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North Carolina couple grows plumbing operation with hard work, dedication and treating customers with respect
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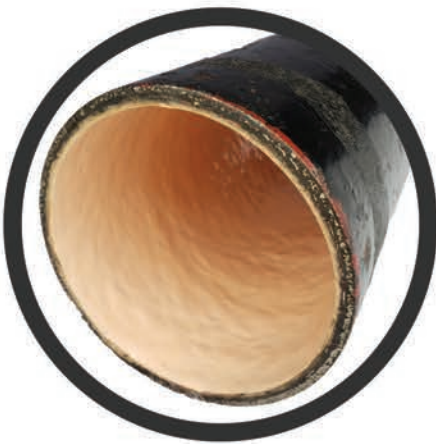
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On the ROAD

Time is Money

Automated customer-service software increases operational efficiencies for New Jersey contractor.

- By Ken Wysocky



On the Cover

Plumber Ron Brockette, left, with Carrboro Plumbing in Carrboro, North Carolina, cuts a piece of insulation as he insulates a newly installed waterline inside a home addition in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Looking on is plumber Jasmine Jones. Carrboro Plumbing was founded in 2007 by Chris and Emily Kreutzer and now has 12 employees and eight service vehicles.

(Photography by Andrew Krech)

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Profile

NuFlow Certified Contractor

When John Perry and his dad, Harley, decided to add pipe lining to their plumbing business, they took their time evaluating partners.

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When John attended a NuFlow Annual Summit and met other NuFlow Certified Contractors it was a turning point for his business.

“After the summit we designated a crew specifically to pipe lining. Eventually, we had to rebuild our entire plumbing business because our pipe lining took off.”

John still keeps in touch with the NuFlow team and the network of NuFlow Certified Contractors.

“Anytime one of us has a question about a job, we can reach out to see what other people have done. The NuFlow crew is experienced and knowledgeable. We make a great team!”



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Cory Dellenbach

Tackling the Tough Jobs

Right crew, right attitude will go a long way in accomplishing those difficult jobs you get called to

There is a moment of satisfaction that you get when you accomplish something that either had never been done before or nobody thought you could do it. You feel like you're a superhero and nothing can touch you.

I imagine that is how plumbers feel when they get called to an emergency job, solve an emergency for the customer, and retain that customer for future work.

Solving those problems for customers are what drive many of you to the plumbing industry as I've read in many emails from our readers. You enjoy helping people and finding solutions to issues that they have with plumbing systems.

FINDING SOLUTIONS

When plumber Chris Kreutzer was called to a restaurant where they suspected a leak, instead of breaking up the concrete slab floor and creating a giant mess for the customer, he proposed cutting in valves to isolate the problem.

That's what he and his team at Carrboro Plumbing in Carrboro, North Carolina, did. They found the leak easier and, because of that job, secured the restaurant as a long-term customer.

Finding solutions for difficult jobs like that are what drive Carrboro Plumbing, featured in this issue, to do what they love every day.

SMALL JOBS, BIG JOBS

It doesn't matter if that job that you've helped a customer with was small or big. Every job comes with its challenges and finding a solution to them can be difficult at times. That's when you depend on your crew you've hired or work with to put heads together and come up with a way to solve it.

Everyone on your team has different job experiences and putting those together can create a pretty awesome team that will make almost any job doable.

In this issue's Industry Insider column, Randy Lorge talks about the differences a plumber may see in plumbing codes in different states. It can be a challenge figuring them all out, but each one has its advantages and disadvantages.

It doesn't matter if that job that you've helped a customer with was small or big. Every job comes with its challenges and finding a solution to them can be difficult at times.

It also helps you understand why another plumber may have done a job one way, while you tackle it another way.

LET'S SEE THOSE JOBS

I want to see more of your jobs this year. I like to highlight the tough, unique and strange plumbing jobs you've been on. Email me about them, send me pictures of them, or call and tell me about them!

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Enjoy this issue and have fun with those tough jobs! 



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OVERHEARD ONLINE

"(The customer's gratitude) reminded me to be grateful for the privilege of helping others. To be glad I work in an industry where we can make a real and lasting impact on people's lives."

— Remembering the Difference Plumbers Can Make In People's Lives

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CONSISTENT WORK

Preparing Preventive Maintenance Contracts

Establishing maintenance contracts with customers is a good way to gain consistent work, but as with any contract, you'll want to be sure you have everything properly covered from a legal standpoint. This online exclusive explains more. ▲ plumbermag.com/featured

COSMIC PLUMBING

Space Station Gets a Toilet Upgrade

A few months ago, the International Space Station received some upgraded plumbing. A new toilet was designed using astronaut feedback, making it more user-friendly and easier to maintain than the space station's previous bathroom facilities. Read more in this online exclusive.

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TRANSITIONS

How to Prep for Business Succession Planning

Establishing a solid strategy for passing on your business — whether it's staying within the family or transitioning to a different owner — can only be accomplished by doing some planning well ahead of time. This online exclusive details three important steps.

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▼ Carrboro Plumbing owners Emily and Chris Kreutzer stand in front of one of their company service vehicles at their company headquarters in Carrboro, North Carolina.

EMPHASIS ON QUALITY

North Carolina couple grows plumbing operation with hard work, dedication and treating customers with respect

By Ken Wysocky

Photography by Andrew Krech



Carrboro Plumbing Inc., Carrboro, North Carolina

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Chris and Emily Kreutzer

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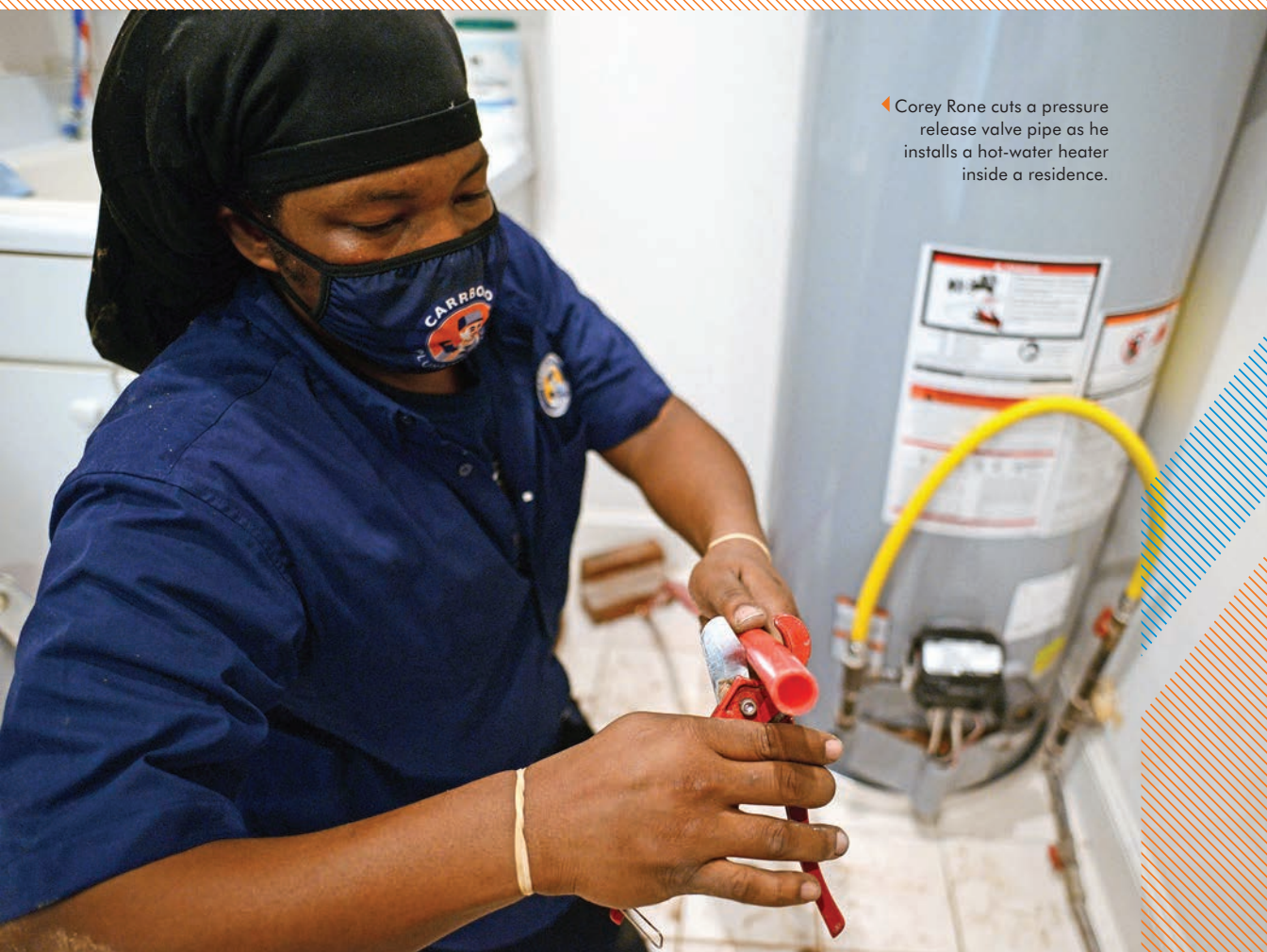
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◀ Corey Rone cuts a pressure release valve pipe as he installs a hot-water heater inside a residence.

