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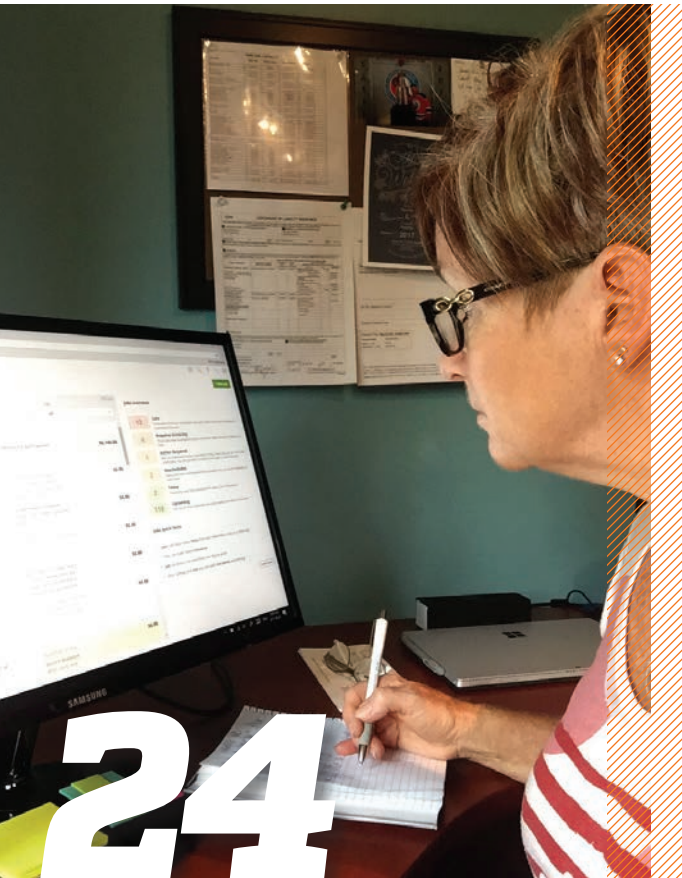
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Easy-to-use business management software makes small company look like a big-shot outfit — and increases customers satisfaction along the way.

- By Ken Wysocky



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Gary Kes, co-owner of Benjamin Franklin The Punctual Plumber, works on a fixture repair at a home near the company's headquarters in Northfield, Minnesota.

Photography by
Brad Stauffer

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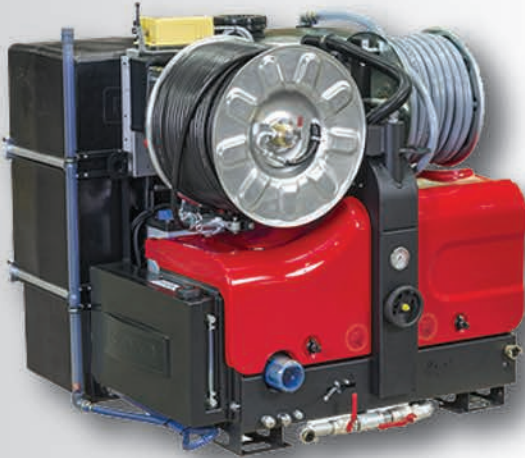


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Cory Dellenbach

Plumbers to the Rescue

Every plumber needs to think of themselves as a provider of clean and safe drinking water and not just someone who fixes pipes

W

hen your customers think of plumbers, they usually picture someone fixing pipes, clearing a clog or finding a water leak. But there is so much more to what you do.

Not many think about plumbers as providing clean and safe water for drinking, bathing and cooking. Do you even think of that yourself? If not, you should start. Then, educate your customers to do the same. There are plenty of plumbers who take their profession and providing safe water to heart.

In February 2016, more than 300 union plumbers from all over Michigan traveled to Flint to install free filters for residents. The problem in Flint started in 2014, when the city switched its drinking water supply from Detroit's system to the Flint River and failed to use corrosion controls. The result was lead in the water.

Today, plumbers in that area continue to replace pipes in homes — and from the mains to the homes — to get customers safe water.

Another plumber dedicated to safe and clean water is Gary Kes's Benjamin Franklin Plumbing franchisee in Northfield, Minnesota, profiled in this issue. Kes started providing water filtration equipment to the dairy industry in 1985.

In 2007, Kes decided to move into residential plumbing, and he now offers water filtration and softener equipment to homeowners. In his area of Minnesota, the well water generally contains limestone and iron. The water is hard and can sometimes have a rust color or look white with a smell of rotten eggs.

Kes says clean water is important to the plumbing infrastructure in the home: "Most plumbing issues start with the quality of water. If you don't have good water, you will have plumbing problems."

BEING READY IN A MOMENT'S NOTICE

Sometimes being a plumber means you can never count on time off. You have to be ready for anything at a moment's notice.

Jeff Lowe Plumbing, Heating & Air Conditioning found that out in the winter of 2016 when a customer called about water in the home. As you'll read in the First Responder feature, the couple was out of town and returned home to find water throughout the house. A radiator had frozen and broken, leading to plumbing lines freezing and breaking. The water damaged the floors and ceilings.

The water was turned off, and crews from Jeff Lowe Plumbing, Heating & Air Conditioning in Kingston, New York, were at the house the next morning. Before any restoration work could proceed, technicians had to replace several of the lines and eight of the 12 cast-iron radiators.


The work required opening up ceilings and floors to reach damaged pipe. It took crews about four months to get all the plumbing work and restoration completed.

SETTING UP ALARMS

It's in such situations that plumbers can easily sell homeowners on alarms and other alert systems to tell them when they might have a problem.

The Product Focus in this issue highlights some of those controls and alarms that plumbers offer to help prevent damage and diminish late-night emergency calls.

Take a look through this issue and you're sure to find an easy way to make your customers happier and keep them coming back to you.

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BRANDING

Plumber Invests Heavily in Creating a Distinct Brand

Building a unique brand can help you stand out in a crowded plumbing service area. Bob Oates has definitely done that with his Seattle-based company. The centerpiece of his marketing efforts is Poopy, a skinny, goofy-looking mascot that appears on all the company's service vehicles, as well as its website and any collateral marketing pieces like invoices. Learn more about how the company uses branding to increase business. [▲ plumbermag.com/featured](http://plumbermag.com/featured)

WEB WISDOM

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More people than ever are spending hours per day online, and the internet is often the go-to resource when people need services like plumbing. Yet many plumbing companies aren't keeping up with SEO (Search Engine Optimization) trends. Every few months, major search engines are reprogrammed to do a better job at reading your website's content and find out how you should rank online. Learn more about how you can improve in the SEO arena in this online exclusive.

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COMMUNITY SUPPORT

California Plumbing Firm Helps Hurricane Harvey Victims

Brent Watkins was born and raised in a suburb just outside of Houston. So when Hurricane Harvey hit the area in late August, Watkins, a service tech with Anderson Plumbing, Heating & Air in San Diego, immediately felt compelled to pitch in and help his family and friends affected by the storm. What he didn't anticipate was how much support he would get from his employer and the San Diego community.

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OVERHEARD ONLINE

"An unexpected slow day is a great opportunity for anyone with employees to work on training. Practice makes perfect, so use this time to drill important concepts into employees' heads. If you have employees who are going to be on the clock, turning a slow work day into a training opportunity is an investment."

— *A Slow Business Day Doesn't Have To Be an Unproductive One*

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PRO 



FROM FARMS TO FRANCHISEE

Minnesota contractor expands into residential plumbing during a market shift and continues to see growth

