop and the store pays for the building.”

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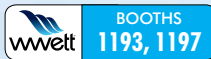


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DIVERSIFIED SERVICES

Vice started his company in 2000 by primarily focusing on unclogging drains. After he earned a master plumber's license in 2001, he entered the plumbing market. He wanted to diversify his customer base and bring in more steady business.

"Fayette is a small town, so to survive, you have to do a little bit of everything," says Vice, who co-owns the company with his wife, Melissa. "If you just specialized in drain cleaning, you'd starve to death. Not only that, but when someone calls you to clean a drain, they assume you're also a plumber who can fix a leaky faucet, too.

"So if it's got water running through it, we go after it," he adds. "The thought of calling someone else to do something that I can provide to our customers is awful."

Today, Fayette Drain receives about 30 percent of its revenue from plumbing repair, 35 percent from drain cleaning and 35 percent from septic system and grease trap services. And thanks to its diversified customer base, the company has grown steadily since its inception. The company now employs 12 people and owns a sizeable fleet of equipment that includes three service vans, two mini-excavators, a trailer-mounted water jetter, numerous drain cleaning machines, several pipeline inspection camera systems, and two vacuum trucks.

PERSEVERANCE PAYS OFF

There was a time when buying trucks and equipment seemed like a pipe dream to Vice, who worked in a cotton mill for about 11 years before taking a job as a technician at the local Roto-Rooter

"I gave out 3,000 business cards my first year alone and asked people if there was anything I could do for them. I even painted someone's house because we didn't have enough plumbing work."



Melissa Vice rings up parts for Justin Simmons (left) and Will Byars at Vice Plumbing Supply in Fayette, Alabama. Fayette Drain & Sewer owner Mark Vice opened the supply shop to help his plumbing business operate more efficiently.

MORE EQUIPMENT EQUALS HIGHER PROFITS

To maximize revenue, Mark Vice — the co-owner of Fayette Drain & Sewer Service Inc. with his wife, Melissa — prefers to avoid subcontracting work whenever possible. As such, part of his business model includes buying two of each kind of machine whenever possible.

“If I have one excavator on a pipe replacement job, for example, and I get another call for a job that requires an excavator, I can’t stand the thought of pulling that first excavator off and sending it to the other job and having nothing for an emergency backup,” he says. “As I went along, I wanted two sets of trucks, two excavators and so forth so there’d always be a backup.

“When you’re in the emergency service business, that’s where you make your money,” he adds. “If there’s a whole building shutdown and a customer says, ‘I need you now,’ I want equipment at my disposal so we can do timely and quality work. I don’t want to have to depend on someone else to be there for me when I need it.”

A wide array of equipment also ensures additional revenue streams. “After most jobs, I’ve made money off unclogging a drainline, I’ve made money on cameraing the line and if needed, I’ve made money digging up the drainline and replacing it,” Vice says.

Vice also continually reinvests in equipment that improves efficiency — and its close cousin, profitability. A good example is RIDGID ProPress

tools, which he says can dramatically reduce the time it takes to fix a 2-inch copper line, for example.

“Before, it would take us three to possibly four hours to sweat the pipes and put them back together,” he explains. “With ProPress, once you find the leak, you can have the water turned back on within 30 minutes. You just slide on the fitting and crimp it and it’s almost 100 percent leak free. Sure, it’s a \$3,000 crimping machine, but cutting out two hours of plumbing saves us time and reduces customer costs — and that helps us differentiate our company from competitors.

“In the plumbing business, you have to have the latest in equipment and technology,” he adds.

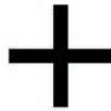
Vice also praises the SeeSnake pipeline inspection cameras, which save time by helping technicians accurately diagnose drainline problems. “It turns potentially large jobs into smaller jobs, which significantly reduces the cost to customers by eliminating all the guesswork,” he says. “It also allows you to develop the best plan for a repair.”

The SeeSnake also helps Vice get more work referrals from small municipalities around Fayette, for whom his company does work. “The city officials we work for know people in their towns and recommend us to their customers,” he says. “If you keep those city guys happy, they’ll keep sending you more and more work.”



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operation. He worked there for four years, gaining valuable experience. When the franchise encountered financial trouble, he decided to strike off on his own.

"I bought a service van and some used drain cleaning equipment and started going door to door in Fayette, handing out business cards and begging for work," he recalls. "I was flat broke at the time and was lucky to find a banker who loaned me \$7,000 to buy the van and drain machines.

"I did a lot of footwork — and a lot of praying," he says. "I gave out 3,000 business cards my first year alone and asked people if there was anything I could do for them. I even painted someone's house because we didn't have enough plumbing work." After three months, Vice was seriously questioning his business prospects. "I knew one thing, though: I didn't want to go back and work in a factory again. I loved service work and dealing with people. ... I was driven by my fear of going back to a plant."

Then fate intervened with a cold spell that generated a lot of work repairing broken lines. After six months, Vice had made enough money to pay off the \$7,000 loan, and things took off from there. "Business just exploded," he says. "I couldn't believe it. People who I'd given business cards to just started calling with jobs. We're thankful that the Lord sent us a hard freeze."

By 2008, the company employed about five

workers, then six. Vice expanded into industrial cleaning and cleaning drainlines in apartment complexes. As the company's reputation grew, he pushed for more commercial business. "Residential work is great, but it's very unpredictable," he points out. "You might get 10 calls today and just two tomorrow and 15 two days from now. But apartment complexes and restaurants provide steadier work. You're not going to pump a lot of septic tanks when it's dry, but you'll pump out grease traps whether it's wet or dry."

Vice says he tries to get commercial customers — especially the owners of restaurants and apartment complexes — to buy into the concept of routine maintenance cleanings, because they're easier to

"If people get an answering machine when they call, most times they're probably going to call someone else. You have to value every phone call because every time you miss one, you miss out on at least \$100 in work."



The Fayette Drain & Sewer crew includes (from left) Justin Simmons, Jerry "Uncle Jerry" House, Melissa Vice, Harrison Kummer, Mark Vice, Will Byars, Jamarcus Hughes, Russell Oswald, Josh Jackson, Shawn Leonard and Jeff Goree.



schedule than emergency calls. He does not ask for formal signed contracts, just verbal agreements. "We want customers to be able to drop us at any time if they're not happy with our work," he explains. "We don't want them to feel trapped by a written contract — just pleased with our service."


EQUIPMENT MATTERS

On the plumbing and drain cleaning side of the business, the company relies on three Chevrolet service vans with KUV bodies made by Knapheide Manufacturing, plus two Chevrolet service trucks. Each van is equipped with three drain cleaning machines made by Duracable Manufacturing; a RIDGID SeeSnake pipeline inspection system; and a pipeline locator made by Pipehorn Utility Tool Co.

The company also owns a trailer-mounted water jetter (4,000 psi at 18 gpm) made by US Jetting; two mini-excavators made by Kubota Tractor Corp.; a Caterpillar backhoe/loader; and two dump trucks with chassis made by Mack Trucks and Chevrolet and dump bodies built by Ox Bodies. On the septic side, the company owns two vacuum trucks built by Abernethy Welding & Repair Inc. One truck features a 2,500-gallon steel tank and a Jurop/Chandler water-cooled pump. The other truck features a 2,500-gallon steel tank built by Keith Huber Corporation and a 350 cfm pump made by Power-Flo Pumps & Systems.

▼ Josh Jackson installs a new 4-inch PVC drainline below the floor of a cabin.