About five years ago, plumber Chris Kreutzer got a call from a restaurant owner with a pressing problem: a waterline leak, as indicated by an unusually high water bill.

The co-owner of Carrboro Plumbing in Carrboro, North Carolina, came up with a novel approach to locating the leak, which he figured was in a waterline imbedded in the restaurant's concrete-slab floor.

"I proposed cutting in a bunch of valves to isolate the problem without breaking up the concrete slab, which would force the restaurant to shut down," he explains. "So that's what we did. I turned the water on and off at different locations while one of our technicians observed the water meter."

Eventually Kreutzer isolated the location of the leak to one particular hot waterline that ran to a water heater, which technicians eventually repiped with an overhead line.

"I'd never done anything like that before, but it seemed like a good way to find the leak because it saved the restaurant a lot of money compared to

breaking open the slab," he says. "And now we have a customer for life."

That incident reflects some of the skills and values that have spurred growth and success at Carrboro Plumbing, which Kreutzer co-owns with his wife, Emily. Like innovative problem-solving. Plumbing experience and know-how. And concern for helping customers by providing the most cost-effective solutions to plumbing problems.

The company focuses primarily on residential and commercial service and repair work, mixed in with plumbing installations for residential remodeling projects and roughing in plumbing for commercial new-construction projects.

"Customer service absolutely is our top priority," Chris says. "All of our guys know that. We make that super clear to them and they take ownership of it — they're proud to do good work."

"In the end, it's really all about making customers feel comfortable and being honest," he continues. "Some people have bad experiences with plumbers and are distrustful."

“But we’re straight-forward — we look them in the eye and answer whatever questions they have,” he adds. “We do what’s in their best interests instead of trying to upsell them on things they don’t need.”

To enhance customer service, the company also sends customers appointment reminders via email, as well as a detailed explanation of billing rates to avoid on-the-job misunderstandings.

“And we don’t charge customers for a technician’s learning curve on a particular repair or if we make a mistake,” says Emily. “We always try to be fair to customers. We can treat customers well without short-changing ourselves.”

STEADY GROWTH

The approach has worked well for the company, which the Kreutzers established in 2007. Since starting out with

Chris working solo out of his mother’s mini-van and going door-to-door to hand out business cards, the company has grown to 12 employees, including six full-time plumbers, three helpers and an office manager.

“We’ve emphasized customer service and developed a strong customer base,” says Emily. Word-of-mouth referrals and strong reviews on Google, Facebook, Yelp, Angie’s List and Nextdoor anchor the company’s marketing efforts.

“We have virtually no advertising costs,” she notes. “We’ve found that when people have a good experience, they like to share it.”

Emily also credits the vinyl wraps on the company’s service vehicles for boosting brand awareness and generating service calls. “Even when we had one truck, people would tell us that they see our trucks all over town,” she notes.

Giving Back to the Community: It’s Just the Right Thing to Do

Emily Kreutzer was inspired when she read an article in *Plumber* about a pay-it forward program created by T’N G Plumbing in Dexter, Minnesota. So she called Habitat for Humanity of Orange County NC to find out how Carrboro Plumbing — the company she co-owns with her husband, Chris, in Carrboro, North Carolina — could do something similar.

Turns out they could. Habitat officials told her about three elderly siblings that lived in a house with no water or sewer service. As a result, they used an outhouse and got potable water from an outdoor spigot that would often freeze up in winter.

“In an area where so many people have so much, it’s hard to imagine that people go without such basic necessities,” she says. “I couldn’t imagine my grandparents having to walk through snow to go to an outhouse.”

So on a Saturday in January 2018, all 12 Carrboro Plumbing employees converged on the home. While plumbers laid out and connected a sewer line, roughed in plumbing for the kitchen and a bathroom and installed fixtures and installed a water heater, the remaining employees did some exterior painting and yard work.

“It was a great day because our whole team was there together, which seldom happens,” she says. “And we did it all in one day. It’s amazing what 12 people can accomplish in a day.”

A few months later, Kreutzer posted on the company’s Facebook page a “wish list” on Amazon — similar

to a wedding registry — for items the three siblings needed, such as towels, towel hooks, mirrors, shower curtains and so forth.

“All the items were purchased,” she reports. “So we went back in March and finished the job. It was another great day — lots of happy tears. They were very grateful.”

In all, Kreutzer estimates the company donated about \$10,000 worth of materials and labor. But the return on the investment was priceless, she says.

The company planned to do another project in 2019, but it got delayed to early 2020 — and then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. But as soon as it’s possible, the company plans on partnering with Habitat on a similar project.

The company supports many local and national charities, including Make a Wish Eastern North Carolina, Christmas House, Friends of Orange County DSS (Department of Social Services), American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Doctors Without Borders and Habitat for Humanity of Orange County NC.

But this special project was, well, special.

“It was so gratifying to make a difference,” she says. “It’s so important to give back. We’ve grown in this community because of people and in return, we want to help those who support us. And it’s great having a skill that you know you can use to make a difference in peoples’ lives. It’s just the right thing to do.”

► Plumbers Ron Brockette, left, and Jasmine Jones, right, install a new waterline inside a new home addition in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The company does primarily residential work, along with some commercial.

“Putting money into great vinyl wraps pays for itself pretty quickly — they’re a great marketing tool,” she continues. “How we look and present ourselves is important to our customers.”

DIDN'T PLAN ON PLUMBING

Chris Kreutzer took a roundabout path to a plumbing career. He started out by working for his mother and father, Anne and Tom Kreutzer, who owned and operated a plumbing company in Virginia until 2006. In 2001, he earned a degree in computer engineering from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (aka Virginia Tech). Stymied by a poor job market, he started working for his parents again, as he did during summers in high school and college.

“It didn’t take long before I realized I’d rather be plumbing than working in an office,” he says. “Plus there’s more job security, too.”