By Marian Bond | Photography by Brad Stauffer



Benjamin Franklin The Punctual Plumber, Northfield, Minnesota

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Gary and Pauline Kes

EMPLOYEES

7

ESTABLISHED

2007

SERVICES

Repair, water filtration, water softeners, CCTV, jetting, drain cleaning

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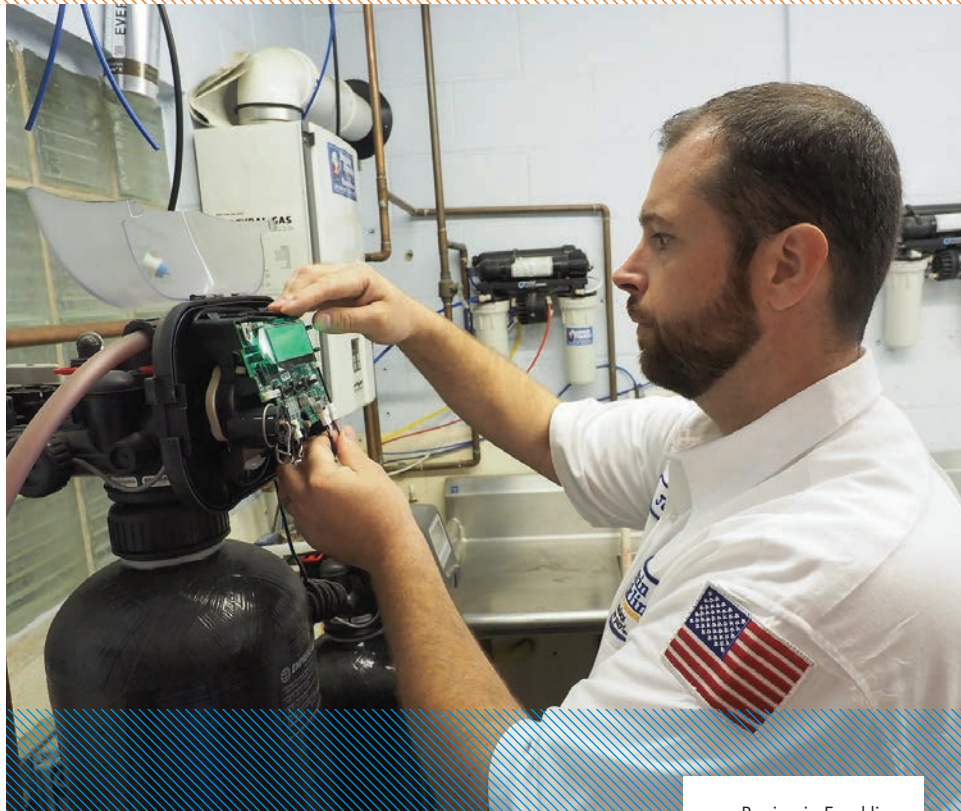
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▲ The staff of Benjamin Franklin The Punctual Plumber pose in front of their offices in Northfield, Minnesota. From left, master plumber Tom Olsen, warehouse manager Jesse Pick, customer service rep Katie Pick, master plumber and co-owner Gary Kes, co-owner/office manager Pauline Kess, plumber apprentice Caleb Stockdale, and water treatment specialist Jesse LeBoeuf.



▲ Benjamin Franklin water specialist Jesse LeBoeuf programs an iron filtration aqua system eradicator in the company shop.

After working for more than two decades servicing the dairy industry with water purification and treatment services, Gary Kes started to see a shift in the industry. Farms were closing, and housing developments emerged on those lands.

It was time for a change. Instead of completely removing himself from the purification and treatment side, Kes shifted his focus to residential customers.

In 2007, 22 years after finding his original company, Kes made the decision to become a Benjamin Franklin Plumbing franchisee. He now serves an area 40 miles south of Minneapolis. “Having the franchise has offered me a chance to bring my business to the next level,” he says. “It became a more valuable entity in my view.”

A START ON THE FARMS

Kes founded Kes Equipment in 1985, jumping on an opportunity to provide water filtration equipment to the local dairy industry after two other companies folded, leaving the market open.

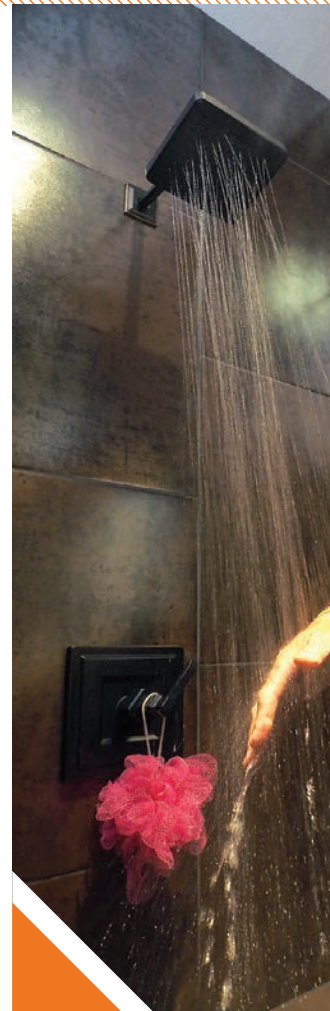
Water purification and treatment is important in the process of handling milk.

Farmers need to maintain clean lines on the equipment in order to offer quality milk. “The biggest thing about dairy equipment is you have to have clean water to keep the equipment clean, and you need soft water so you do not require many chemicals or the processes,” Kes says.

In that area of Minnesota, the water contains both limestone and iron. The water is hard and sometimes can have a rust color or look white with a smell of rotten eggs. “Bottom line is that water filtration and softening equipment is an essential part of life,” Kes says.

After 12 years of providing and servicing equipment to the dairy industry, Kes began to notice a shift in the market. Farms began closing and housing developments popped up on former farm properties. Kes knew he had to change, too, and he began to service residential customers with water filtration and softener systems.

“We were still operating as Kes Equipment, and I was also doing some plumbing locally on a smaller scale,” Kes says.



“When we go on a service call in a residential area, we drive past 100 homes to get to one customer, so there are plenty of opportunities to grow this business and stay within our designated region.”

Gary Kes

“This is how we operated until we became a Benjamin Franklin Plumbing franchisee in 2007.”

Over the past decade, Kes has been slowly shifting the Kes Equipment name to the back burner in favor of the Benjamin Franklin Plumbing name and logo, putting all of his focus on this side of the business.

MANY SERVICES OFFERED

Kes knew that water filtration and softening would still be a major part of his business. “Most plumbing issues start with the quality of water,” Kes says. “If you don’t have good water, you will have plumbing problems.”

He also believes that every plumbing company should offer water filtration services: “If you are already offering this equipment, you are going to be ahead of the competition.”

To help with its service work, Kes has a fleet of four service vehicles operated by seven employees, including himself and another master plumber and two apprentices. Those service vehicles are a 2014 Chevrolet 3500 with the Hackney box, a 2006 GMC 3500 box truck, a 2006 Ford E-350 and a 2008 3500 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter van.

Water softeners and water filtration systems from Aqua Systems in Avon, Indiana, are Kes’ choice for those jobs. For other plumbing work, the company uses tankless water heaters from Noritz America Corp., water heaters from American Water Heater Co., and fixtures from Delta Faucet Co.

“We do a lot of tankless water heaters, and sometimes these are more challenging than a normal water heater when it comes to repair,” Kes says. “We have two of us trained specifically on these heaters and those repairs. We have a lot of faith in the manufacturer we use and the support we have from them.”

While the primary focus is on the residential market, Kes’ company does some light commercial work and takes care of nursing home facilities — primarily cleaning drains after hours. “Our company is about the only one in the



- ◀ Plumber's apprentice Caleb Stockdale gets supplies ready in one of the company's 2008 Mercedes-Benz Freightliner Sprinter 3500 vans.
- ◀ Master plumber and co-owner Gary Kes tests a shower's capacity for hot water on a house call in Northfield, Minnesota.
- ▲ Master plumber Tom Olsen replaces a water fountain in St. Dominic Catholic School.

neighborhood that takes after-hour calls," he says.

The company operates out of a 10,000-square-foot facility with a storefront located on a state highway with prominent signage. In the store is a display of equipment, including some water treatment equipment along with tankless water heaters.

OUTSIDE OF THE NORM

In addition to the traditional plumbing, water filtration and softening services, Benjamin Franklin Plumbing also picks up drain cleaning jobs such as hydrojetting and camera inspections from time to time.

The company does not, however, offer relining or pipe bursting. When that work comes along, Kes will reach out to the Minneapolis Benjamin Franklin Plumbing franchisee where they have a liner crew.

Faith in the crew

Gary Kes built his Benjamin Franklin Plumbing franchisee using the faith he has in his family and employees working alongside him.

"They have the responsibility to make decisions that will benefit the customer and our company," says Kes, owner of the company. "They also know that they can check in with me if they are on a challenging job and need a second opinion."

The staff includes seven employees, which includes four plumbing technicians. Kes' wife and co-owner, Pauline, is a customer service representative and bookkeeper for Benjamin Franklin Plumbing. Other members of the family involved in the business are daughter Katie Pick (marketing) and son-in-law Jesse Pick (shop inventory control monitor).

"My people are really good at what they do, but they know that they can always talk with me to help find the right solution and to be sure we are on the right track to take care of our customers," Kes says.

The company performs regular reviews once a year with employees, but treats them as exercises.

"Basically, we will go over some of the major issues we see, but we also keep in mind that we are a family-oriented business and that is with all of our employees," Kes says. "We know there are certain times of the years when employees want to have some time off, and we work around that as long as we are able to take care of our customers. That has to be the most important thing in our overall view."

- ▶ Master plumber Tom Olsen and co-owner/office manager Pauline Kes discuss the day's workload.
- ▼ Gary Kes catches up on some essential reading in his office. The master plumber knows the importance of a valuable trade magazine such as COLE Publishing's *Plumber*.