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Jeff Goree, Josh Jackson and Harrison Kummer (from left) work on a waterline repair outside a home in Fayette, Alabama.

Of course, all the great machinery in the world isn't worth much without also providing quality service. Vice says that Fayette Drain provides a high level of customer satisfaction through great employees and a rather simple philosophy: Always answer the phone.

"When people can't flush their toilet (because of a backup), they want someone and they want someone right away," Vice explains. "So when they call, they want to talk to someone, not an answering machine. They want to be assured that someone is going to come and fix their problem."

As such, Fayette Drain contracts with a 24-hour answering service that runs from 5 p.m. to 7 a.m. "It's a great investment," he adds. "If people get an answering machine when they call, most times they're probably going to call someone else. You have to value every phone call because every time you miss one, you miss out on at least \$100 in work. The answering service costs about \$160 a month, so it easily pays for itself with, say, one septic tank pumping job."

Looking back, Vice says that despite the extremely tough times during the early years, he has no regrets about starting his own business. "When you start something from scratch ... you eat, breath and sleep it. It's basically all I do, other than family and God. If I could do it all over again, I still wouldn't do anything else." ■

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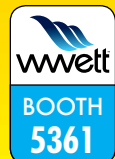


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SERVICE AND COMMUNICATION

Plumbing is about more than what you do on site, it's about treating the customer right

Written by William Heinselmann

CUSTOMER ASSURANCE IS KEY

Beyond pricing specifics, you should also inform your customers of insurance policies and professional plumbing licensing. Home and commercial property owners want to know they're working with a dependable, trained and fully insured plumber.

Offering services without a license or liability insurance isn't in the best interest of your customers. The work you do must be more than just what the customer needs — it must also be covered if things go wrong on the job. If you can't offer that, don't take a single plumbing job until you can.

DON'T BE A JERK

Above all else, excellent customer service in the plumbing industry, and any industry for that matter, comes down to just treating customers with the right kind of respect and professionalism they would expect of a service professional. Don't be a jerk. Whether you're working with a new or return customer, always listen openly to what they have to say, and hear their feedback.

If a customer's house is flooding and they call your company for emergency help, take pride in that fact alone, listen to their problem, and walk them through exactly what they should do to stop the issue from developing further. Don't be rude and don't downplay their concerns. Address callers and customers alike directly; peace of mind and trust should be just as much a part of your services as plumbing expertise.

SERVICE THAT GOES BEYOND ON-SITE WORK

One of the best pieces of advice I can give aspiring plumbing professionals is to provide your

One of the best pieces of advice I can give aspiring plumbing professionals is to provide your customer base value beyond work done on location. Your relationship with clients shouldn't end once you walk out their doors.

Professional plumbing organizations have more duties than they realize when it comes to home and commercial pipe repair. Excellent work and customer satisfaction are the mark of a professional plumbing package, and the latter can't be achieved without high-quality service and communication.

The best plumbing service teams are those that offer more than just great work, but also outstanding customer service. You could do the best work of any plumber in your region, but your business will ultimately fall behind if you don't treat your customers right.

There are some core principles and practices all professionals in the plumbing service industry should follow — the how-to on treating each and every customer right.

KEEP YOUR PRICING TRANSPARENT

When working with customers and providing pricing estimates, include all costs involved in a given project. Don't tack on unexpected labor costs that catch the customer off guard; let them know the total amount they'll be paying, and inform them of any other costs or work before you complete that work.

Customers are more comfortable working with plumbing teams that offer a flat rate for their services, based on the job type requested. Hourly fees come with a stigma and broad pricing window that makes some customers wary, or worse, untrusting, of your services. Offer a flat rate including all foreseeable costs, and inform customers beforehand if additional work may be required. Don't stick them with costs you didn't include in initial estimates without telling them first.

Additionally, don't just offer guarantees — fulfill them. If there's an issue with work you have completed and you offer a guarantee, live up to the mistake and resolve the problem on the house. Customers want to know they won't be paying extra due to a minor mistake on their plumber's behalf. If you slip up on the job (which happens sometimes, no matter how well trained you might be), deal with the problem honestly and promptly.

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customer base value beyond work done on location. Your relationship with clients shouldn't end once you walk out their doors. The best way to bring one-time customers back is by helping them in ways beyond on-site labor.

Do you feature FAQs, handy DIY plumbing guides or informative videos on your plumbing service website? These are great ways to provide added value outside of physical work, while also building rapport with customers. It's a win-win situation for both you and your clients.

Customers shop online when looking for people to service their home or property. A few bad user experiences lead to bad reviews, and bad reviews breed nothing but bad business. I hope that by following these tips, you will be able to improve the way you work with customers, and, in turn, the way they think of your business. ■

William Heinselmann is the owner of Express Sewer & Drain in Rancho Cordova, California.

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BETTER FLEET MANAGEMENT

Sophisticated equipment maintenance reporting options will uncover your true cost of ownership

Written by Ed Wodalski

The question isn't why should you use vehicle maintenance software for your plumbing service truck fleet, but why not? Sure, you can store data on an Excel spreadsheet, file drawer or even a shoebox, but why would you?

Nathaniel Cochran, director of operations for Dwyer Plumbing, handles dispatching, IT and long-term strategy for the Alexandria, Virginia, company and its 30 employees. He's also in charge of managing the company's fleet of 28 vehicles, which includes service vans, compressors and trailers.

"We had been keeping information in Excel, but we really didn't have great records," he says. "It wasn't hard to use, but it didn't put out as much information as the fleet software, like scheduling reminders." Approximately a year ago, Cochran went shopping for a program that would keep tabs on service and fuel mileage, and provide preventive maintenance reminders.

The program he chose enables him to share inputting, service and repair data. "I can give a couple other people access so they can update the information themselves rather than having it cross my desk," he says. "We can pull up the maintenance software from our phones, which helps when I'm doing a physical inspection of the vans — just enter it in from the parking lot."

Cochran says his insurance provider suggested



A good fleet management program will help you stay on top of regular maintenance and catch small problems before major repairs are required.

going the maintenance software route. "He said some contractors he works with, the only record they have of their vehicles is the insurance schedule, which is not a particularly good way to know about the condition of your fleet." What Cochran finds most beneficial is knowing which vehicles are costing the most to repair and should be replaced.

CHOICES, CHOICES

Ready for a test drive? A quick online search can display thousands of software options, from free downloads to for-fee upgrades. The challenge is deciding which program best meets your needs and budget.

Made by Alembx Solutions LLC, FleetVIP's free demo tracks two vehicles, while the Standard version (\$19.95) tracks up to six vehicles. The Plus version (\$49.95) tracks up to 26 vehicles and the Pro version (\$199.95) tracks an unlimited number of vehicles. In

"You want a system that can adapt to your needs. You want to track the maintenance of the vehicle separately from the maintenance that occurs on your vacuum pump. If there are unique things that need to be captured at the time of service, having a system that is flexible enough to meet those needs is pretty important."



Fleetio's Dashboard provides an overview of maintenance history, service reminders and service costs.

The screenshot shows the 'Maintenance History Form' in FleetWise Lite. It includes a 'Repair Orders' table with the following columns: ID, NUMBER, STATUS, SCHEDULED, COMPLETED, UNIT ID, TOTAL COST, ODOMETER, HOUR METER, REASON, and REPAIR ORDER. The table contains several rows of data, including repair orders for 'JOB OPEN', 'JOB CLOSED', and 'JOB SCHEDULED'. Below the table, there are sections for 'Repair Order Details' and 'Parts'.