“I had an epiphany one day during a service call at a business and saw a bunch of people

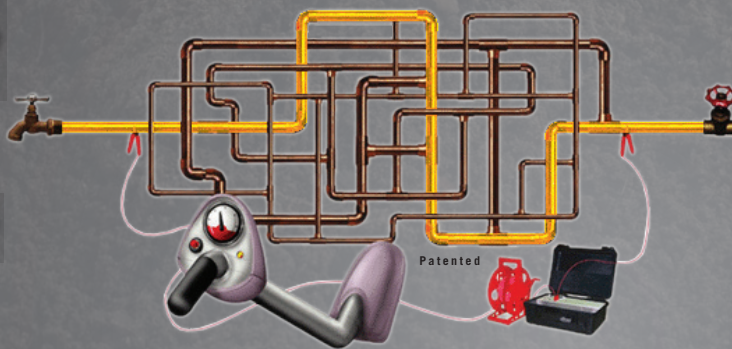


“In the end, it’s really all about making customers feel comfortable and being honest. Some people have bad experiences with plumbers and are distrustful.”

Chris Kreutzer

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working in cubicles,” he adds. “I realized I needed elbow room. I like to move around, not sit still.”

After moving to Wilmington, North Carolina, for what he thought would be a temporary stay, Chris met Emily. Eventually they decided to move to Carrboro, about 15 miles southwest of Durham, so Emily could attend law school at the University of North Carolina.

GREAT EQUIPMENT, EMPLOYEES

As the company grew, so did its roster of equipment. The business currently runs eight service trucks, four Ford E-series vans, three Nissan NV vans and one Nissan pickup truck.

Drain cleaning equipment includes two RIDGID K-60 sectional-cable drain machines, one RIDGID K-1500 sectional-cable machine, one RIDGID K-400 cable drum machine, six hand-held RIDGID Power Spin drain machines and three RIDGID PowerClear units.

The company also relies on a standard RIDGID SeeSnake pipeline-inspection camera with a CS6x monitor; a NaviTrak Scout pipe locator; and a Gen-Ear audio leak-detection system from General Pipe Cleaners, a division of General Wire Spring Co. Technicians use power tools made primarily by Milwaukee Tool, Porter-Cable, Craftsman, Bosch and RIDGID.



▲ Plumber Sim Heninger, left, talks with a customer about calking issues in a shower at a residence in Carrboro. The company’s plumbers take pride in how they work with customers and try to upsell right away.

▲ Jasmine Jones runs the pipe as she installs a new waterline inside a new addition to a home.

Of course, attracting and retaining employees that can use that equipment efficiently is paramount to success. To that end, the company offers employees competitive pay and benefits, which include paying half their health-insurance premiums; nine paid holidays (including a day off to celebrate birthdays); five to 10 days of paid vacation, depending on length of employment; retirement accounts in which the company matches employee contributions up to 3%; and 529 plan education accounts, Emily says.

Interestingly, some Carrboro Plumbing technicians are on their second careers, one having worked as a Wall Street trader (with plumbing experience gained from summer jobs in high school and college) and another as a social worker, Emily points out.

“The nice thing about that for us is they’re mature adults who know what’s expected of them,” she says.

The company also performs two employee performance reviews a year, not one. The sessions focus less on what employees do right or wrong and more on strengths and weaknesses, as well as what kind of work they like and don’t like to do, she adds.



“We have virtually no advertising costs. We’ve found that when people have a good experience, they like to share it.”

Emily Kreutzer

“Happy employees do better work,” Emily says. “We also ask them what they need from us, as well as what we do well as a company and where we could improve. We value their input.”

To attract employees, Emily says she speaks at local career fairs and high schools. She’s even spoken on radio shows in an effort to raise awareness about the lack of skilled tradesmen and the resulting great career opportunities available.

SOFTWARE AIDS EFFICIENCY

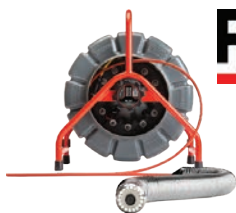
On the business-management side, the company uses Smart Service field-management software and iFleet (a Smart Service program), which boosts productivity

and efficiency. The programs enable technicians to use iPads to receive service schedules, create invoices and collect payments at job sites and write down notes about jobs for future reference. They also can take pictures of jobs, which get filed in a customer database, Emily says.

“In 2017, state regulations changed and we had to start charging sales tax for plumbing calls,” Emily explains. “That’s when we invested in Smart Service. It would’ve put too much on our service guys to have them figuring out sales tax manually. Plus it syncs up with QuickBooks, which makes things easier for our accountant.”

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Plumber Profile



CARRBORO
PLUMBING, INC.



▲ The Carrboro Plumbing staff at their headquarters in Carrboro, North Carolina. From left, front row, Sim Heninger, Jasmine Jones, Chris Kreutzer, Emily Kreutzer and Justin Baker; back row, Jeff Opfer, Jack Elms, Ron Brokette, Shane Harris, Corey Rone and Mark Lutsock.

“It’s very satisfying work. And at the end of a day, you also get to see what you’ve done, which is very gratifying. Service work definitely is my thing — finding weird, tricky problems and figuring them out.”

Chris Kreutzer

morning. “Before, they’d call in to get their next job, which wasn’t as efficient,” she says. “There’s less downtime now because they’re not waiting to find where to go next.”

Moreover, because technicians know ahead of time the kind of service calls they’re faced with, they can stop at a supply house in the morning and get any required parts and materials they don’t already have stocked on their trucks, Emily says.

Furthermore, dispatchers routinely ask customers to send photos of the problem they’re experiencing, which then get sent to technicians, resulting in more accurate pre-call diagnosis.

“Sometimes what customers describe isn’t what’s wrong, so photos are really helpful,” Emily says. “Overall, we couldn’t grow and manage people properly without this system.”

MORE GROWTH, NO REGRETS

As for the future, Chris anticipates more growth ahead, provided the company can find employees with not

only the necessary technical skills, but the right aptitude and attitude to provide great customer service.

“We’re in no hurry to grow,” he says. “We can grow only if the right people come along.”

Areas of expansion could include trenchless pipeline-rehab methods such as pipe bursting and pipe lining, along with investments in leak-detection equipment.

But as Chris looks back at the past 13 years, one thing is certain: He has no regrets about choosing plumbing over computers. He says he truly enjoys the problem-solving aspects of plumbing and the resulting appreciation from customers.

“You fix their problem and they’re so grateful and happy,” he says. “It’s very satisfying work. And at the end of a day, you also get to see what you’ve done, which is very gratifying. Service work definitely is my thing — finding weird, tricky problems and figuring them out.”



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Time Is Money

Automated customer-service software increases operational efficiencies for New Jersey contractor

By Ken Wysocky

With one business decision, Pipe Works Services improved its customer service, increased technician's efficiency, boosted office-staff productivity and burnished the company's image as a modern, consumer-friendly place to do business.

Ticking all those boxes in one fell swoop may sound far-fetched. But that's exactly what the Chatham, New Jersey-based plumbing and HVAC company achieved when it opted to invest in Schedule Engine's cloud-based, customer-service software platform.

The company started using the software in February 2020. One key feature is online-scheduling capability that reduced service-related, phone-call volume by around 15%, says owner Paul Giglio.

“We were dying for a good after-hours company to answer customers' questions and book the call, which is the most important thing a customer-service representative can do.”

Paul Giglio

“We book around 500 to 600 service calls a month,” he says. “So if we can eliminate roughly 15% of those calls, each of which lasts for 10 to 12 minutes, it adds up to a considerable amount of time saved that allows employees to do more higher-value work, such as improving customer service.

“Time is the most valuable thing in business today,” he continues. “If we can save 40 hours a month, for example, it's like we gained another full-time employee for a week without paying for it.”