“We do take care of tree roots on a regular basis, but when pipes are in bad shape, that’s when we contact the shop in Minneapolis,” Kes says. “They will come to our area and dig — or do whatever is required — to get that work done.”

For its hydrojetting and camera inspection work, the company uses jettets and cameras from MyTana Mfg. The jettets are the M20 (2 gpm, 1,500 psi) and a MV80 (8 gpm, 3,000 psi), and the cameras are the NGx10 and an MS9-NG2.

BUILDING THE FRANCHISEE

Having the franchise name has offered many benefits, including the advertising, buying power and opportunities for growth in his territory — about a 30 to 40 mile radius around Northfield.

Kes sees many avenues for growth within the area he is licensed to service. His goal is to eventually have seven technicians and as many service vehicles.

“We do need to do more on the marketing end so our name is in some of the rural areas,” he says. “When we go on a service call in a residential area, we drive past 100

homes to get to one customer, so there are plenty of opportunities to grow this business and stay within our designated region.”

As part of that marketing plan, technicians are asking customers to post a notice or review after a service is performed. “It only takes a few minutes, and it is such a benefit for us,” Kes says. “Our website is also beneficial, but we are going to ramp it up to be even more relevant. We’re just about ready to kick that off.”

The best part of the job for Kes is when he can see the company solve a problem for a customer and bring clean, clear water into the home. “I always tell my service personnel that our policy is to build a relationship with the customer,” he says. “We want to provide the customer with not just clean water, but a better life, better systems and the best solutions to achieve these goals.” **PI**

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Judy Kneiszel

6 Ideas to Steal From Amazon

The e-commerce behemoth has changed the business landscape, and copying a page or two from its playbook could give your company a boost

By Judy Kneiszel

Twenty years ago this year, Amazon went public. While only a fortunate few got in on that initial public offering, Amazon's subsequent growth brought change to the masses that's far more significant than free two-day shipping and yet another option for video streaming.

As a plumbing contractor, you may think those changes are limited to the modern-day miracle of having parts for your equipment delivered right to your door with the simple click of a mouse. But Amazon has changed not only how America shops, but how business in general is conducted. It has revolutionized the customer experience. Ignore Amazon's innovations and you risk being left behind. Even service businesses can benefit from being a little more like Amazon. Here's how:

Don't make decisions based on what the competition is doing. Rather, offer new products or additional services you perceive your unique customers want.

Don't be afraid to change. Amazon started out as an online bookseller. If its founder, Jeff Bezos, had been resistant to change, he wouldn't have a net worth of more than \$70 billion today. Selling books was never his long-range plan. Books were a foot in the door and a way to gain consumers' trust. If you've got the trust of your customers, maybe it's time to add a new service line like drain cleaning or pipe bursting.

Seek feedback. Before Amazon, people didn't review every single purchase they made from a roll of toilet paper to a big-screen TV. Today, buying decisions are frequently based on the number of stars a product has been awarded by previous purchasers. Bezos says, "If you do build a great experience, customers tell each other about that. Word-of-mouth is very powerful." So don't be afraid to ask your clients to go online and fill out a survey about their experience with your company or provide a testimonial for your website or marketing materials. Use any negative feedback to improve your service.

Think like a customer. Amazon doesn't care what Walmart is doing so much as what their own Amazon customers are doing. Try to think like your customers, and give them what they want to build loyalty. Amazon has done this by going beyond basic retail sales and offering streaming services, digital downloads and its own hardware, like the Kindle e-reader, because of a perceived need of its own customers. You can do the same. Don't make decisions based on what the competition is doing. Rather, offer new products or additional services you perceive your unique customers want.

Speed it up. Changing attitudes in retail mean shortened lead time for every business. Thanks to consumers adapting to one-click ordering, 24/7 customer service, online chats, and next-day shipping, you don't have days to return a phone call, you have minutes before a potential customer calls the next plumber on their list. However, in some ways, speed can work in your favor. Rather than going back to the office, writing up an invoice, mailing it the customer, and then waiting for the check in the mail, payment can be instantaneous and on-site with devices like portable credit card readers. And this is how today's customer is

accustomed to doing business, so you don't risk offending anyone by offering an instant payment option.

Strive for maximum efficiency. Speed can be achieved through efficiency. Amazon is always studying logistics in order to make delivery faster and more cost-efficient. You're in the delivery game, too, even if your "packages" are all the same size and your delivery area is somewhat geographically limited. Frequently re-examine your service routes to make them as efficient as possible. Fewer miles wasted means higher profitability whether you're Amazon or a plumber.

Beef up branding. Unless someone is very new to this planet, they will recognize the Amazon logo and at least have some sense of Amazon's stated brand promise to offer "Earth's biggest selection" and be "the Earth's most customer-centric company." Strong branding goes a long way toward building up a company. Make sure your brand goes beyond simply a logo to encompass a mission and goals.

Thanks to Amazon, window-shopping has all but been replaced by shopping via browser windows, and the phrase

"allow six to eight weeks for delivery" has become antiquated. Amazon has been at the forefront of the changes in how we do business, and those who lead the way always have something to teach the rest of us. While you may not strive to be the Earth's biggest plumbing company, becoming more customer-centric is likely to be a profitable endeavor in the long run. **P**

Judy Kneiszel has operated her own small business for about 20 years and is familiar with the many rewards and challenges of ownership. Write to her with questions, comments or topic suggestions at thewordhouse@ameritech.net.



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Larry Towner

Making Sense of Alternative Fuel Choices

Straight diesel and gasoline engines are no longer the only way to go for your fleet of trucks. But are they still the smartest answer? *By Larry Towner*

The vast majority of vocational trucks serving the plumbing industry are driven by gasoline. However, alternative power sources — natural gas, propane, hybrid and fully electric — may offer advantages to your operation.

Why should you consider alternative fuels?

1. Proper specification for your application
2. Fuel and maintenance savings
3. Emissions
4. Promoting a “green” image

When specifying a truck, selection criteria are determined by many factors including annual mileage, terrain, elevation, gross weight, governmental regulation, PTO selection, driver retention, maintenance, fuel availability and marketing goals.

An in-depth analysis of your operations — truck by truck, route by route — and a description of the makeup of your fleet is the starting point for considering alternative fuels.

STARTING THE PROCESS

The various fuel types do not work well in all applications. An in-depth analysis of your operations — truck by truck, route by route — and a description of the makeup of your fleet is the starting point for considering alternative fuels. Compile data including mileage, PTO hours, fuel costs and maintenance costs per truck. Operational concerns such as terrain, weather and range per day are selection factors. In addition, the company’s goals and objectives are helpful in determining the specification.

Let’s use a hypothetical roster of equipment for a plumbing company with four gasoline trucks:

Year	Model	Body	GVWR (lbs)	Annual Mileage
2009	Ford F-250	Pickup	9,000 - Class 2	22,847
2010	Ford F-250	Pickup	9,000 - Class 2	27,184
2013	Ford F-350	Pickup	12,000 - Class 3	29,671
2015	Ford F-350	Pickup	12,000 - Class 3	28,377

This company operates in northern Georgia. Their office is at 750 feet above sea level, but they service some customers in the mountains with elevations up to 2,500 feet, so terrain is hilly. The F-250s and 350s are on job sites regularly. The F-350s also tow trailers for equipment and supplies.

Georgia does not have any incentives for alternative fuels. Alternative fueling stations are not common in the area of operation.

There are two company goals: reduce costs and to cultivate a green image by having an alternatively powered green truck. An analysis of this fleet shows some potential for alternative power plants. Let’s look at the options:

Natural gas

Natural gas has been powering trucks for approximately 20 years and comes in two forms: compressed (CNG) and liquid (LNG). CNG is compressed to 150 PSI for storage. LNG is refrigerated to 294 degrees below zero for storage. It is available for classes 3-8.

Continued ▶

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Strengths: Extremely clean burning, fuel costs are low, good power curves, can be government subsidized, and LNG offers good range

Weakness: Requires specialized maintenance and fueling facilities, CNG has limited range and large fuel tank requirements, and LNG has fuel-handling safety concerns (due to cold) and fuel loss due to evaporation

CNG works well in applications that are predictable (route driven) and an economy of scale can be achieved with enough units. CNG has gained acceptance in the municipal solid waste segment (trash) and in the government segment. LNG works well for over-the-road applications provided fueling is planned and predictable.

Propane

Propane has been powering trucks for more than 50 years and is readily available. Propane has characteristics similar to gasoline, but it burns cleaner. It is available for classes 3-7 trucks.

Strengths: Readily available fueling stations, simple and reliable catalyst-based emissions system, maintenance, ultraclean burn, and can have governmental subsidies

Weaknesses: Different power curve requires higher rpm to generate torque, mpg is less, more frequent maintenance intervals, limited PTO applications, and minor fueling issues (pressurized to 60 psi) and some cold weather issues

Propane works well in applications similar to gasoline and can be considered a gasoline substitute. Acquisition cost is slightly higher but not significantly higher. Propane has the greatest penetration into a distribution market (propane bobtail tank trucks).