FleetWise Lite is designed for smaller fleets (under 10 vehicles). Its maintenance history form includes status, date scheduled and completed, total cost, odometer or hour reading and reason for repair.

each case, there are no monthly or annual fees. The for-fee programs are Cloud backup compatible, while the Pro version adds spreadsheet export.

Fleetio offers a 14-day free trial of its programs that range from the free Personal Fleet (one user, five vehicles) to the 1,000-vehicle Epic Fleet (\$689 per month or 69 cents per vehicle per month). The for-fee programs allow unlimited users and driver management, and provide email support. The Large Fleet (100 vehicles, \$119 per month), Super Fleet (250 vehicles, \$199 per month) and Mega Fleet (500 vehicles, \$359 per month), as well as the Epic Fleet programs, include phone support. All plans include secure data encryption, unlimited file storage, and data export.

FleetWise's suite of products start at \$100 for the FleetWise Lite package designed for smaller fleets (10 vehicles) to its full-feature flagship FleetWise VB that includes vehicle and equipment information for an unlimited number of vehicles, repair order system, inventory control and fuel management (\$700 for stand-alone program without inventory control; \$1,350 with inventory; \$1,500 for network program without inventory; and \$2,700 for network program with inventory).

LOOK FOR WEB-BASED PROGRAM

Tom Summerville, founder and CEO for RareStep of Birmingham, Alabama, maker of Fleetio, says maintenance programs enable fleet owners to understand the overall cost of owning and maintaining each piece of equipment, from truck engines to vacuum pumps and trailer tires. "All that additional equipment is going to need preventive maintenance and documentation as well," he says. "Even if you have a very small fleet, you still need to be maintaining records and staying on top of the operations of that fleet from a maintenance perspective."

When shopping for a program, look for something that is Web-based and online accessible, he says. It should store all your information in one place, but more importantly, it should be easy to use.

It should also be mobile. "Having information at your fingertips is a very effective and powerful way to monitor things," Summerville says. And it should seek you out. The system should come to you with notifications — emails and text alerts of what's wrong and needs work.

It should be flexible. "You want a system that can adapt to your needs," he says. "You want to track the maintenance of the vehicle separately from the maintenance that occurs on your vacuum pump. If there are unique things that need to be captured at the time of service, having a system that is flexible enough to meet those needs is pretty important."

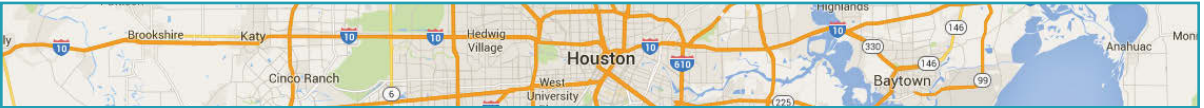
BETTER DATA

Peter Michaelis, owner of All About Computers in Jacksonville, Florida, maker of FleetWise, says one advantage of a maintenance program over a spreadsheet is data validation. "You might have a column that says 'repair order costs,' but there's no checking if the number you put in is correct."

Maintenance programs can perform multiple functions, such as automatically updating parts inventory when entering repair costs. Could the same be done on a spreadsheet? Certainly, says Michaelis, but you would have to go to the repair order spreadsheet and put in the cost, then go to the inventory spreadsheet and subtract your part. It's not as efficient, he says. "The general rule of computer systems is if you have to do something twice, then the chance of it being wrong is twice as great." ■

A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

Texas company's trucks give efficiency and profits a lift – and keep technicians happy, too



COMPANY Pickett Plumbing LP
LOCATION Houston, Texas
VEHICLES 2012 and 2103 Isuzu NPR cab-over-style box trucks built out by Jenkins Diesel Power Inc.
FEATURES 12- and 14-foot box bodies made by Hackney; interior shelf-and-tray adjustable storage system made by Hackney; rear-opening barn-style doors
INVENTORY About \$8,000 worth of parts, including one water heater, one toilet tank and two toilet bowls
EQUIPMENT Two drain cleaning machines
COST About \$75,000 per truck
WEBSITE www.pickettplumbing.com

Written by Ken Wysocky

No offense to plumbing supply houses, but master plumber Walter Pickett prefers to avoid them as much as possible. And the owner of Pickett Plumbing in Houston does just that, thanks to the service trucks he purchased from Jenkins Diesel Power.

“It’s not that I don’t like them,” Pickett says of parts depots. “I just can’t make as much money when we’re visiting them all the time. I wanted better inventory control so we can stay out of the supply houses.”

To maximize productivity and its close cousin, profitability, Pickett wanted a truck that could not only carry more parts, but also keep them well organized. So he opted to invest roughly \$75,000 apiece on two vehicles that Jenkins markets as plumbing “super trucks.” They’re built on Isuzu NPR cab-over-style chassis — one with a 12-foot-long box body, the other 14 feet long, made by Hackney. The trucks (2012 and 2013 model years) feature an interior Hackney parts storage system that can be customized by adjusting shelf heights to accommodate various sizes of drawers.



To maximize productivity, Pickett Plumbing invested a little extra in two Isuzu NPR cab-over-style chassis with Hackney bodies and parts storage systems.

“My thought was that I could set up both trucks identically, with every inventory item in the same place,” he says. “We’re getting there — both trucks are set up pretty much the same — but the guys like to move some things around, for one reason or another.”

“Before, we didn’t always have all the necessary items on the trucks,” he adds, noting that each Isuzu carries about \$8,000 worth of parts inventory, including one water heater, one toilet tank and two toilet bowls. “Our six other trucks (Fords with 14-foot



Pickett Plumbing's "super trucks" carry about \$8,000 worth of inventory, along with the tools to take on any job, all neatly organized for easy access.

box bodies made by Supreme Corporation) are not as well organized. While I can't quantify it, I know we were losing money because of that, if nothing else from lost productive time wasted by making trips to supply houses."

Pickett estimates that the Jenkins trucks have drastically reduced the number of supply-house trips, which can easily take an hour and a half round-trip. "I can't tell you how many trips we've reduced per week, but now we probably average just two or three trips a day," he says. "We also do a better job now of restocking the six Fords."

The trucks are all business inside, organized for easy part location and equipment loading and unloading. For easier retrieval and stocking, different sections of shelves are devoted to certain kinds of parts — such as PVC pressure fittings, toilet parts, sink parts and so forth — subdivided into various sizes. The Hackney storage system features 18- by 22-inch trays with dividers; the trays are either 3 1/2 or 6 inches deep. "The trays also keep inventory from being damaged," Pickett notes. "Without them, things can rattle around in back and get damaged."

The trucks' interior configuration allows room for a water heater in the rear by the rear barn-style doors, along with a medium-size drain cleaning machine. A

"The bottom line is that if I told my guys we were going back to regular service vans, none of them would want to stay — they'd all leave."

larger drain cleaning machine gets stored in the front.

The emphasis on organization and neatness also impresses customers, which can lead to repeat business as well as word-of-mouth referrals. Pickett says that customers occasionally take a peek inside the trucks and are impressed by what they see. "I'm not sure if customers realize the value of trucks that are so well organized, but they comment on how nice and clean they look inside," he says.

There's another more intangible but equally valuable factor in play: technicians' attitudes. In short, a happy plumber is a more effective plumber. "When you have a messy truck and can't find what you need, you get frustrated," Pickett says.