In addition, providing online scheduling enhances customers' perception of the company as a modern, technologically savvy business that's concerned about making things convenient for customers, says Tricia Bruno, sales manager.

“Many homeowners would rather book an appointment online — have less time-consuming contact,” she says. “It also allows people to book appointments late at night. Internet booking is the way the world is going. It's all about providing convenience for both existing and future customers.”

Furthermore, if the company is inundated with service calls (think requests for air conditioning repairs in mid-July or heating-system issues in January), Bruno says the company can set Schedule Engine to block any service bookings for, say, the next three days.

◀ Schedule Engine software not only allows customers at Pipe Works Services to book service calls online, it also allows customers to upload photos and videos that vividly illustrate their plumbing problems, which helps technicians like Zach Langowski better prepare for service calls and work more efficiently. (Photo courtesy Pipe Works Services)





Chatham, NJ

COMPANY	Pipe Works Services Inc., Chatham, New Jersey
OWNER	Paul Giglio
TECHNOLOGY	Schedule Engine software
FUNCTION	Automated customer-service processes that save time and boost productivity
FEATURES	Online service-call booking; customizable artificial intelligence component that more narrowly defines customers' problems through a series of questions; allows customers to upload photos and videos to show problems; online chat option with certified industry professionals who field customer questions.
COST	Approximately \$495 a month, plus an initial onboarding fee
WEBSITE	www.pipeworksservices.com
SCHEDULE ENGINE WEBSITE	www.scheduleengine.com.com

Moreover, the platform easily integrates with ServiceTitan, the company's field-management software. Among other functions, ServiceTitan sends out reminder emails to customers about scheduled appointments as well as emails that tell them about a technician's pending arrival, she adds.

BENEFITS TECHNICIANS, TOO

The platform also helps technicians be more efficient and productive because it enables customers to upload photos or even videos that vividly illustrate the problem they're experiencing. That allows technicians to plan accordingly and be sure they have all the parts necessary to make a repair, Giglio notes.

"It also helps our service manager considerably because when he can see photos and videos, he can assign the appropriate technicians to each job, based on their skill sets," he adds.

In addition, Schedule Engine offers a customizable artificial intelligence program that more narrowly defines

issues by leading customers through a series of questions. This helps drive better decision-making and eliminates long phone discussions as customers explain their problems, Bruno points out.

For example, a pop-up menu will ask customers what problem they're experiencing. If customers select no heat, then the system asks if they have a forced-air or a hydronic system. If they select forced air, it'll ask if the system is blowing any air. Each answer prompts a different question until the problem is defined very specifically, she says.

It also will tell customers what the company doesn't fix. For example, the company doesn't work on oil-fueled heating systems. So if customers select "oil" when asked what powers their heating system, it automatically will tell them the company doesn't work on oil systems, she says.

ONLINE CHATS


Schedule Engine also offers an online chat feature where customers can ask an expert about plumbing and HVAC problems. And the questions aren't fielded by bots, they're handled by trained and certified industry professionals, Giglio notes.

"We were dying for a good after-hours company to answer customers' questions and book the call, which is the most important thing a customer-service representative can do," he says. "We've used other companies for online chats in the past, and Schedule Engine blows them out of the water."

"They're by far the most knowledgeable and professional people and they do what we need them to do — book the calls," he continues. "I see all the transcripts of their conversations and every time I read them, I think, 'Wow, these people are amazing.'"

The company paid an initial onboarding fee to Schedule Engine and pays a monthly fee of \$495 to use the software. (The flat-rate monthly fee varies according to companies' size and other factors.) But Giglio says the system more than pays for itself through increased productivity and operational efficiencies, not to mention how it enhances customers' perceptions of the company as a progressive, modern outfit.

"In so many other businesses out there, it's remarkably easy to order things online and have them delivered to your doorstep," he notes. "But you couldn't do it for a plumbing service call. It was insane. Now we're finally getting the industry into the 21st century."

Just how valuable is Schedule Engine to the company? "I would cry if they went out of business," Giglio says. "I'm not even kidding you or trying to build this up into more than it really is. It just saves us so much time and when you have more time, everything is easier and better." 

Carrying the Cargo

Space, riding comfort are some of the advantages of going with a cargo van vs box truck for some plumbing companies

By Tim Dobbins

Plumbers face a difficult challenge of fitting a full shops worth of tools, equipment and parts in a vehicle. Throw in a jam-packed schedule on top of that and staying organized with all those pieces can be headache.

Vehicles designed to address organization issues faced by those with careers on the road have evolved over the years providing some great options to get you and your equipment to the job site. With so many styles, makes and models to choose from, it comes down to figuring out what you want out of the vehicle and choosing the best fit for you and your crew.

Cargo vans are a popular choice for many plumbers as they not only help them stay organized, but also offer advantages that aren't found in other work vehicles.

Gina and Todd Grundmeier, owners of T'N G Plumbing in Dexter, Minnesota, have been using a Ford Transit 250

cargo van for the past five years. "The most specific thing that drew us to it was the ability to be able to transport so much more materials for service work," says Gina Grundmeier. "That and you could save on your back by not stooping around looking for items."

SPACE AND COMFORT

Multiple manufacturers produce cargo vans with varying features and capabilities. Grundmeier says they started and ended their search with Ford. And so far, they are happy with their purchase. "There isn't really anything we

"The most specific thing that drew us to it was the ability to be able to transport so much more materials for service work. That and you could save on your back by not stooping around looking for items."

Gina Grundmeier



◀ T'N G Plumbing of Dexter, Minnesota, has been using a Ford Transit 250 cargo van for the past five years because of the amount of storage space in the van and the comfort of riding in it. The company takes pride in the vehicle's appearance and cleans it often. (Photo courtesy T'N G Plumbing)

dislike about this van as far as changing it,” she says. “The setup we chose when we purchased shelving was carefully researched and storage is utilized to its max potential.”

One of the biggest draws of cargo vans is the vast enclosed space they offer, allowing interior customization for storage. Each make and model will vary in terms of interior space, but most cargo vans offer 120-200 cubic feet of space and have options for interior ceiling racks, shelves, bins, drawers or lockers to be added and arranged in a fashion that suits you and your business.

In the Grundmeier’s van, they have shelving units on both sides of their Transit providing a multitude of storage options for equipment and parts. The ample shelving and storage possibilities is one of the biggest attributes that the Grundmeiers like about the cargo van. They are able to use bins within the shelving to store various PVC fittings, power tools and smaller service parts. The van provides plenty of room to lay lengths of PVC pipe on the floor while keeping enough room for a clear pathway to maneuver throughout the vehicle.

Comfort is another thing that attracts people to cargo vans as their office on wheels. It’s easy to focus on the storage attributes of a service vehicle, but don’t forget about staying comfortable for long hours on the road. Cargo vans are designed to match the comfort level of an SUV or minivan, so driving them commercially doesn’t strain the operator.

“There is probably more capacity for storage in a box truck, but it wouldn’t drive me to own one,” Grundmeier says. “I did use one through a previous employer. I felt they were a rough ride and more challenging to maneuver driving to service calls in town when weather was inclement, meaning snow.

“The gas mileage we get now is also a bonus,” she adds. Cargo vans in today’s market have put a lot of research and development into fuel efficiency making their fuel consumption considerably lower than box trucks. However, how much better depends on the make and model you choose.

Cargo vans come in various sizes and often grouped as large, or compact. Large cargo vans like the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter advertises up to 19 mpg with other comparable size vans from other van manufacturers

“I try to maintain as best as I can on a daily basis to keep the van in its best shape. I feel that the appearance of the inside is just as important as the appearance of the outside.”