Hybrid electric

Hybrid technologies have been used in heavy-haul applications since the 1950s. Options are available in classes 3-8 trucks.

Strengths: Powerful and versatile, clean operation, and government subsidies

Weaknesses: Acquisition expense, PTO issues, and tare weight issues

The best example of a heavy-haul hybrid vehicle is a locomotive. The diesel engine powers a generator that provides propulsion to the wheels. There are some examples of this type of propulsion in the trucking industry. Wrightspeed.com has introduced a technology in the refuse industry with some success. No great penetration of any market has been gained by hybrid vehicles.

Electric

Electricity has been powering a small number of vehicles for more than 75 years.

Strengths: Powerful and versatile, clean operation, simplified maintenance, and governmental subsidies


Weaknesses: Range, acquisition expense, lack of availability, PTO issues, and tare weight issues

While there are currently fully electric passenger cars, there are no viable electric vehicles operating in the commercial market. Many prototypes are in development and being tested. The greatest problem with electric vehicles is energy storage capacity. Current battery technology is not practically viable for fully electric commercial vehicles.

FLEET QUESTIONS

How does this apply to our example company? Reviewing the data provided shows some alternative power plant options.

The pickups are best served by gasoline. All run in the higher mileage/hour range and need the power of gasoline to work most effectively. Natural gas would work for these applications, but the acquisition cost and fueling issues detract from that option. Propane is an option for the pickups, but the mileage might lead to an increase in fuel costs.

This article is not designed to give you clear answers, but to offer a guideline to frame your truck power plant options. In a future article, I will discuss the missing alternative fuel: biodiesel. 

Larry Towner is a vocational solutions specialist for Peach State Truck Centers in Norcross, Georgia.

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Professional Appearance

Easy-to-use business management software makes small company look like a big-shot outfit – and increases customer satisfaction along the way *By Ken Wysocky*

Ann and Len Lane run their small company, Park Lane Plumbing Ltd., out of their rural home in Sherwood Park, just outside of Edmonton in the Canadian province of Alberta. But thanks to Jobber business management software, the three-person operation provides its customers with the kind of professional data management and dispatch services normally associated with large-scale, big-city plumbing outfits.

“For a small business, we tend to look very professional because of Jobber,” says Ann Lane of the business, established in 1986. “The average small business that’s run from home might send out handwritten invoices and might not have good recordkeeping. I know that’s what it was like for us in the past.

“But our invoices are customized with our logo and we email them, not mail them,” she continues. “Our customers know we have a professional system that tracks their jobs and invoices. We’re certainly willing to spend a little money to look this good.”

The Lanes’ business primarily centers on commercial service plumbing for property managers who run shopping malls and condominium complexes. Most of the customers have been using Park Lane Plumbing for years, so keeping a detailed history of previous work is critical, she explains.

“Having that history is priceless to them,” Lane explains. “They may have some of the information on their own but not to the level of detail that we have. At a glance, I can call up all of the relevant information for a specific customer: any active work, past jobs, previous quotes, invoices — even photos of jobs. Sometimes customers want to know what was done on a previous job, and with Jobber, it’s easy to find out. They love it when they call and you know the exact date of the last service call or the serial number of the backflow valve that was tested, for example.”

The city of Edmonton requires annual backflow testing for commercial properties, and Jobber makes it easy to track the tests — and remind customers when they’re due



COMPANY	Park Lane Plumbing Ltd.
LOCATION	Sherwood Park, Alberta
OWNERS	Len and Ann Lane
SYSTEM	Jobber field-service management software
FUNCTION	Customer data management, dispatching, invoicing
FEATURES	Syncs with accounting software, drag-and-drop calendar, email invoicing, expense tracking, GPS tracking, job scheduling, online payment option, invoicing, quote development and status
COST	About \$600 a year (but varies by customer)

for a test. “The customer never has to wonder when it’s time to do the test,” Lane says. “As a courtesy, we remind them. Property managers have a lot to do, and they love it that they don’t have to remember when to schedule a test. The Jobber system captures all that information beautifully.”

The ability to add photos to customers’ records — and invoices — adds another level of customer service. When Len Lane, a plumber with 35 years’ experience, or the company’s apprentice, Kyle Antonano, take photos on jobs via a Jobber app, the images get automatically added to the customers’ job files, she notes.

“The pictures they take flow into the invoicing,” she says. “Sometimes building supervisors make the service

“ Our customers know we have a professional system that tracks their jobs and invoices. We’re certainly willing to spend a little money to look this good.”

Ann Lane

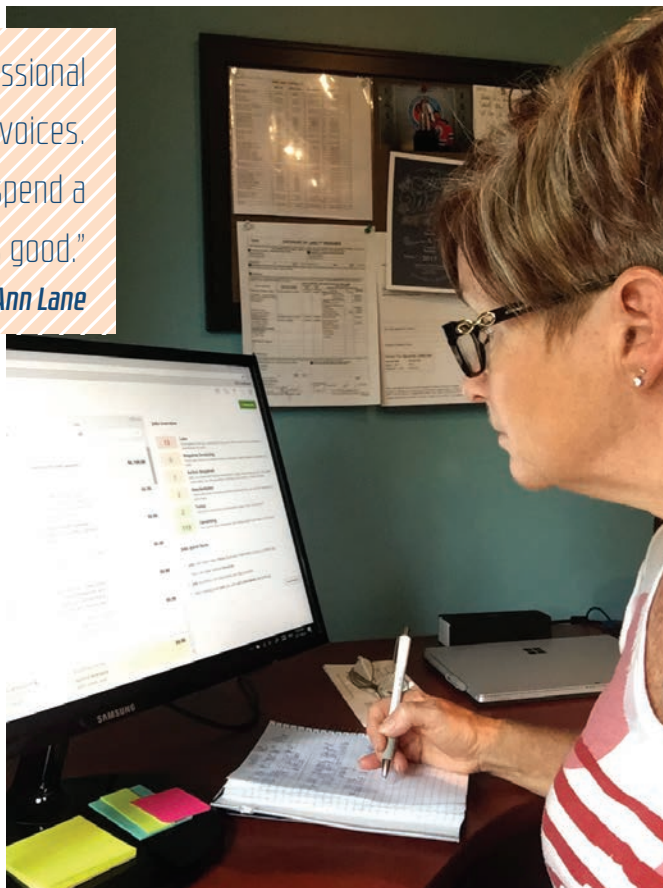
call but the property managers get the invoices, and they want to be able to explain the problem to tenants. Or sometimes they need photos to make insurance claims. We used to give photos to customers on a stick (zip drive) or email them, but sometimes the files were too big. Now, I do it all directly from Jobber.”

The software also makes dispatching easier. When Lane receives a service call, she uses the Jobber system to send a work order to Len’s or Kyle’s cellphone — no phone call required. In addition, Lane can include all relevant customer information to make the job easier for the technician. Providing all that information without having to make a phone call and verbally explain a job dramatically minimizes the chances of omitting vital information, she points out.

After a job is closed, Jobber automatically sends Lane a reminder to create an invoice. Then she closes the job and invoices it. She emails invoices to customers, sometimes on the same day the job is completed. That allows Park Lane Plumbing to get paid faster, as opposed to mailing out invoices. That, in turn, increases cash flow — a critical component of running a successful small business. Moreover, Jobber syncs up with QuickBooks accounting software, Lane notes.


The company used to rely on another system for dispatching, invoicing and tracking customer data. But it was very complicated and probably better suited for a large company. “It was like looking at a giant Excel spreadsheet all the time,” she explains. “And if I accidentally hit the wrong button, it messed things up.

“But you can’t mess up with Jobber,” she adds. “I could sit down with any average Joe and teach them how to use it. It’s very intuitive and very clean and 100 percent reliable. Once you get on top of it, it’s an absolute piece of cake to use.”



▲ Park Lane Plumbing owner, Ann Lane, looks over the Jobber field-service management software on her computer at her home office in Sherwood Park, Alberta. Lane has found the use of the software to be easy and has helped the company become more knowledgeable to its customers. (Photo courtesy of Park Lane Plumbing)

Lane says she was concerned about converting from the old business management system to Jobber because she didn’t want to lose all the customer data she’d worked so hard to compile over the years. But the conversion was seamless. “It’s a very clean, simple system to use,” she says. “I loved it from the get-go.”

The annual cost of using the Jobber software varies from customer to customer. In Park Lane Plumbing’s case, the annual fee is just under \$600 — money very well spent, Lane says. “The instant access to customers’ work histories makes me look so knowledgeable and professional — customers love our attention to detail,” she says. “The bottom line is that Jobber just makes me look good. It absolutely sets us apart from other businesses.” 