In the long run, Pickett says his profit margins have improved since he bought the two Isuzus. "Sure, they were a considerable investment, but they're well worth it," he says. "It's hard to quantify, but I'd say our profit margins have increased.

"The bottom line is that if I told my guys we were going back to regular service vans, none of them would want to stay — they'd all leave. I wish I would've bought the 'super trucks' much earlier." ■

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INSURING YOUR OFFICE

Regardless of the size and scope of your business, a periodic review of your coverage makes good sense

Written by Judy Kneiszal

There are several possible scenarios for what “back at the office” means to the operator of a plumbing company. Maybe your entire business has a different address than your home. That means you park the trucks, store your equipment and sit at a computer to process the payroll at a different address than where you eat dinner, watch *NCIS* and sleep.

Or maybe your office is actually in your home, in a spare bedroom or corner of the basement. A third option is that your office is in a building you own that’s separate from your home, but on the same property. This, I recently learned, makes insuring it a bit tricky.

WHEN A HOME OFFICE ISN’T IN A HOUSE

If your business office is in your home, it may be covered by your homeowner’s insurance. Some insurance companies offer business coverage as part of a homeowner’s policy, while others may require the purchase of separate coverage. Check with your agent if you’ve recently started the business, moved the business office to your home, or just assumed your home office was covered but never thought to ask.

In my case, my husband and I added a separate building in our home’s backyard that serves as an office. We found the insurance that protected our office equipment from fire or burst water pipes as part of our business liability policy when we rented an office a few blocks away didn’t cover the same equipment in our new building, or the building itself. We wondered if our homeowner’s insurance covered the building and its contents, just like it would cover a garden shed and the tools inside it.

While most homeowner policies automatically cover other structures on the premises, that coverage may not extend to a structure used to operate a business. We needed a commercial insurance policy on the new office outbuilding, despite the fact that it does have a separate storage room for rakes and shovels.

SOLUTIONS VARY FROM COMPANY TO COMPANY

As more and more people telecommute or run home-based businesses, insurance companies have had to come up with solutions for various home office scenarios. In our case, a commercial policy combining business liability and coverage of the building and its contents was drawn up. A rider was added for some business-related equipment occasionally used off site.

Here are some factors an astute insurance agent will consider before quoting a premium if you have a business facility on your property, but not in your home:

What is the replacement cost for both the structure and contents of your office building? You want to determine the full replacement value. This is the total amount it would cost to rebuild and equip the building at today’s costs. This is determined using a dollars-per-square-foot rate set by the insurance industry for your geographic area. The estimate your agent comes up with may seem high, but consider that construction costs are always rising, and if the building was destroyed you may have to rent space somewhere else temporarily to keep the business going during reconstruction.

List all equipment and furniture in the building. Some insurance companies require detailed information including serial numbers and replacement value for equipment you want insured.

Who uses the building? Do customers come to your office, or is it just a quiet place you go to do the books? Do you have employees who use the facility? Liability insurance may be higher if others use the building.

How is the building heated? Using a wood or pellet stove to heat an outbuilding can increase premiums.

REMINDERS FOR ALL SMALL-BUSINESS OWNERS

If you have insurance with two different companies for your home and business, check to make sure there is no overlapping coverage or gaps in coverage. You may think one policy is covering something that neither policy is actually covering.

Sometimes having all your insurance eggs in one basket can save you money, but this is not always the case. Shop around, but don’t assume the best option is always the insurance policy with the lowest premium.



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A lower premium can mean a lack of needed coverage. Don't wait until after disaster strikes to learn you weren't covered for that particular disaster.

When comparing insurance bids from two companies, be sure you are comparing apples to apples and getting adequate coverage for your dollar. If you want to save money on premiums, consider taking on higher deductibles rather than reduced coverage. Insurance on your business is meant to protect you from catastrophic loss. Having a \$500 deductible and filing a claim for a \$1,000 roof repair after a storm may ultimately raise your rates and cost you more money than the payout you receive. It may be wise and save money in the long run to choose a policy with a higher deductible.

The best way to make sure you have the right insurance — and enough insurance — without paying too much is to meet with your agent at least once a year and, painful as it can be, read your policies and know what's in them. ■

Writer Judy Kneiszel has operated her own small business for 15 years and is familiar with the many rewards and challenges of business ownership. Write to her with questions, comments or topic suggestions at thewordhouse@ameritech.net.



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2016 REGISTRATION

4 DAYS TO MAKE YOUR BUSINESS BETTER

The Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport Show promises great value and opportunity for your business

Written by Luke Laggis



WWETT Show Kickoff Party. Relax, check out the exhibitor sponsor displays, and enjoy a cold beverage and complimentary hors d'oeuvres while networking with manufacturers and peers.

“One of the main requests we receive from attendees year in and year out is for more networking opportunities,” says show coordinator Brad Bisnette. “The Kickoff Party presents this opportunity and does so in a very unique, convenient and exciting atmosphere.”

The show really ramps up on Thursday when the exhibit hall opens. Every year, products introduced at the show become important components in many

Last year, the Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport (WWETT) Show was spilling out of the exhibit hall at the Indiana Convention Center. This year, it's pouring into Lucas Oil Stadium.

It all gets started like it does every year, with the industry's best slate of education courses. The show returns to its Wednesday-through-Saturday schedule this year, so Education Day will be held Wednesday, Feb. 17.

A day in the classroom may not sound like the most exciting part of your trip to Indianapolis, but it could be the most valuable. Presenters from the industry's top manufacturers and associations will lead a wide variety of classes, covering everything from septic myths to small-diameter pipe cleaning. There are more than 50 classes on Wednesday alone.

When class lets out, the party gets started. Just take the short walk over to Lucas Oil Stadium — it's connected to the convention center — for the 2016



The WWETT Show provides opportunities to meet manufacturers and other industry experts, and find the tools that will drive your business forward.

“It's going to be very impressive when the lights turn on and the doors open for showtime.”

industry professionals' toolboxes and equipment fleets. More than 9,400 people representing 4,200 companies and 54 countries attended the 2015 show, with 597 exhibitors nearly spilling out of the exhibit hall.

This year, it's going to be even bigger, encompassing all 560,000-plus square feet of exhibit space at the Indiana Convention Center, in addition to the classrooms, stadium and the Sagamore Ballroom.

"Right now it's a daily challenge trying to figure out how we're going to fit this much equipment on the floor," Bisnette says. "It's going to be very impressive when the lights turn on and the doors open for showtime."

When that moment comes, take your time and scope out the floor. There's a ton to see, and you can't get to all of it in one day. Plus, there are dozens more education courses on Thursday, and you'll want to take advantage of those opportunities. It's the perfect day to take another class or two, give yourself an overview of the show floor and formulate a plan to get everything you need out of the next two days. And when the floor closes, you can head back to Lucas Oil for the second night of the Kickoff Party.

Friday brings more education and another full day on the exhibit floor, with a chance for you to zero in on the tools, equipment and conversations that can make a difference for your business.

In addition to being a huge day at the show, Friday is also the biggest night, with the Sagamore Ballroom doors opening at 5 p.m. for the annual Industry Appreciation Party. In addition to 25-cent tap beer and a fun, laid-back atmosphere, country music star Jerrod Niemann will perform. Niemann's hits include "Blue Bandana," "Drink to That All Night" and "Lover, Lover."

Just make sure you don't really drink to that all night, because Saturday is the final day of the show and your last opportunity to see everything that makes it great.