Gina Grundmeier


advertising from 15-18 mpg. Obviously, the larger vans will permit more storage than their compact counterpart, but the smaller compact cargo vans make up for that in added miles per gallon with some models like the Dodge RAM ProMaster City advertising 28 mpg highway.

KEEPING IT CLEAN

Another added benefit that comes standard with cargo vans no matter their size is the blank wall on each side of the vehicle’s exterior and their rear doors. That space is easily transformed into a mobile billboard for your business name and logo. However, remember that your van is a representation of your company, especially if your logo is covering the outside of it.

With that in mind, make sure you develop a routine schedule of cleaning and organizing the vehicle. Just like the welcome area in a front office, the vehicle may be the first impression a potential customer has of you and your business so it needs to be kept tidy and impressive to anyone who may see the inside.

“Cleaning is done weekly,” Grundmeier says. “I try to maintain as best as I can on a daily basis to keep the van in its best shape. I feel that the appearance of the inside is just as important as the appearance of the outside. If my customers, when my customers, see inside my van, they will see organization and not scatter. I believe that reassures them of my work ethics as well.”

Whether it becomes your one and only service vehicle or part of a larger fleet, cargo vans have a lot to offer plumbers, but do some research and find the van that fits your business needs. 



Liz Uram

Powerful Phrases to Add to Your Toolbox

Assertiveness doesn't come naturally to everyone, but these tips will help you communicate like a leader

By Liz Uram

Do you ever come up with your best responses an hour after a conversation has ended? Do you ever say to yourself “I wish I would have said...” or “I wish I wouldn't have said...”? Do you ever get tongue-tied when you are put on the spot?

If you can relate to any of these situations, you can improve your confidence by adding a handful of powerful phrases to your repertoire.

People who communicate with confidence are calm and in control. They strive to be positive and helpful in order to get a good result that benefits everyone. However, it can be hard to keep your cool if you aren't equipped with the right tools. You might avoid saying the things you should or say things you wish you hadn't.

When addressing a performance issue you'll have the best outcome if you focus on the observable behavior rather than on the person.

Here are five of the most powerful phrases to add to your skill set so you can communicate like a boss in every situation:

1. “That sounds really hard.”

Whether it's the co-worker who vents nonstop about their job, the friend who goes on and on about their relationship problems, or the employee who complains about how overworked they are, they have one thing in common: They don't want your advice. They aren't telling you about their problem because they want a solution. They just want you to listen. They are looking for empathy, not advice.

It can be difficult to listen to problems without giving a

solution, especially when you know exactly what they should do. Trying to convince them that you have the answer will only lead to frustration and a potential argument.

Resist the temptation to tell them what to do and instead try saying, “That sounds really hard.” You'll find that using a phrase like this will validate the other person's feelings and help them move on.

2. “What are you going to do about it?”

After you have expressed empathy, follow up with a question such as, “What are you going to do about it?” Most people know what they should do and by nature they will put more energy into their own ideas than yours. Don't waste your time telling people what to do. Avoid any statement that starts with “You should” or “You have to.” Instead ask them what they think.

This will also reveal whether they have any interest in solving the problem or if they just want to continue complaining. If you sense that they aren't interested in solving the problem, then you may have to distance yourself. However, if it's coming from a direct report you will have to deal with it. Negative attitudes are contagious. (See No. 4 for how to address a negative attitude.)

3. “I agree.”

This short, powerful phrase will stop an argument in its tracks. It's nearly impossible to argue with someone who is agreeing with you (although some people will try). There is little upside to arguing your point with anyone.

For example, say a team member didn't complete their work for the day and when you ask them why not they say, “There's too much work. We're too busy. I can't do everything around here.” Simply say, “I agree. It has been really busy around here.”

Once you've agreed then you can follow up with the expected job performance: “I agree, it has been really busy lately. However, you know that our promise to our customers is that every job will be completed on schedule.”

Continued ▶

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From 8 Trucks to 48 Trucks in 5 Years

After 13 years in business, Aaron Gaynor of The Eco Plumbers has seen tremendous growth in the last 5 years. It's more than just trucks – in the same time period, he's gone from 13 employees to 73 employees and counting.

What's his secret? It's no secret.

Aaron's success isn't a fluke. His rapidly growing company is the result of dedication, hard work, and follow-through.

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—Aaron Gaynor

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4. "I need your agreement."

Dealing with performance issues can be challenging and, given a choice, many managers prefer the "wait and see" approach. That usually doesn't work. When someone isn't meeting performance or behavior standards, a coaching conversation is needed to help the team member get back on track.

The one and only goal of a coaching conversation is to get the team member to agree to improve their performance or behavior. Because many managers don't have this phrase in their skill set they never come out and clearly state what they want.

Behavioral issues, such as negative attitudes, can be especially challenging but they must be addressed if you are going to put an end to negativity in the workplace. Chronic negativity is a drain on the bottom line and you risk losing your top performers if you allow others' bad attitudes to go unchecked.

Don't avoid having these difficult conversations — there is too much at stake. Say, "I need your agreement that you will maintain a professional, respectful attitude in the workplace." And then hold them to it.

5. "I noticed..."


The words you use to start off a potentially difficult conversation are the key to a positive or negative outcome. When addressing a performance issue you'll have the best

outcome if you focus on the observable behavior rather than on the person. Keep in mind that the principles of good communication include being positive and helpful.

For example, when addressing an attitude issue try saying, "I noticed that you don't seem like yourself lately." Not, "What's wrong with you?"

If you choose the wrong words and the other person immediately gets defensive you might as well end the conversation and come back to it later.

Be aware that even if you use all the right words and say all the right things, there is no guarantee that the other person will respond in the same professional way. That's okay. Communicating like a boss is about taking ownership of what you do and say regardless of the outcome. You are responsible for making the effort. You are not responsible for how the other person chooses to react.

These five phrases will help you remain calm, confident and in control in all situations. Take them out and use them. The more you use them the more comfortable you'll get and soon you will be communicating like a boss. 

Liz Uram is a nationally recognized speaker, trainer, consultant and author. She equips leaders with the tools they need to communicate like a boss so they can make a bigger impact, get better results, and motivate others to do their best. Contact her at www.lizuram.com.

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Randy Lorge

Talking Code

Plumbing codes are different, but that does not necessarily mean they are wrong

By Randy Lorge

For the past 28 years I have either been learning plumbing code or teaching it. I know what you're thinking: "He needs to get a life," but honestly, I enjoy it. It has become a large part of who I am.

I served a four-year plumbing apprenticeship here in Wisconsin. Class was a day away from the hands-on work in the field and an intense day of learning. I had a great instructor by the name of John W. Kollman III. He instilled the importance of what it was to be a plumber to me. He inspired me and gave me a true understanding of how "the plumber protects the health of the nation."

The code training I received served me well. Shortly after passing my journeyman plumber's exam, I started teaching evening classes to plumbing apprentices and journeymen. The first class I taught? Well of course, plumbing code review! I like to think I found my knack when it came to teaching code. Eventually I became a full-time plumbing apprenticeship instructor.

For 20 years I worked in the classroom grooming tomorrow's next plumber. I found ways to present complex and, sometimes, mind-bending methods to my students in a way that made the most sense to them. It took a lot

of work to first understand how the code was developed and what the intention or the "why" was about a specific code topic. But as I always told my students, once you understand the why, the "how" comes easy.

Flash forward to the second week of October 2020. I wrote and passed the master plumbers exam for another state. Now, just so you understand, and do not jump to conclusions, I don't run around the United States taking plumbing exams for fun! I took this exam to assist my www.iwsh.org team with an upcoming project in 2021. IWSH — or the International Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Foundation — is a foundation that harnesses the skills and expertise of water industry professionals, organizations and manufacturers to support critical water, sanitation and hygiene initiatives worldwide. In order for my team and I to legally perform plumbing in this state, I needed to show competence of the applicable code.