Staying Through Tough Times

Missouri contractor continues with septic and portable restroom operations after adding those in 2008 to keep the company going

By Marian Bond

When Shane Lane opened his plumbing business 20 years ago, he focus on the typical plumbing service, repair and new construction work, but that changed in 2008 when the recession hit.

Now, the company, based in Hermann, Missouri, offers services in the septic and portable restroom industry. That side of the operation now accounts for 10 percent of the revenue for Reliable Plumbing & Septic.

The customer base is about 80 percent residential and 20 percent commercial. Lane and Mike Bruno own the company that operates with two plumbers and two apprentices.

“When I’m in the office all day, I’m just not a pleasant person to be around. I don’t feel that sense of accomplishment and satisfaction I get when I’m out in the field.”

Shane Lane

Q: What is the general area that you serve?

Shane: We are in a small town that’s about 2,500 in population, and we travel a radius of about 40 miles. The total population as a whole is 80,000 to 100,000.

Q: What was involved in opening the septic portion of your business?

Shane: I had to spend a couple hundred thousand dollars in equipment. I had to buy trucks and toilets. It’s just a supplement to my main business.



▲ The leadership staff of Reliable Plumbing & Septic, from left, Shane Lane, Mike Bruno and Nick Nolting, stand near their vehicles at the company yard in Hermann, Missouri.

Q: What other services have you offered?

Shane: We do offer jetting as we do sewer cleaning and repair. In our commercial work, we are dealing with and serving multiple bed-and-breakfast establishments, car dealerships, gas stations, public works buildings, restaurants and multiple hotels in our area by providing all our services.

Q: New construction is an important element in your company. What does this involve?

Shane: In addition to plumbing and fixtures, we also do gas piping and fire sprinkler installations. Generally we work with the homeowner, and occasionally we are a sub-contractor. The custom homes we work on are generally 4,000 to 4,500 square feet.

Q: How do you promote Reliable Plumbing & Septic?

Shane: Most of the work we get comes from word-of-mouth. I still use the telephone directory because older people in our area still frequently go there. When we added other services, we advertised quite heavily. Today, I have a good

multiplier for my advertising that I negotiated a while ago, so it doesn't cost a whole lot, relatively speaking.

Q: Can you tell us about the sewer work your company offers?

Shane: We do lateral lines, water service lines and municipal mains. We are not afraid to take on any challenge. We just recently ran 1,800 feet of 6-inch waterlines to part of the city. In our region, there are a lot of lead lines and galvanized pipe that are 70 to 80 years old, and they need to be replaced. We also have a lot of cast-iron pipe, and we can take care of these issues.

Q: What opportunity is there to grow the septic end of the business?


Shane: There is potential to grow this business, but I don't have the time it would take to develop new customers any further than we are. There are a lot of regulations involved in the septic business that complicate things, and I am not anxious to take it that much further. We will take care of the customers we have.

Q: What has been the key to your success?

Shane: I would say it is our work ethic. We go seven days a week if we have to. There is no such thing as a holiday or day off. It is all about our response time. People know that when they call, somebody will be here to answer. That pays off.

Q: How do you feel about what the business has accomplished so far?

Shane: I'm 53 years old, and I plan on doing this until I'm 65. I'm content with the volume of work we have and the rate that it comes in. The part of the business I absolutely enjoy is being part of a solution. But I don't want to drive for an hour and a half to develop new work — to chase work — when I have plenty in my backyard. I don't want to develop a six- or eight-person crew and have more to deal with. I'm trying to do less, not more.

With the good help I have now, I'm able to do well. I would as soon be in the truck as in the field. I enjoy that and physically doing the work considerably more than the paper work. When I'm in the office all day, I'm just not a pleasant person to be around. I don't feel that sense of accomplishment and satisfaction I get when I'm out in the field. 



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Quick Response

Plumbing contractor, restoration company work together to get home back in working order after radiator pipes burst *By Irwin Rapoport*

When radiators and pipes burst, timely intervention is needed to limit the damage. A New York City couple owning a country house in Kingston, New York, considered themselves lucky the flooding caused by a broken radiator in the winter of 2016 only lasted about 24 hours.

“The oil burner malfunctioned and the heat went off during a cold spell, and the house wasn’t checked,” says Jeff Lowe, president of Jeff Lowe Plumbing, Heating & Air Conditioning of Kingston. “One of the radiators froze and broke, and that led to plumbing lines freezing and breaking. The water damaged the floors and ceilings. The radiator that broke was the first to thaw out, and luckily it was caught before the others had thawed. We were able to get the heat on, drain what we could and minimize the damage.”

The water ended up in the basement, rising to about 12 inches before help arrived to turn the water off. PuroClean Professional Restoration, also of Kingston, was the first on the scene after being notified by the local police department due to an alarm. PuroClean then called Lowe Plumbing to help on the plumbing side.

“Emergencies never happen Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.,” says Miriam Gibbons, an account

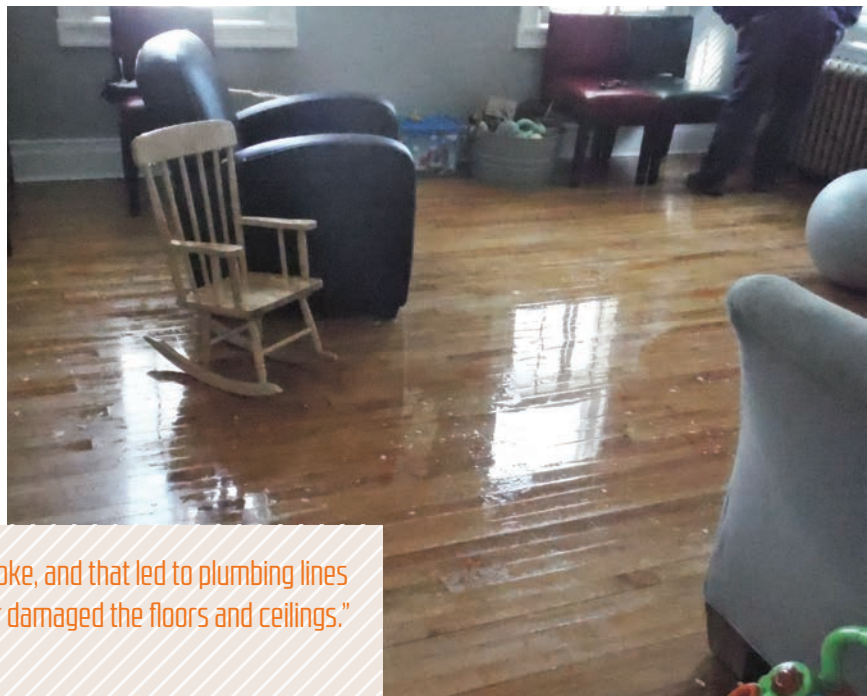
executive at PuroClean. “Our restoration work could not begin full-scale until the plumbing repairs were completed. This family needed help to save their home. Our equipment is temperature-sensitive, and we needed the leak to be plugged and the heat restored for us to begin the restoration.”

GETTING TO WORK

Lowe Plumbing was quick to respond, and in the end, eight of the 12 cast-iron radiators were replaced as well as

Continued ▶

▼ Water sits on the hardwood floor of a house in Kingston, New York, after radiator pipes froze and burst while the homeowners were away. Crews from Jeff Lowe Plumbing, Heating & Air Conditioning were hired to come in and repair the radiators and check over the other plumbing systems in the house. Crews were on the job for four months. (Photos courtesy of PuroClean Professional Restoration)



“One of the radiators froze and broke, and that led to plumbing lines freezing and breaking. The water damaged the floors and ceilings.”
Jeff Lowe



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- ◀ Water from a burst radiator hose seeps through the upstairs floor, causing the ceiling on the floor below to bubble.
- ▶ Crews from Jeff Lowe Plumbing, Heating & Air Conditioning had to open walls and pull up floorboards to repair pipes that were damaged when they froze and later burst.

several plumbing lines, which required opening up ceilings and floors to reach damaged sections of pipe.

“Once we drained the radiators and pipes and removed some of the debris, we started on the immediate repairs to see what went wrong,” Lowe says. “We had to order some refurbished radiators. Fortunately, the boiler was not damaged. Had the leak not been discovered earlier, there would have been much more damage and the house could have been lost.”

Lowe Plumbing crews were on site the day after the leak was detected and the assessment began. Water was turned off and radiators drained, disconnected, and lines capped. Pressure testing was later initiated to determine where the leaks in the pipes had occurred.

“We found that some of the fittings cracked in the ceilings, and the carpenters on site opened them up,” Lowe says. “We were on site for about four months. In the first week, we were able to get the undamaged radiators back online and work with the insurance company to order the refurbished radiators. Later on, we quoted prices for additional work to repair the plumbing and heating systems, and they were approved.”