Don't forget, there's also plenty to do outside the show. Indianapolis is a fun and accommodating city with dozens of museums, entertainment venues and shopping opportunities, along with hundreds of restaurants within walking distance of the convention center. And with 4,700 guestrooms connected to the Indiana Convention Center via covered and heated skyways, weather won't be an issue.

The 2016 WWETT Show will be held Feb. 17-20 at the Indiana Convention Center in downtown Indianapolis. You can view the complete schedule of events along with an exhibitor list, floor plan, travel information and everything else you'll need to plan your trip to Indy at www.wwettshow.com. ■



WWETT Show SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY FEB. 17, 2016

- Education Day - Exhibit Hall Closed
- 60+ Educational Sessions
- WWETT Kickoff Party - 5 p.m.

THURSDAY FEB. 18, 2016

- Educational Sessions: 8 a.m. - Noon
- Exhibits Open: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- WWETT Kickoff Party - 5 p.m.

FRIDAY FEB. 19, 2016

- Educational Sessions: 8 a.m. - Noon
- Exhibits Open: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- **Industry Appreciation Party**
5 p.m. - 25¢ Tap Beer - 7 p.m Music

SATURDAY FEB. 20, 2016

- Exhibits Open: 9 a.m.
- Exhibits Close: 2 p.m.


Feb. 17-20, 2016
Indiana Convention Center
wwettTM16
Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport Show

wwettshow.com

BUILDING A NEW BRAND

Bluefrog uses WWETT Show to market its system and attract new franchisees

Written by Craig Mandli

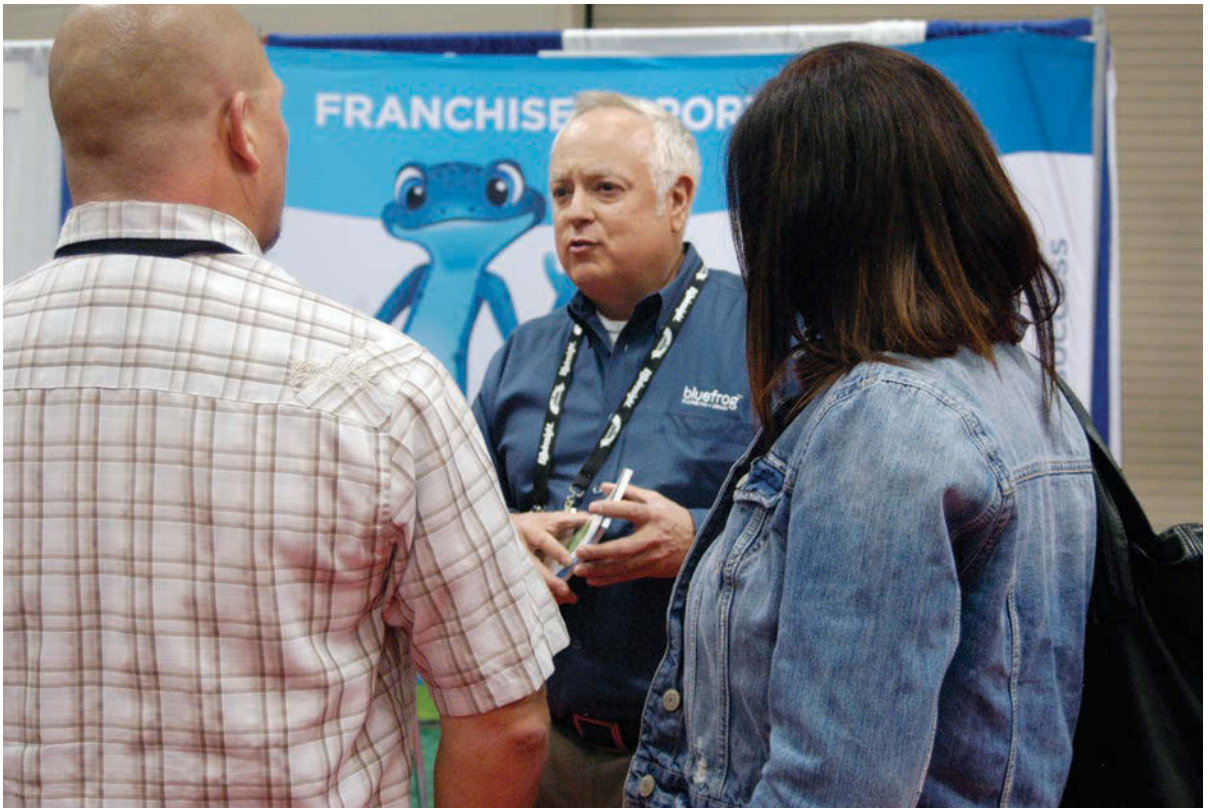
With its creative name and Freddie the bright-blue frog as a brand ambassador, bluefrog Plumbing + Drain created a buzz at the 2015 Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport (WWETT) Show. The company used WWETT to introduce attendees to the company and seek new franchisees, including wastewater service companies looking to expand services to include plumbing.

The plumbing and drain cleaning service, repair

and replacement franchise system is backed by a national network with more than three decades of experience. Home Brands Group, the parent company of Re-Bath and 5 Day Kitchens, seeks to move its brands forward and build systems to help them sustain long-term growth.

“We are aiming for independent company operators that utilize one to four trucks in their business,” says Jeremiah Cundiff, the company’s franchise development director. “Under our plan, the independent contractor would convert to our franchise, with the goal of growing the business into six or more trucks.”

According to Cundiff, bluefrog focuses on providing consumers with five attributes, including timeliness, safety, professionalism, consideration and a transparent value. The brand is easily marketable,



Jeff Moody, center, vice president of operations for bluefrog Plumbing + Drain, discusses franchisee opportunities with two attendees at the 2015 WWETT Show. The company is aimed at private plumbing contractors and septic and drain businesses looking to increase their service offerings. (Photo by Craig Mandli)

and franchisees are required to stay open 24/7 all 365 days of the year, with no extra charges for nights, weekends or holiday calls. Service technicians give each client a courtesy call while on their way with the projected arrival time, and for security purposes can email a photo of themselves to the client prior to arrival at their home.

“We train our franchisees on a different way of operating a business,” he says. “Our system shifts away from price to a value-based service. Instead of offering the lowest price, our intent is to provide the best service and increase the value for the client.”

To handle increased business, the company provides education on how small businesses can add valuable employees to their teams. The idea focuses on helping the owner of the franchise leverage their trade knowledge by getting them out of the truck and into a managerial role.

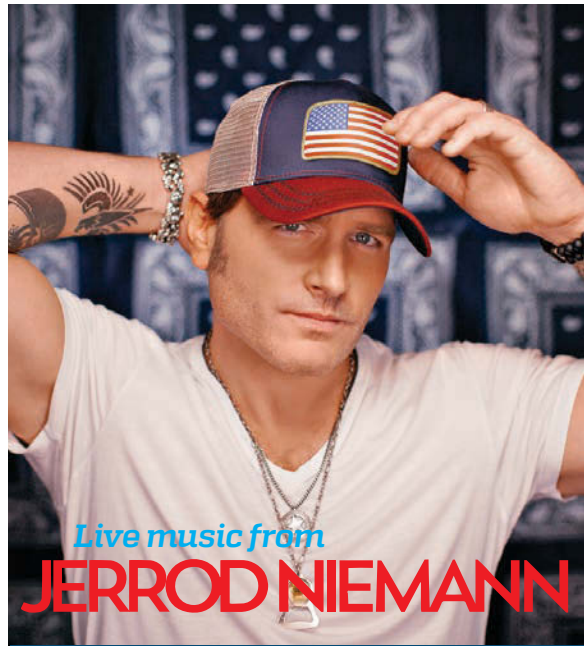
“One of the biggest reasons small companies struggle with increased business is that typically the owner is a plumber that’s still running service calls every day instead of taking the time to build and oversee his team,” Cundiff says. “We help that owner find the right technicians to field his service calls and positively represent his business. We want technicians who understand the importance of a positive customer experience.”