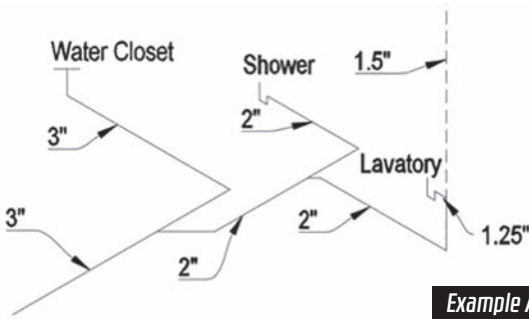
Here is where I truly had to relearn plumbing. You would think plumbing should be an internationally recognized process where for a lack of better words, plumbing is plumbing. But that is far from the case, which I quickly learned. Some of you reading this today probably subscribe to a social media network that relates to plumbing and I'm sure you can relate to what I'm saying. How many times have you seen another plumber post a picture of their work/craftsmanship on social media only to have 2 million comments either blasting that person for shotty work, or posting "That's not legal!" or "You can't do it that way, it will never work!"

I can certainly relate to the above and many times rolled my eyes at some of these installations saying the exact same things. But let me tell you, I'm not as quick to do so after my recent studies. Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about.

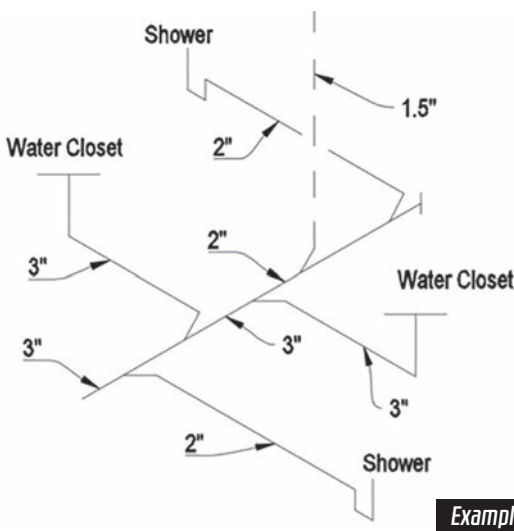
Here are three venting systems from three different codes:

It took a lot of work to first understand how the code was developed and what the intention or the "why" was about a specific code topic. But as I always told my students, once you understand the "why," the "how" comes easy.

All three are referred to as “horizontal wet vents” by their respective codes but you can easily see that they are not all the same.



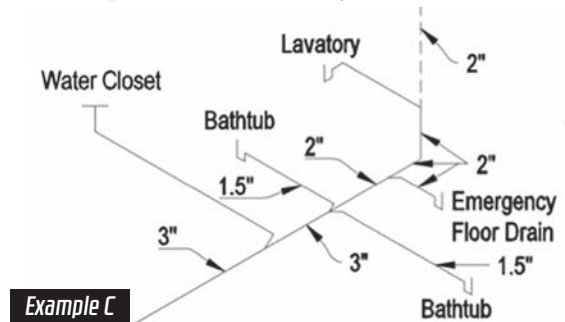
Example A has a dry vent extending from the lavatory. In this code it states that the drain from a lavatory or lavatories which are either provided with individual vents or a common vent may serve as the wet vent for not more than two bathtubs or showers and not more than two water closets. All fixtures must be located in a *nonpublic* bathroom group only. The dry vent size is 1.5 inches and may not exceed 150 feet in developed length based on drainage fixture units of the fixtures being vented (DFU). The wet vent is required to be a minimum of 2 inches and cannot exceed 4 DFU.



Example B, from another code, indicates that the horizontal wet vent begins at the connection of the required dry vent connection and extends downstream to the last horizontally connected wet vented fixture drain. The required dry vent shall be an individual or common vent for any (*public or nonpublic*) bathroom group fixture except for an emergency floor drain and not more than one fixture may connect upstream from the dry vent

connection to the horizontal. Again, the dry vent is 1.5 inches but is based on the vent being half the diameter of the drain served. It also goes on to state that in the event that the dry vent exceeds 40 feet, the entire vent would increase one nominal pipe size. The wet vent portion of the system is sized via a table based on the total DFU discharging into the wet vent.

Example C was taken from yet another code. While



still being classified as a horizontal wet vent system, that code indicates that the dry vent connection to the wet vent shall be an individual vent for the bidet, shower or bathtub. One or two vented lavatory(s) shall be permitted to serve as a wet vent for a bathroom group (*public or nonpublic*). Only one wet-vented fixture drain or trap arm shall discharge upstream of the dry-vented fixture drain connection. Notice this time that the dry vent above the lavatory is 2 inches since there is a water closet in the system. The dry vent is permitted to be 120 feet in length provided not more than 40 feet is installed horizontally.

Each system is a legal horizontal wet vent, yet I would say that you probably thought somewhere along the line while looking at them, “That’s not legal!” or “You can’t do it that way, it will never work!” Oh, and don’t even get me started on permitted point of vent distances (aka vent to trap), we’ll save that one for another article!

Each system works. Each system is installed every day around the country. The moral of the story is, plumbing codes are different, but not necessarily wrong. **P**

Randy Lorge is a third-generation plumber and the director of workforce training and development for the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO). Lorge is also a member of the planning team for the International Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Foundation (IWSH). This 501(c) (3) foundation has completed water and sanitation projects for those less fortunate in India, South Africa, Indonesia and, more recent, the United States. He enjoys time with his family and spending as much time as possible in his deer stand. To contact Lorge, email editor@plumbermag.com.



Built for Longevity

RIDGID tools span multiple generations of plumbers and that carries over into manufacturing as well *By Cory Dellenbach*

When plumbers like Dan Gross, of Gross Plumbing in Ohio, pick up a RIDGID pipe wrench, they know they are getting a quality tool that has been around a long time and that they can depend on it.

“We appreciate the durability of RIDGID tools. The new and innovative tools that make our work easier to accomplish are also a game-changer and allow us to perform work faster and better,” says Gross.

Gross has been using RIDGID tools since he started his company in 1956, and that longevity is a point-of-pride for the men and women who work at RIDGID.

“When I first started here, I got a call from one of our customers telling me about his RIDGID wrenches and pipe cutters that had been passed down through three generations of plumbers,” says Craig Sumner, president of Professional Tools, Americas (RIDGID and Greenlee brands). “I sat back in my chair beaming with pride about working for a company where building high-quality product is central to the brand.”

Plumber recently conducted a Q&A with Sumner on the history of RIDGID, how far they’ve come and where they are headed.

Plumber: What is your name and title with the company?

Craig: Craig Sumner, president of Professional Tools, Americas (RIDGID and Greenlee brands). I have worked at Emerson — RIDGID and Greenlee’s parent company — for 15 years; eight of those years I’ve been working with our Professional Tools brands. From 2016 through 2018, I was the president of Emerson, and I had the chance to play a role in expanding our RIDGID wet/dry vac lines. In 2018, I returned to our world headquarters in Elyria, Ohio, to take on my current position where I lead the Professional Tools business across the Americas and Asia Pacific.

Plumber: Can you give me a brief history on RIDGID. How was it founded, what has it grown into?

Craig: We’ve always been dedicated to the professional trades — creating products that help the hardest workers achieve better results. I love the story of our founding because it reinforces this commitment. In the 1920s, it was a challenge to find a reliable tool to make or loosen tough pipe connections, as the wrenches of that era often broke or slipped off the pipe under heavy load. In 1923, the company launched its first product, the RIDGID pipe wrench, to solve this issue. It was built for a need and a purpose and solved the durability issues of prior products; and it’s a product that, in principle, remains largely unchanged and is still used globally today.