PuroClean brought in heaters to warm the house so that draining operations could be done. The complete house restoration covered hardwood floors, ceilings, and bathrooms due to water damage and opening up sections to repair the pipes.

Although the plumbing firm has dealt with such problems before, this was the most serious incident it had to repair — about \$30,000 worth of work. Depending on the day, Lowe Plumbing either had two or four people on site. Progress reports were sent to PuroClean, and they forwarded them to the owners.

PREVENTING FUTURE INCIDENTS


Lowe noted that additions to alarm systems can alert homeowners to drops in temperatures and thermostats can be linked to a phone connection to let people know that the heating system is operating — the line keeps ringing if



the system is on and a busy signal is heard if it is not functioning. Asking friends to check on the system is another option.

“With cold weather, the heating system should be checked every day,” Lowe says. “If the heat goes off, the house can freeze overnight depending upon how tight it is and how much insulation is there. I always recommend that if the homeowner is going away for the winter or on a vacation — and this also applies for the summer as well — to turn off the main domestic water source. If something happens like a water heater leaking, a pipe breaking or a toilet tank cracking, turning the water off prevents a lot of damage from occurring.”

Lowe Plumbing crews know the drill when dealing with emergency situations.

“Every time we get a cold winter, you always get a few of these jobs,” Lowe says. “Basically, you start off in the basement once everything is stabilized and work your way up, testing with air pressure, getting some temporary heat on — going from one floor to another. To find the hidden damage, we try to isolate certain sections of the system with valves to discover where the leaks are. We keep testing until we can pin it down.” 

“Every time we get a cold winter, you always get a few of these jobs.”
Jeff Lowe



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By Craig Mandli

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The **Z Control Gateway** system from **Zoeller Pump Company** provides notifications of high-water events through an existing wired or Wi-Fi router, or by using an accessory cellular device. It is a solution for locations that don't need the sophistication of a SCADA system but have some sort of available internet nearby. If the application can benefit from notification or remote control, testing, and diagnostics of crucial pump equipment, then a connected high-water alarm with auxiliary inputs for control panels may be a simple solution. **800/928-7867; www.zoeller.com.**



REHAU, Building Solutions Division, Smart Controls

The **REHAU, Building Solutions Division, Smart Controls** system, designed for residential and midrange commercial buildings, enables intelligent integration and optimization of a building's HVAC system components. The system can be accessed with any internet-accessible device, allowing users to make adjustments to a building's indoor climate from practically any location in the world. Even when not on site, users can still be sure their HVAC systems are optimized for maximum energy efficiency and comfort. While the appeal of the system to homeowners may be primarily its convenience, it can also add efficiency for a commercial building where a few optimization adjustments can add thousands to the bottom line. **800/247-9445; www.na.rehau.com.**



Controls/Control Panels

Jet Inc. Model 197

The **Model 197** control panel from **Jet Inc.** monitors the operation of the treatment system aerator and additional components. It can monitor single- or dual-aeration systems with selectable high- and low-amperage monitor settings. The panels have dedicated alarm and control circuits with separate power circuits for aeration devices. In addition to the aerator control circuits, the panel contains three auxiliary 120-volt output circuits for external device control relays. Panels include three low-voltage auxiliary input circuits selectable for N/O or N/C alarm inputs. An integrated pump power control relay is automatically disabled in an auxiliary device alarm condition. A signal array includes a power indicator LED and four additional equipment alarm indicator LEDs. The integrated alarm buzzer has an output for an optional remote-mounted audible alarm. An external reset switch and internal master reset switch are standard. **800/321-6960; www.jetincorp.com.**



TouchSensor Technologies LevelGuard

The 100 percent solid-state **LevelGuard** sump/sewage pump control from **TouchSensor Technologies** solves the problem of failing float switches leading to basement floods. It has no moving parts and has been tested to over 4 million cycles. It is easy to install on any 10-amp pump and is contamination-resistant. **877/342-3261; www.levelguardproducts.com.**



Viega Hydronic Mixing Block

The **Viega Hydronic Mixing Block** simplifies wiring, piping and programming for radiant heating systems. The unit is a user-friendly and economical solution for controlling radiant heating systems. It combines mixing, control, air elimination and a circulator in a single, simple unit that makes wiring, piping and programming easy. Installing the unit is an easy process, as it features only three connections with clearly labeled fittings and ports. The installer inserts the fittings, mounts the unit into the bracket, and then ties it into the system. The block's control offers an intuitive menu structure for quick, simple programming without sifting through multiple menus. **800/976-9819; www.viega.us.**



Waterline Controls liquid level controls

Liquid level controls from **Waterline Controls** use an electronic sensor that contains multiple stainless steel probes inserted into the liquid being measured. These sensor probes never foul, plate or degrade, no matter the water quality. The sensor array is connected to a controller that runs software to determine the water level and activate relays accordingly. The relays can be connected to any operation but are primarily used for valves, pumps and alarms. The only moving parts are the relays, which can be easily tested and inexpensively replaced. Sensors are available configured as internal and external static pipe, Vanstone flange and hanging wire. All products are ETL Listed to the Industrial Controls UL Standard 508. Integrated firmware controls all functions of the relays and the sensing. **888/905-1892; www.waterlinecontrols.com.**



Honda Power Equipment WB20XT3

The general-purpose WB20XT3 pump from **Honda Power Equipment** is designed with heavy-duty full frame protection; a rigid-mounted cast iron pump volute; and an abrasive-resistant, silicon-carbide mechanical seal. Powered by a 120cc Honda GX120 OHV engine, it has a discharge capacity of 164 gpm. Typical applications include light construction, irrigation and flood control. **678/339-2600; www.powerequipment.honda.com.**



Orenco Systems Biotube ProPak Pump Package

Biotube ProPak Pump Packages from **Orenco Systems** are complete, ready-to-install pump packages in a box. They are used for filtering and pumping effluent from single- or dual-compartment septic tanks to gravity or pressurized discharge points. Pump vault technology eliminates the need for a separate dosing tank. Packages include a Biotube filter cartridge, which filters up to two-thirds of solids, so only liquid from the tank's clear zone is pumped. Filters are easy to remove and clean without pulling the pump vault. All components are designed to be quickly installed and easily maintained. The PF Series high-head effluent pump is field-serviceable and field-repairable, and pump controls are designed for the specific package you purchase. Multiple models are available. Free ProPak Select software provides fast, error-free hydraulic calculations and generates system curves. **800/348-9843; www.orenco.com.**



Effluent/Sewage/Sump Pumps

Hammelmann Corp. HDP series

The **HDP** sewer pump series from **Hammelmann Corp.** is suited for sewer cleaning applications. With flow up to 160 gpm and pressures of 3,200 psi, the pumps are designed to handle any sewer blockage problem. They have a compact design with optimum space utilization and an integral reduction gear. They are available in horizontal or vertical models and can operate at any angle. They have reversible pump heads, a central or side suction connection, discharge connections on both sides, and a left- or right-hand drive shaft. Their water end is suitable for recycled water. There is less wear due to high-grade solid ceramic plungers, wear-resistant valve seats, low flow velocity over suction and discharge valves, packing seal sets within rust-resistant stainless steel sleeves, a slow plunger speed, an industrial drive-end specifically designed for continuous duty, a pressurized oil lubrication system, and clockwise or counterclockwise rotation. **800/783-4935; www.hammelmann.com.**





ScreenCo Systems Patz Sydex

Patz Sydex progressive cavity pumps, distributed by **ScreenCo Systems**, are multiple-application, high-perfor-

mance industrial pumps available in block or long-coupled configurations. They are designed to ensure trouble-free, long service life. By using this system, the pumps supply the coupling rod as a complete preassembled kit, making assembly and maintenance easy. The pin joint is securely sealed with an elastomer cover and protected by a metallic sleeve. The joint is oil-lubricated to ensure heat dissipation. 208/790-8770; www.screencosystems.com.

Webtrol Pumps MVPS-RE1

The **MVPS-RE1** drop-in package for existing progressive cavity systems from **Webtrol Pumps** has a progressive cavity pump at its center, which provides reliable operation and nearly constant flow, and is easily able to adjust for pressure variations in any system setting, according to the maker. The package is powered by a 1 1/2 hp motor, spinning at 1,750 rpm to provide grinding torque. With all package parts readily available and easily replaceable, it can quickly and easily be serviced in the field. 800/769-7867; www.webtrol.com.



and cut, while the soft solids become slurry, minimizing downstream solids and preventing clogging. The engineered design prevents wrapping at the inlet, which clogs grinders. The cutters are made of case-hardened 440 stainless steel, and are easy to sharpen and adjust clearances. 855/281-6830; www.ashlandpump.com.