The new franchise opportunity adds an additional revenue stream that’s relevant to existing septic service and installation businesses. For instance, Cundiff says that several franchise partners are composed of independent system installers looking to expand their service offerings, as well as independent plumbers who are looking to apply the proven system. That idea appealed to several WWETT attendees.

“Our business stands out not just with the name, but also our identity and core values,” Cundiff says. “Coming into this show, our goal was to leave with three or four strong franchise partner leads. We had 22 strong leads just the first day. We couldn’t be happier with the response.”

At the 2016 show, bluefrog will again be looking to add trustworthy, independent contractors with an entrepreneurial drive to its franchise system. The ideal prospect is an established independent plumber or septic service technician who is bottom-line driven, customer-service oriented, and has a passion for community involvement.

“The great thing about this show in particular is the varied locations of the attendees,” Cundiff says. “I have talked with people from all around the country and Canada. A big goal of ours is expanding the company’s reach, so our opportunity at WWETT is great.” 844/260-3764; www.whateveryplumbermustknow.com. ■



Live music from
JERROD NIEMANN

Industry Appreciation Party

5 p.m. - Friday, Feb. 19

Sagamore Ballroom

2nd Floor - Indiana Convention Center

Doors Open **4 p.m.**

Refreshments **5 p.m.**

Jerrod Niemann **7 p.m.**

**Admission included
when you pre-register!**

 Feb. 17-20, 2016
Indiana Convention Center
wwett 16
Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport Show

wwettshow.com

PLUMBING IN THE MIDST OF PANIC

A Southern plumber comes to the rescue of a sick couple during unusually harsh conditions

Written by Paul Nicolaus

Although Greenville, South Carolina, rarely deals with temperatures that dip below freezing, residents and plumbers are impacted in a very real way when it does occur.

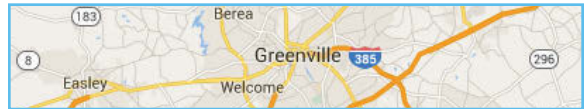
“Everybody laughs, but when we get a few flakes of snow everybody panics,” says Scott Smith, master plumber and owner of All Clear Plumbing. “In our area it’s very hilly, and we’re in the South so we don’t get a lot of freezing weather.”

Local infrastructure isn’t built to take on the colder weather. The whole community shuts down during ice events, and chilly temperatures bring along with them the possibility of power outages, frozen pipes and burst waterlines.

Arriving quickly to shut off the water and save customers’ belongings is crucial in these situations, but it was a different sort of late-night call that really grabbed Smith’s attention in the midst of a rare stretch of frigid cold. It was an elderly couple with a backed up sewer line. The gentleman was on oxygen and his wife, who was receiving cancer treatment at the time, needed access to a functioning bathroom.

As transplants new to the area, they had no existing relationship with a plumber who could step up and help them out, so they were relying on nothing more than the phone book. After placing a few calls, reality set in as the couple learned it would likely be days before anyone else would be able to take the job due to the sheer number of emergencies popping up across the area.

“Everybody was busy fixing waterlines, and other plumbers looked at it as, ‘They only have a stopped-up sewer and it can wait,’ but sometimes you have to look past just what it is and you need to look at who it is that’s having a problem,” Smith says. “What we take



COMPANY All Clear Plumbing
OWNER Scott Smith
LOCATION Greenville, South Carolina
FOUNDED 2012
SPECIALTY Service plumbing
WEBSITE www.allclearplumbingupstate.com



When other plumbers wouldn’t prioritize an emergency call for an elderly couple with health issues, All Clear Plumbing owner Scott Smith stepped up and fixed the problem so the couple could stay in their home.

“You do the right things for the right reasons, and it always seems to work out.”

as an inconvenience was an emergency on their part.”

When he arrived at the retirement community, a neighbor next door had a similar issue, too, so Smith quickly determined that it was a common line. After some investigation, he found a clean-out and began feeding cable from his Duracable drain cleaning machine into the line, eventually clearing what turned out to be a large root blockage.

“When we do get snow on the ground, it’s hard to find clean-outs at night, so having a good piece of equipment that you can roll around to the job is nice,” he says. “I’ve always sworn by their machines.”

The job took about an hour and a half in temperatures hovering in the 20s, and by the time Smith arrived home it was past 1 a.m. It was a very long day, he says, but helping somebody in need takes some of the edge off those late hours. The after-hours visit prevented the couple from having to temporarily move out of their home, which would have been more than just a minor inconvenience, considering their health complications.

This type of business philosophy — treating people as they should be treated and putting people that have a genuine need ahead of the almighty dollar — is one of the reasons for the young company’s word-of-mouth success in recent years, Smith notes. “You do the right things for the right reasons, and it always seems to work out.” ■

There’s often more to the story than the plumbing problem itself, and Scott Smith knows listening to the customer and understanding the issue is not only good for business, it’s the right thing to do.



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wwett16
Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport Show

wwettshow.com

WELL WATER SERVICES/ WATER CONDITIONING

Written by Craig Mandli

Controls



FORBEST PRODUCTS FB-1060SS-150/300

The FB-1060SS-150/300 well video inspection camera from **Forbest Products** is designed to inspect deep well water. It comes with 500 or 1,000 feet of cable and a reel with a meter counter. Longer cable is available. It has a 62 mm pan-and-tilt 360-180-degree color waterproof head with 14 high-brightness LEDs. The camera head makes it possible to have a panoramic view of very deep well water with high pressure to depths to 1,000 feet. The detailed continuous scan of sidewalls allows an operator to examine wall, casings, infiltration, screen, gravel pack, encrustations, deterioration, perforation blockages or other physical damage. The well camera comes with a 5.7-inch 640x480 LCD color monitor with SD card recording. It works in temperatures from 14 to 131 degrees F. **877/369-1199; www.forbestusa.net.**

FRANKLIN ELECTRIC SUBDRIVE

SubDrive constant pressure drives from **Franklin Electric** provide easy setup and configuration through Wi-Fi connectivity for simplified monitoring and troubleshooting. They come with a NEMA 3R (Type 3) enclosure and are rated for both indoor and outdoor use, providing a degree of protection against falling rain or sleet. They have Wi-Fi capability through the FE Connect mobile app, a convenient way to set up and configure the drive in fewer steps. Once configured, they allow real-time monitoring of key system data, adjustment of advanced features and settings to optimize the system to the spe-



cific application, and access to fault history of up to 500 detailed entries that can be emailed for enhanced troubleshooting capability. They can be retrofitted to most pumping systems using a Franklin motor, making the transition smooth and simple for current water well systems. Basic setup allows users to be ready to pump water with the flip of two switches. **800/701-7894; www.franklinwater.com.**