Nearly 100 years later, we’re the leading manufacturer of dependable, rugged tools trusted by tradespeople around the world. More importantly, we still believe in the idea of field-driven innovation. We know our tools have to stand up to the toughest challenges, so they are developed and tested on job sites. Every tool we offer is purpose-built to deliver a better way to work. Currently, we offer 300-plus types of tools in over 100 countries that help our customers get their jobs done. Our customers know, from the first turn of the wrench through their 50,000th press connection and beyond, that RIDGID tools stand up to the toughest challenges.

RIDGID

RIDGID

LOCATION Elyria, Ohio

EMPLOYEES 1,400

TYPE OF TOOLS Diagnostics, inspection and locating; pipe and tubing tools; pressing; electrical tools; drain cleaning; general purpose and hand tools

WEBSITE www.ridgid.com

- ▶ RIDGID crew members work the assembly line at the manufacturing facility in Elyria, Ohio.

Plumber: How have you seen technology change over the last 5 or 10 years in regards to RIDGID tools/equipment?

Craig: Getting jobs done efficiently — yet with a high level of quality — will always be important to tradespeople. Today's modern jobsites are faster paced than ever, and professionals are pressured to do more in less time. Speed, skill and efficiency have become a competitive advantage. These are demanding conditions, and tools must be an asset in helping tradespeople do their jobs in a more productive manner. Before buying a new tool, our customers often ask: "How can this make my life easier?" One way we're doing this is integrating technology into our tools where there is a clear value to our customers. They're still as tough and rugged as our customers have come to expect, yet they're also smarter.

For example, two major pain points for plumbers are accessing tight spaces and fatigue from working overhead with heavy, awkward equipment. That is where designing lightweight, compact — yet rugged — tools is important. Over 20 years ago we were the first to bring pressing to the North American market, eliminating the need to solder copper pipe; today we continue to take this technology to the next level as we expand our capabilities to press new materials across broader applications. Our newest pressing tool, the RP 350, takes the benefits of pressing even further. In addition to being smaller and lighter, we are able maximize uptime by incorporating a brushless motor, enhancing our battery capacity by 20%, and eliminating necessary service intervals. The tool's 360-degree swivel with a wireless bolt sensor is an industry first, and comes paired with bright LED lights to let users not only access tight spaces, but see them more clearly. The new pressure valve sensor increases reliability to ensure proper force output from the tool on every crimp, every time.

We don't just build technology into our tools; we use technology to improve processes across the enterprise. We look for any opportunity that allows us to add more value for our customers by streamlining our own processes. We recently finished construction on a 30,000-square-foot shipping and receiving facility expansion at our Elyria facility. It's truly state-of-the-art, from the lighting to the improved flow of our products through the plant. This investment has allowed us to improve the speed in which we get products to our customers.



We've always been dedicated to the professional trades — creating products that help the hardest workers achieve better results.
Craig Sumner

Plumber: You recently came out with several new tools that extended your existing product offerings. The RIDGID RP 342-XL Press Tool and FlexShaft Machines come to mind. What do these add to your lineup of tools for plumbers?

Craig: Innovation is core to our future success and these tools are a couple of great examples. The RIDGID RP 342-XL press tool is a great example of technology that serves a clear purpose. As I mentioned, a major pain point with plumbers is getting the job done as efficiently as possible. The RP 342-XL is the first RIDGID press tool that works on pipes up to 4 inches across a variety of materials. From 1/2-inch PEX all the way up to 4-inch carbon steel, this tool can press it all. It also works with the full line of RP 350 accessories including the StrutSlair strut shear head and Press Snap Soil pipe cutter.

Another great example of purpose-built innovation is our line of FlexShaft drain cleaning machines. These have really grown in popularity in recent years, and we've expanded our line to handle larger pipes and tougher blockages. Earlier this year, we launched the K9-306 FlexShaft drain cleaning machine. It's built for wall-to-wall cleaning to 125 feet in 3- to 6-inch drain lines, making it ideal for large-scale residential or commercial jobs where speed is critical. This new addition complements the full line of sectional and drum drain cleaners that RIDGID has offered

- ▶ After finishing with assembly, a RIDGID crew member loads a pipe threader into a packing box for shipment to a customer.
- ▼ A RIDGID manufacturing crew member assembles heavy-duty wrenches in the company's facility in Elyria, Ohio.



for decades — widening the breadth of solutions to our customers. Our commitment is to continually find ways to help plumbers be more productive and complete that extra job every day.

Plumber: Your tools have a history of lasting a long time, getting passed down to generations. What does that mean to you and your company?

Craig: There is absolutely something special about your brand when people are passing tools down from generation to generation and even getting tattoos of our tools on their arms. It highlights the design and workmanship of our products and the special connection tradespeople have with their tools. When I first started here, I got a call from one of our customers telling me about his RIDGID wrenches and pipe cutters that had been passed down through three generations of plumbers. I sat back in my chair beaming with pride about working for a company where building high-quality product is central to the brand and then thought about the fact we haven't sold any wrenches to this family in over 50 years! However, it's the reputation we've built



with customers like this that have helped grow our business. Tradespeople trust their colleagues more than anyone, and he was telling his friends how much he trusted RIDGID. I love hearing from our customers, and there's a genuine satisfaction in knowing that we're building innovative products that stand up to tough jobsite conditions. Our tools are truly built for those who know.

Plumber: I hear the culture at RIDGID is kind of unique with a lot of family working there; what do you think that adds to the company?

Craig: Our culture has always been one that stresses the importance of hard work. We place a strong value on doing what's right and enjoying yourself while you're doing it. It's a mentality that we strive to instill at every level in our organization. I believe that is why we not only have many long-term employees — over 20% of our workforce in Elyria has been with us for over 25 years — but why we have several generations from the same family. A few families have worked in our facility consistently since the 1940s. The great part is combining the knowledge, experience and passion of our long-term employees with the fresh ideas and energy of those earlier in their career.

Brad Yuronich has worked in our software development group since 2004, but he's been a part of the RIDGID family for much longer. His father, Ken, started with us as a machinist in 1973 and helped in the development of our

threading machines such as the 535 and 300. During Ken's time in the milling department, he saw the process go from 15 machines down to just one CNC machine, which did it all. I love that Brad is carrying on his father's innovative spirit today for a new generation — helping to develop and enhance our software apps. Ken laid the foundation; now Brad is carrying it on.

Plumber: 2020 was a different year for many contractors and manufacturers. How have things changed for RIDGID (training, getting products out, etc.)?

Craig: It was a challenging year for everyone — especially tradespeople. But the challenges highlighted how essential our customers' work is to their communities. We appreciate what they do every day to keep our country running and their role as essential workers during this pandemic. We're also grateful to the essential workers in our plants who kept building the tools our customers needed on the job site. This situation brought out the best in our people, and we supported their commitment by implementing many new protocols to keep them safe, like staggering shifts, adjusting workspaces to allow for greater social distancing and hiring additional cleaning personnel in all areas of our operations.

Our culture has always been one that stresses the importance of hard work. We place a strong value on doing what's right and enjoying yourself while you're doing it. It's a mentality that we strive to instill at every level in our organization.

Craig Sumner

As a manufacturer we looked for new ways to support the efforts of our customers during this challenging time, and launched JobSite Live — a virtual event series designed to put RIDGID and Greenlee experts in front of our customers using social media channels and live broadcasts. Viewers can ask questions and get immediate feedback. This new platform allows us to recreate a feeling of community in a virtual space. It's a powerful way for us to have meaningful conversations with tradespeople, giving them the educational resources and expertise they rely on from RIDGID. We missed being on the jobsite with our customers during the height of the pandemic, but our team did a great job adjusting.