Submersible Pumps

BJM Pumps XP-JX

XP-JX heavy-duty submersible pumps from **BJM Pumps** are ideal for tough conditions where explosion-proof, FM, C/US approved (Class I, Division 1, Group C & D) are needed. The impeller, volute and strainer are constructed of 316 stainless steel. The elastomers such as O-rings and lip seals are made of FKM. They have oil-lubricated double mechanical seals and a separate lip seal. They offer up to 264 gpm and heads to 113 feet. 877/256-7867; www.bjmpumps.com.



Polylok Inc. / Zabel PL-CPE4A

The **Polylok Inc. / Zabel PL-CPE4A** is a submersible 4/10 hp, 115-volt, single-phase effluent pump with a 2-inch NPT vertical discharge. It has a maximum head of 38 feet and a maximum flow of 56 gpm. The pump is designed with a 3,450 rpm oil-filled permanent split-capacitor motor and has an amp rating of 6.6 for 115 volts, a rugged cast-iron housing and volute equipped with a cast-iron vortex impeller capable of passing a 3/4-inch-diameter solid. The stainless steel shaft is supported by two single-row, oil-lubricated ball bearings. The shaft seal is an inboard design with a secondary Exclusion V seal. It has a 20-foot UL/CSA-listed power cable suitable for submersible service and fitted with a three-prong plug. The unit is supplied with an integrated clip for the included piggyback mechanical float switch for automatic operation. 800/765-9565; www.polylok.com.



Grinder Pump

Ashland Pump AGP-HC200 grinder pump

The **AGP-HC200** grinder pump from **Ashland Pump** has a radial portion that grinds waste into fine slurry and a cutting-edge axial portion that cuts and chops stringy solids and other forms of nonhuman waste into pieces small enough to pass through the small-diameter discharge pipe. Fibrous materials get chopped



Water Pumps



Cat Pumps Model 3570

The **Model 3570** from **Cat Pumps** is the ideal combination of high-flow and high-pressure, rated to 30 gpm and 3,000 psi. Higher flow rates are

desirable to get more work done in less time. Chrome-plated brass manifolds provide added strength and corrosion resistance. Concentric, high-density polished solid plungers provide a true wear surface that results in long seal life. The drive-end uses matched connecting rods and oversized bearings to provide many hours of trouble-free service. **763/780-5440; www.catpumps.com.**

Mongoose Jettors by Sewer Equipment UDOR run dry water pumps

UDOR run dry water pumps, distributed by **Mongoose Jettors by Sewer Equipment**, are standard equipment on all Mongoose Jettors and are manufactured with brass manifolds; heat-treated crankshafts; stainless steel check valves; industrial-quality bearings; solid ceramic plungers; and heavy-duty, high-pressure seals. The ceramic plungers and improved machining technology means it can tolerate changes in temperature — even those caused by running the pump dry. **877/735-4640; www.mongoosejettors.com.**



Pump Parts/Components

Caleffi North America 535H

The **535H** pressure-reducing valve from **Caleffi North America** is engineered to deliver accurate pressure regulation under varying pressure and draw conditions. Low internal pressure losses produce superior falloff performance, enabling more flow capacity to fixtures. It includes NSF 61 certification, a 180-degree F temperature rating, antiscaling components and convenient cartridge design. It has a pressure pre-adjustment knob with convenient front and back psi indicator and a 15 to 95 psi adjustment range. The removable cartridge with stainless steel mesh filter makes for easy in-pipe servicing. Its seat and shuttle seal design minimizes turbulence and noise. A contour-shaped EPDM diaphragm withstands sudden pressure fluctuations. Scale-resistant internal parts minimize lime scale formation. It is hot-water booster system compatible and is 300 psi and 180-degree F rated. It is certified to ASSE 1003, NSF 61, NSF 372, CSA B356. **414/238-2360; www.caleffi.com.**



Franklin Electric Little Giant SPBS Series Battery Backup System

The **Little Giant SPBS Series Battery Backup System** from **Franklin Electric** allows contractors to provide homeowners with peace of mind that their basement is protected from flooding when the electricity goes out. It comes in four systems: two options that feature the full system including a primary sump pump, backup sump pump, controller, charger, and alarm, and two options providing everything except the primary sump pump. The full systems use Little Giant 6EC or 10EC sump pumps that deliver capacities from 53 to 67 gpm. The result is a system with high flow rates, quick charging time and hours of battery longevity. Adding the RS-12 switch provides hours of reliable pumping when the electricity goes out. The switch technology requires nothing mechanical to operate the pump, minimizing the opportunity for mechanical hang-ups. **260/824-2900; www.littlegiant.com.**






Safe-T-Cover pump enclosure

If you need to install a pump outdoors and are looking for protection from the elements and vandals or if you need to reduce the noise of a pump installed indoors, **Safe-**

T-Cover manufactures pump enclosures of various sizes, including custom models to meet the unique requirements of the project. The enclosures are made of 18-gauge 5052 marine-grade aluminum and insulated with 1 1/2-inch rigid polyiso. The enclosures have removable, lockable access panels for routine maintenance and many smaller models offer a lift-up roof for complete access to the pump. A variety of colors are available, as are thermostatically controlled heaters and exhaust fans to manage the internal temperature of the enclosure. **800/245-6333; www.safe-t-cover.com.**

SJE-Rhombus EZconnex

The **EZconnex** float switch connection system from **SJE-Rhombus** is an efficient way to install and maintain float switches in a wet well for level control applications. Simply install the wiring manifold, plug in the quick-release (pinch and pull) float switches, and wire the manifold cable to the control panel. The manifold cable contains colored wire pairs that match colored caps on the manifold housing for easy field wiring and identification. A protective rubber boot provides a dual-seal design for an extra layer of protection to keep the connection clean and dry. This system can be used with one to four float switches; sealing plugs are available for unused ports. It is rated for short-term submersion in water. Three- and four-port models are available, along with multiple manifold and float cable lengths. It is CSA certified. **888/342-5753; www.sjrhombus.com.** 




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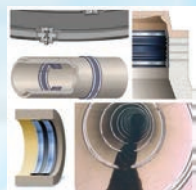
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Pumps, Controls and Alarms

By Craig Mandli

Leak detection system provides peace of mind



Problem: A Fort Lauderdale, Florida, property experienced a supply line leak while unoccupied that caused tens of thousands of dollars in damage after the insurance deductible was paid. The homeowners began shutting the water off when they left the property for fear of future leaks. The home insurance carrier informed the homeowners that they were required to install a leak detection device with auto shut-off in order for the home to remain insured, and it provided an allowance to pay for the installation.

Solution: The technicians at H2NO Leak recommended a **FloLogic System**. The system finds leaks as small as one drip per second anywhere in a plumbing supply. It catches leaks by identifying continuous flow times that exceed normal use, based on whether the property is occupied or unoccupied. The valve is waterproof for outdoor installation, includes battery backup, can be installed in any orientation, integrates with home security panels, and Wi-Fi connectivity allows remote oversight and control through a smartphone app.

Result: The client maintained their insurance coverage, receives a new premium discount and never turns off their water supply. When FloLogic catches future leaks, H2NO Leak can locate and fix them, further developing the value of the customer. 877/356-5644; www.flologic.com.

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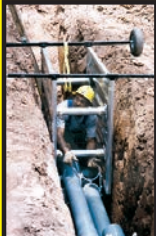
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GPS Insight makes *Inc.* 5000 list eight times

Inc. magazine ranked GPS Insight number 4,250 with three-year sales growth of 62 percent on its 36th annual *Inc.* 5000 list, the ranking of the nation's fastest-growing private companies. This is the eighth consecutive year GPS Insight has been named an honoree.

HD Supply Waterworks changes name

HD Supply Waterworks announced it is changing its name to Core & Main, effective immediately. The company, previously a division of HD Supply, currently employs about 2,900 associates at 246 branch locations throughout the U.S.

General Pipe Cleaners' Andy Zelazny retires

Andy Zelazny, national sales manager for General Pipe Cleaners, announced his retirement at the end of September. He joined the company in 1977 and was named national sales manager in 2001.

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▲ John Hazen White Jr., Taco Comfort Solutions owner and executive chairman of the board, poses with Student Scholarship Award recipients and their Taco Comfort Solutions employee fathers. From left to right: Jim Hoskins and son Jason Hoskins of Coventry, Rhode Island; White; and Madison Davis and Tim Davis of Huntersville, North Carolina.



▲ The Fishburn family of Plymouth, Indiana, with Student Scholarship Award winners Kyle and sister Jennifer holding their framed awards. Tim Fishburn (standing behind Kyle and Jennifer) is a machinist for Taco Hydroflo Pumps.