GOULDS WATER TECHNOLOGY AQUAVAR SOLO 2

The **Aquavar SOLO 2** constant pressure controller from **Goulds Water Technology** - a **xylem brand** automatically monitors household water demand, maintaining pressure even when multiple water sources are in use. It is fade-resistant and contains an LED display that indicates the system pressure, speed and current. A programmable output relay can be configured to control an external device and to send a status signal to a monitoring device. An integrated output motor filter protects the motor from voltage spikes and limits electrical interference with devices such as portable telephones, radios, televisions and garage door openers. It is compatible with any manufacturer's motor, so it can be retrofitted to any conventional system. A soft-start motor requires less energy at startup and extends pump and motor life. **866/325-4210; www.goulds.com.**

SEE WATER HLA LIQUID LEVEL ALARM

The **HLA Liquid Level Alarm Series** from **See Water** is designed to alert of potentially threatening liquid level conditions. The series includes the HLA type 1 (indoor rated) liquid level alarm, the HLA-4X liquid level indoor/outdoor robust alarm, and the HLA-4X-X, a variety of models monitoring 2 to 10 liquid level alarm point. The alarm panels



are ideal for tank monitoring, sewage pump chambers, sump pump basins, lift stations and other liquid level monitoring applications. They are UL listed. **888/733-9283; www.seewaterinc.com.**



SEPTRONICS EXTERIOR PUMP CONTROL

Septronics offers an exterior pump control with an interior alarm that comes with a hand-off auto switch. Operators can turn the power to the pump totally off and run the pump manually

with the flip of the toggle switch, or put it on automatic to run via the float switch in the tank. Plug in the pump, plug in the pump switch (single or double float) and wire the automatic reset interior alarm low-voltage line to carry the alarm float information back to the main supply along with the power supply line for the pump. It's kept safe in a NEMA junction box mounted on the pedestal and includes a hookup package for the tank. **262/567-9030; www.septronicsinc.com.**

SJE-RHOMBUS VARIOSPEED

VARIOspeed constant pressure controls from SJE-Rhombus offer a pre-engineered solution for variable-speed pumping applications, including submersible deep well, booster



and irrigation pumps. They have a factory-programmed variable-frequency drive in a NEMA 1 (indoor) or NEMA 3R (indoor/outdoor) enclosure with a user-friendly keypad and backlit display for easy installation and setup. Both are available in 1.5 through 20 hp, and include the LCD display. The VFD automatically controls the pump speed to maintain a constant discharge pressure. The visualization and configuration of the system is simplified using pump terminology to allow non-VFD experts a greater comfort level with the drive. The system offers PID control, adjustable electronic overload, auto start on pressure drop (adjustable), and auto stop on low Hz (no-flow – sleep mode). They include a 0 to 200 psi pressure transducer, and are UL/cUL listed. **888/342-5753; www.sjerhombus.com.**

SUMP ALARM 2L OUTDOOR TANK ALARM

The 2L version outdoor tank alarm from Sump Alarm is a weatherproof high tank alarm designed for simple and fast installation with no on-site wiring. Sim-



ply position the float switch, mount the head unit, and plug into an outlet. Versions are available for high- and low-level detection, and custom units are available. It has a 1-inch LED red pilot light visible from a distance with an integrated 90 dBA

alarm and an always-on white light that indicates the pump has power. It is available with mercury-free float cords in 10-, 16-, 33- and 100-foot lengths, which allow it to be positioned near a secondary power source in a highly visible area, ideal for line-of-sight installations. **314/787-8059; www.sumpalarm.com.**

Pressure Tanks / Valves

CALEFFI NORTH AMERICA 553 SERIES

The 553 Series pre-adjustable AutoFill fill valve from Caleffi North America is designed for use on closed-loop hydronic systems to automatically fast-fill and maintain system



pressure. It can be preset to the required pressure prior to charging the system. The valve automatically stops when the set pressure is reached. A system pressure indicator is optional. **414/238-2360; www.caleffi.us.**



THERMOMEGATECH M/D

The M/D temperature control valve from ThermoOmegaTech is designed for three-way mixing or diverting applications in reverse-osmosis filtration. It is compact and low mass for fast response. Its Thermoloid sensor/controller automatically and accurately proportions the flow in response to fluid temperature, helping improve the efficiency of the filter by more than 50 percent vs. using cold water. Using the thermostatic element incorporated in the valve body to accurately and reliably control water temperature, the valve self-regulates the temperature of water

coming in. As a result of doubling the efficiency, half the amount of filters and space is needed, with less maintenance. Valves are available in multiple sizes to accommodate almost any installation. 877/379-8258; www.thermomegatech.com.



WEBSTONE VALVES THERMOSTATIC MIXING VALVE

The Thermostatic Mixing Valve from Webstone Valves is available with press connections. In addition to being easy to install, these forged lead-free brass

valves provide output ranges from 95 to 131 degrees F, making them ideal for point of use or water distribution systems. Temperature-locking handles ensure user safety. They are also available in compression, PEX, MIP or SWT union connections, in 1/2- to 1-inch sizes, with or without integral inlet checks. 800/255-9529; www.webstonevalves.com.

Water Conditioners

TACO GENIE

The small, silent Taco Genie pump attaches to hot and cold waterlines in the cabinet under the most remote kitchen or bath fixture. When activated, cool water that normally runs down the drain is recirculated back to the water heater through the cold waterline. When hot water arrives at the faucet, the pump automatically shuts off to prevent pumping excess hot water into the cold waterline. It can also be installed in dedicated return line systems. 401/942-8000; www.taco-hvac.com.



Water Pumps

ARMSTRONG FLUID TECHNOLOGY E.2

The E.2 pumpless volute kit from Armstrong Fluid Technology is designed to upgrade, renew or replace all working parts of E Series model circulators. The kits are suitable for hydronic fluid and potable water applications and are compatible with the original E Series. The kit includes a water slinger to protect the motor against water intrusion, a stainless steel shaft, seal, permanently lubricated bearings and bellows-style mechanical seal with silicon carbide wear surfaces. 800/356-9845; www.armstrongfluid-technology.com.



GRUNDFOS HYDRO MPC BOOSTERPAQ



The Hydro MPC Boosterpaq from Grundfos is a fully integrated and compact pressure-boosting system that offers multiple configurations — with up to six pumps in parallel — to accommodate water supply systems, as well as industrial and irrigation applications.

Its CU 352 intuitive graphical interface controller makes the system user-friendly, while ensuring efficient operation. Using actual pump-curve data, the intelligent controller helps to optimize energy consumption by controlling/staging the number of pumps in operation, as well as the speed of the individual pumps, in order to continually adjust the performance of the system to variations in demand. A large 3 1/2- by 4 5/8-inch intuitive color screen ensures easy operation, and the startup wizard facilitates commissioning. The controller communicates via the most common fieldbus protocols and has a built-in Ethernet connection, enabling remote access via a Web browser. 800/921-7867; us.grundfos.com. ■

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PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Klein Tools hole-making products designed for quicker, cleaner cuts

Written by Ed Wodalski

The expanded line of hole-making products from Klein Tools includes bimetal hole saws, double-fluted step drill bits and wood-boring bits. Made from heavy-duty steel for greater durability, the tools are designed to cut holes quicker, cleaner and easier.

The bimetal hole saws are optimized for cutting steel, including stainless steel. Multiple slots provide leverage points for removing material. Saw diameters range from 7/8 to 6 3/8 inches. An eight-piece kit includes 7/8-, 1 1/8-, 1 3/8-, 1 3/4-, 2- and 2 1/2-inch saws and case.