Taco Comfort Solutions student scholarship award winners announced

Taco Comfort Solutions has announced the winners of its annual Student Scholarship Awards, which provide college funding assistance for children of its employees. Jason Hoskins of Coventry, Rhode Island, earned the Thomas J. Farrell Scholarship, given in honor of the former dean of arts and sciences at Johnson & Wales University and past president of Taco's White Family Foundation. Madison Davis of Huntersville, North Carolina, will attend the College of Charleston Honors College as a William Aiken Fellow, majoring in biology and international studies. And sister and brother Jennifer and Kyle Fishburn of Plymouth, Indiana, will receive scholarships. Jennifer is a sophomore at Purdue University, majoring in plant science, and Kyle will be a freshman at Purdue University, studying environmental and natural resources planning.

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 Other _____

WHAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR PRIMARY JOB FUNCTION?

- President/CEO/Owner Management/Supervisor
 Operator/Technician Other _____

HOW MANY EMPLOYEES DO YOU SUPERVISE OR WORK WITH AT YOUR FACILITY?

- 0-3 4-9 10-19 20+

HOW MANY VEHICLES DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE IN SERVICE?

- 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21+

WHAT IS THE APPROXIMATE POPULATION OF THE AREA IN WHICH YOU PROVIDE SERVICE?

- 0-10,000 10,001-50,000 50,001-100,000
 100,001-200,000 200,001-500,000 500,001+

WHAT IS YOUR ANNUAL EQUIPMENT BUDGET?

- \$0-\$50K \$51K-\$75K \$76K-\$150K \$151K-\$250K
 \$251K-\$350K \$350K +

WHAT SERVICES DO YOU PERFORM ON A REGULAR BASIS?

- Plumbing Maintenance/Repair Sewer/Drain Cleaning
 New Construction - Commercial Pipe Bursting
 New Construction - Residential HVAC TV Inspection
 Location/Leak Detection Septic System Installation
 Septic Tank Pumping Other _____

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Product Spotlight

Septic Monitoring From Flush to Field

By Craig Mandli

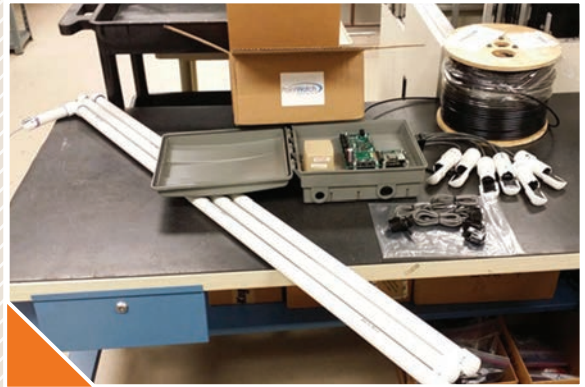
There are several points in a typical septic system where problems can crop up. An effluent filter can clog, the tank can overflow and the drainfield can become saturated. Those problems, and countless others, can add up to big bucks in repairs, not to mention inconvenience for a homeowner.

With PointWatch Systems septic system monitoring, both homeowners and service providers can see the status of all components of a septic system online anytime and receive alerts to a telephone, computer and mobile device. Monitoring sensors in tanks, distribution boxes and drainfields provide real-time information on liquid level, pump condition and temperature in the system. Knowing system status allows installers to optimize the performance of a system and head off emergency or after-hours calls.

“Monitoring can actually lead to lower costs over a septic system’s lifetime,” says Eric Larson, vice president of business, marketing and sales development for PointWatch Systems. “Catching problems early means you’re typically only making only minor repairs instead of major ones.”

PointWatch Systems technicians install strategically placed sensors throughout every component of the septic system, including field sensors, leachfields, inspection pipes, pumps and pump control. They are all tied to a central gateway, which communicates over the internet to cloud servers where data is stored. The account can be monitored by the homeowner and/or service and alarm provider.

“It’s a way of being proactive with the maintenance of a septic system,” says Larson. “Having this type of safeguard



in place can help lower insurance costs in the long run, too. We feel it’s a system that easily pays for itself.”

PointWatch Systems monitors the status of each sensor, ensuring it is online and monitoring low and high alarms at predetermined thresholds. The system also offers the ability to remotely turn pumps on and off. In addition, a 24/7 call center monitors alerts and can coordinate service provider visits. PointWatch Systems also designs the electrical boards for each system and writes compatible software for them.

“It is actually going to increase revenue for service providers while increasing the life of the septic system,” says Larson. “The service provider is going to be keeping each facet of the system in operation, rather than dealing with a total system failure caused by a small problem that wasn’t caught.” 320/362-4157; www.pointwatch.com.

General Pipe Cleaners Metro power drain cleaner

The Metro power drain cleaner from General Pipe Cleaners has a capacity of 75 feet of 5/8-inch Flexicore wire rope center cable and works in 3- to 6-inch lines. Its narrow profile is easier to load into trucks and works in tight places



and on stairs. The Metro features a fold-down handle, stair climbers, a truck-loading wheel and a tough frame on 10-inch heavy-duty wheels for easy transport. Automatic feed moves the cable into and out of drains fast, and the variable-speed control drives and retracts cable at up to 20 feet per minute. The power cable feed and guide tub combination keeps hands clean and free from the spinning cable. 800/245-6200; www.drainbrain.com.

John Guest USA ProLock Male Connectors

ProLock Male Connectors from John Guest USA are available in 3/8-inch CTS by 1/2-inch NPT to 1-inch CTS by 1-inch NPT sizes. The connectors simplify installations and are an idea for under-the-counter filter housings. Its body is manufactured from high-quality engineered black thermoplastic, making them UV-resistant. The lead-free fittings are suitable for use with copper, PEX or CPVC pipe and require no tools to make secure, leak-proof connections. **973/808-5600; www.johnguest.com.**



Reed Manufacturing Co. cordless power pipe beveler



Cordless power pipe bevelers from Reed Manufacturing Co. deburr and bevel plastic pipe 2 inches and larger in diameter. The lightweight tool creates fast, smooth bevels in the field with ease. Adjustable for bevel length, the RBIT1 router bit evenly cuts a 15-degree external bevel up to 5/8-inch long. The Cordless Power Beveler Kit consists of the beveler attachment powered by a 22,000 rpm, 18-volt cordless die grinder with a 4-amp-hour lithium-ion battery. The included RBIT1 cutting tool is a four-flute, carbide router bit. **800/666-3691; www.reedmfgco.com.**

Water Cannon Inc. - MWBE nonmarking pressure washer hose

Durable double-wire stainless-steel-wrapped nonmarking pressure washer hose from Water Cannon Inc. - MWBE has a 4-1 safety factor and has a working pressure of 8,000 psi with burst strength of 32,000 psi. The gray polyurethane cover does not leave marks on the surface. **800/333-9274; www.watercannon.com.**



Moen Incorporated app-driven digital shower

The U by Moen Incorporated is a cloud-based, app-driven digital shower that offers Wi-Fi mobile connectivity and personalization. It features remote activation via smartphone as well as the ability to pause and stop remotely. It also provides countless customization settings directly in the shower or up to 12 personalized presets in the app. **877/663-6776; www.moen.com.**



GROHE Tempesta shower system


The GROHE Tempesta shower system is built to withstand the rigors of daily use, making it ideal for families with small children. The system includes an exposed thermostat with SafeStop to help prevent scalding, an Aquadimmer volume control diverter for easy switching between overhead and hand shower, and an adjustable-height holder to suit all size users. The sleek, minimalist design lines are protected by StarLight, which provides long-lasting sheen and protection against scratching and stains. **800/444-7643; www.grohe.com.**

RIDGID manual hydraulic crimp tool

The RE 60-MLR manual hydraulic crimp tool from RIDGID crimps color-coded lugs and splices up to 600 MCM copper and 350 MC aluminum. Featuring a lightweight, compact, and ergonomic design, it includes RapidAdvance technology, which requires only one pump to engage the lug, and reduces the total number of pumps to complete the connection. The low handle force reduces hand strain, and a built-in pressure relief valve indicates when maximum force is reached and crimping is complete. The tool has 330-degree rotation and slim latching crimp head design for confined panel space use. **800/769-7743; www.ridgid.com.**



StoneAge ProDrain PRO-700 drain cleaner

The ProDrain PRO-700 accessory from StoneAge for the AutoBox ABX-PRO tackles drain cleaning jobs. It does not require tethering. If a system becomes unsteady, an integrated circuit dumps the water to ensure operator safety. The protective splash plate is weighted for stability, and a hose guide tube directs the tool to ensure precise jetting. **866/795-1586; www.stoneagetools.com.** 

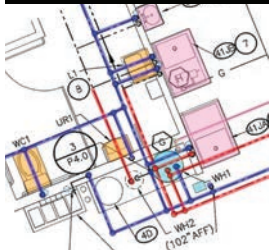


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