“The tooth pattern we use in our hole saws has a much deeper kerf pattern — the tooth and the swoosh of the tooth,” says Dave Mueller, senior product manager at Klein Tools. “The points of the teeth are raised, creating a deeper well between each tooth. If you have wood that has a heavy grain, very sappy, you’re cutting through sawdust — it gets gummy and starts clogging up the saw. With a flatter tooth profile, you might start seeing smoke coming out of the hole or charring because you have pure friction; the teeth aren’t doing any of the work because of buildup around the teeth.”

The double-fluted step drill bits, like the pilot drill in the hole saw, share a non-walking design for greater precision. The step drills are available in five models that can drill from two to 13 holes. The two-hole design drills holes from 7/8 through 1 1/8 inches. The three-hole bit drills 7/8-, 1 1/8- and 1 3/8-inch holes. The nine-



hole design drills holes from 1/4 through 3/4 inches in 1/16-inch increments. The 12-hole model drills holes from 3/16 through 7/8 inches in 1/16-inch increments, and the 13-hole model drills holes from 1/8 through 1/2 inches in 1/32-inch increments.

“A single flute will cut a little slower but it will cut the hole perfectly clean. There won’t be any tiny burr,” Mueller says. “A double-flute bit, since the two flutes are cutting halfway around the circle, when one is done cutting the other is starting to cut farther. While you might have a little burr there, you definitely are cutting faster. And most of the plumbing contractors we speak with say speed trumps cleanliness. The small burr is usually covered up by a flange. Speed is the most demanded feature and the two flutes deliver better than one.”

The bits also feature an extra-long, 3/8-inch hex shank for a firm, positive grip that won’t spin out. **800/553-4876; www.kleintools.com.**

SIoux CHIEF PEX CHAIR SLAB ORGANIZER

The PEX Chair slab organizer from Sioux Chief Mfg. Co. is designed to support single 3/8-inch through 3/4-inch PEX supplies on residential or commercial, multi-floor construction projects. The organizers can be connected in parallel or offset configurations using an interlocking tongue and groove. The raised midsection allows concrete to flow through and around the device. The rear contour is made to abut



vent pipes. Other features include rebar receiver for ground staking and height adjustment for precast deck over pours. **800/821-3944; www.siouxchief.com.**

Continued on page 44 ▶



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The 7712H single-axle flatbed utility trailer from Aluma Trailer features 14-inch aluminum wheels and extruded aluminum floor with front and rear retaining rails. The bed is 77.5

inches wide and 142 inches long. LED lighting package and safety chains are included. **866/415-3285; www.alumaklm.com.**

UPONOR PRE-INSULATED PEX PIPE

Pre-insulated PEX pipe from Uponor North America is available in thicknesses up to 2 inches with 1 and 1.5 inches of insulation to comply with the ASHRAE 90.1-2013 Energy Code and the 2012 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC). The pipe is available in 50-, 75- or 100-foot coil lengths. Pre-insulated Wirsbo hePEX pipe is also available for hydronic heating and cooling applications in 1/2-through 2-inch pipe sizes with 1/2, 1, 1 1/2 and 2 inches of insulation. **800/321-4739; www.uponor-usa.com.**



WATER CANNON PRESSURE WASHER/JETTER

The 17HJ39 pressure washer/jetter package from Water Cannon has a Honda GX 630 electric-start engine with battery and 15-gallon long-run fuel tank. Roll-cage

protected, it features V-belt drive, General HP Series triplex plunger pump (5.5 gpm, 3,500 psi), jetter/pulse valve on demand, 350-foot, 3/8-inch-capacity hose reel, ball valve, hose, wand and four nozzles. **800/333-9274; www.watercannon.com.**

CALEFFI THERMOSTATIC MIXING VALVES

The 521 Series of adjustable thermostatic mixing valves from Caleffi Hydronic Solutions feature Presscon fittings designed for fast, easy installation



and maintenance. Available in 3/4-inch press connections, the low-lead valves are cUPC listed to ASSE 1017/CSA B125.3 for point-of-distribution in domestic water system and radiant hydronic heating systems. **414/238-2360; www.caleffi.com.**



MOEN LOW-PROFILE DIVIDE STAINLESS STEEL SINKS

The 1800 Series of low-profile divide stainless steel sinks from Moen feature a lower center divide between the sink bowls, making it easier to rinse large

items and swivel pot handles. Made from 18-gauge stainless steel, the sinks are available in double-equal or double-offset platforms with a wear-resistant finish and SoundSHIELD undercoating for noise reduction. **800/289-6636; www.moen.com.**

HAMMERHEADSELECTIVE-POINT REPAIR SYSTEM

The RS MaxPatch trenchless, selective-point repair system from HammerHead Trenchless Equipment, a Charles Machine Works Company, is designed for circular or oval sewer and



stormwater pipes 3 to 48 inches in diameter, including concrete, reinforced concrete, vitrified clay, PVC and asbestos cement. The composite consists of a glass-reinforced fabric and two-part ambient-cure resin mixture that exceeds the structural requirements of ASTM F1216. The resin is odor free, styrene free and VOC free. **800/331-6653; www.hammerheadtrenchless.com.**



METROTEL NOISE-SUPPRESSION RECEIVER

The Cable Hound receiver with digital signal processing noise suppression from MetroTel Corp. is designed to filter out most unwanted noise while locating irrigation control wires

and valves, buried cable, gas and water pipes, tracer wires and tapes. The kit contains a transmitter, digital receiver, headphones, tone probe, ground rod and carrying case. **402/426-3789; www.metrotelcorp.com.**

SOURCE ONE ADDS MANAGERS, SALES SUPPORT



Anthony Pizzi



Brad Miller



Cooper Ellis



Larry Lamphere



Martha Hood

Source One Environmental has hired two regional sales managers, two technical sales support specialists and a Canadian sales manager. Martha Hood joins S1E as a regional sales manager. Her primary focus will be engaging with CIPP contractors to determine their individual and industry needs. Larry Lamphere joins S1E as a regional sales manager. Brad Miller was named technical sales support specialist. Cooper Ellis joins S1E as a technical sales support specialist serving all territories in the United States. Anthony Pizzi will work in the plumbing, waterworks and CIPP industries throughout Canada as sales manager for both S1E and Fernco.

DWYER GROUP REACQUIRES DRAIN DOCTOR

Dwyer Group has reacquired the master franchise license for Drain Doctor in the U.K. The acquisition is the latest in a series of purchases by Dwyer Group, emphasizing the company's growing interest in direct



CRESCENT QUICK-CONVERT NUT DRIVER SET

The quick-convert nut driver set from Crescent Tools, part of the Apex Tool Group, provides the speed of a straight-handle driver with the torque of a T-handle driver in one tool. The set includes seven color-coded drivers for easy identification. The universal socket design fits six fastener types (hex, square, 12-point and E-Torx, partially rounded hex and spline) in both SAE and metric sizes. **919/362-1670; www.crescenttool.com.** ■

franchising on an international level. Terms of the deal were not disclosed. The equivalent brand to Dwyer Group's Mr. Rooter system in North America, Drain Doctor is the largest combined plumbing and draining company in the U.K. with 80 locations.



Kevin Smith

HAMMERHEAD TRENCHLESS NAMES PRESIDENT

Charles Machine Works appointed Kevin Smith president of HammerHead Trenchless Equipment. He had been serving as president of MTI Equipment, a Charles Machine Works

company — as is Ditch Witch, where Smith worked as director of product definition and research, product planning manager, business manager and salesman. ■

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