Continued ▶

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Our distribution partners also experienced significant changes in how they operate. The pandemic accelerated a buying shift to e-commerce, so we worked closely with our channel partners to improve the online experience. RIDGID has supported this shift by simplifying the customer online journey and providing informative content. As customers moved to more curbside pickup, we shifted demonstrations to parking lots and supported customers through virtual product demonstrations.

Plumber: What's ahead for RIDGID (new tools, what should readers look for)

Craig: We continue to broaden our portfolio to serve

the professional trades, with Emerson acquiring Greenlee in 2018. Greenlee has a rich heritage with electrical and utility contractors, and they are a respected and trusted source for professional tools when it comes to installing wire and cable. As part of the same family of brands, we're able to offer the broadest portfolio of products to our customers in the mechanical, electrical and plumbing trades.

At RIDGID, we are proud of our heritage, but we are genuinely excited about our future. We have an incredibly smart and dedicated team focused on delivering innovation that will improve the outcomes for our customers. I am proud to be a part of this great brand and organization. 

Tools for Multiple Generations

By Cory Dellenbach

When Dan Gross started his plumbing company in Elyria, Ohio, in 1956, there was only one brand of tools he wanted to use: RIDGID.

As a former hardware store employee, he knew all about RIDGID from the customers he served. When he transitioned to plumbing work, RIDGID's quality and dependability won him over.

"With our third-generation running the company now, we are proud that they learned the trade using RIDGID tools and will continue to use them in the daily operations," Gross says. "We are sure that in the future, we will be using more tools as they are designed."

Plumber magazine recently conducted a Q&A with Gross on his company and its use of RIDGID tools.

Q: What was the first RIDGID tool you used? Why/how was it special to you?

Dan: A pipe wrench. In those days we did mostly repair work and most waterlines were galvanized steel pipe; the RIDGID wrenches were used on almost every job, water or gas line repairs. The wrenches were special because they were a required tool for practically all work.

Q: What do you appreciate most about using RIDGID tools?

Dan: We appreciate the durability of RIDGID tools most. The new and innovative tools that make our work easier to accomplish are also a game-changer and allow us to perform work faster and better.

Q: How are RIDGID tools important to the future of your company?

Dan: RIDGID tools have a unique place in our work; we still use the "old-standby" pipe wrenches every day, pipe cutting and threading tools, and pipe fabrication



▲ Dan Gross has his RIDGID tools spread throughout his shop and uses them daily. The Ohio-based plumbing company began using RIDGID in 1956 and still uses the pipe wrenches and other tools he bought back then.

tools for grooved and welded piping. We also use the newer tools like the press tools for copper tube and fittings. These high-quality, easy-to-use tools allow us to compete in the changing workplace.

Q: Talk about heritage and what it means to you and your company?

Dan: Gross Plumbing is a three-generation business. Although we have been in business for 64 years, we still have some of our original wrenches and we still use our original 535 pipe machine. Through the years we have field tested many tools for RIDGID due to our close proximity to the manufacturing facility. We are proud that we use tools every day that we had input in the design process of the tool.

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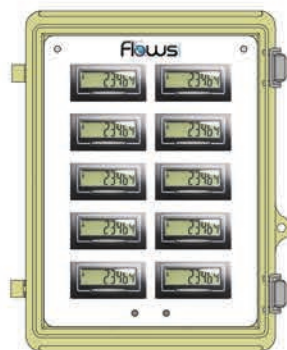
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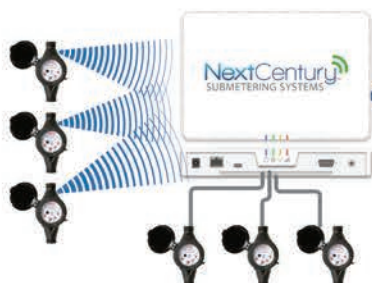


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Hydronic Heating Systems and HVAC

By Craig Mandli

Boilers

Bosch Thermotechnology Greenstar

The **Greenstar** from **Bosch Thermotechnology** is built using precision German engineering that includes its heat exchanger and control systems. It offers reliable, ultraquiet operation, fast, easy installation and very low maintenance costs. The intelligent digital control systems allow for precise boiler control using indoor and/or outdoor temperature sensing, as well as options for controlling domestic hot water. The largest model provides ideal comfort for almost any home, and can run two standard showers simultaneously. In addition, it includes a highly efficient 95% AFUE aluminum silicon heat exchanger, which makes the boiler eligible for savings up to 75% in federal, state and local credits. Visit boschheatingandcooling.com to find the available efficiency rebates in your area. **800-283-3787; www.boschheatingandcooling.com**



Raypak – A Rheem Co. XVers L

The **XVers L** hydronic boiler from **Raypak – A Rheem Co.** is designed to automatically read and adjust temperatures to ensure that the environment remains controlled and comfortable. It has fire-tube heat exchanger technology and **VERSA IC Intelligence**, along with advanced features such as a **VERSA IC Intelligence** touch screen, **Raymote** mobile access, compact size and instant visibility of heater status, stainless steel Fire-Tube heat exchanger technology, up to 98% efficiency and an Energy Star listing. It is available in sizes from 399 to 850 MBtu/h. **805-278-5300; www.raypak.com**

Ductwork

Oatey MODA Supply Box Systems

Available in standard, fire-rated and gas models, **MODA Supply Box Systems** from **Oatey** are made of durable PVC, so that plumbing-supply connections can be made PVC to PVC. The box itself can be mounted with a single screw to a behind-the-wall stud and set flush with the wall. Thanks to the two-piece design of the plumbing valve, no drywall needs to be cut during servicing. It makes supply box installation fast and easy with multiple mounting configurations and fitting options, as well as a sleek, compact design and the option for use as a condensation drain. Residential and commercial plumbers save time and frustration on supply box installations by having a single-box solution for washing machines, dishwashers, ice makers, kitchens and air admittance valves. **800-203-1155; www.oatey.com**



Noritz Residential Combination Boiler

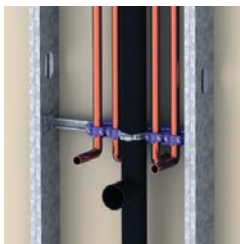


The **Noritz Residential Combination Boiler (NRCB)** allows for simultaneous residential domestic hot-water and space heating. The unit's simultaneous capabilities are easy to control and especially beneficial for applications that do not store or deliver heat energy efficiently. Performing at a 95% Annual Fuel Utilization Efficiency, the unit is EPA Energy Star certified. Its 316L copper primary and secondary heat exchangers have high corrosion resistance, and the unit can adjust to either PP or CPVC venting without the installer needing to make any programming changes. The venting can also easily be reconfigured to use room air. **714-433-2905; www.noritz.com**

Fittings

nVent CADDY Telescoping Plumbing Prefab Bracket

The **nVent CADDY Telescoping Plumbing Prefab Bracket** is an in-wall support solution for supply and waste lines. Brackets come out-of-the-box ready to install and allow for the easy creation of in-wall assemblies without the need for jigs, fixtures and brazing. It includes an integrated telescoping bracket that provides rigid support for 16- to 24-inch stud spacing and allows the lines to be positioned anywhere within the stud cavity. This allows for the mounting of pipe in all vertical or horizontal orientations, and can accommodate multiple sizes of supply and waste lines via its modular design. The quick install hose clamp can accommodate up to 4 1/2-inch waste lines, pipe clamps can secure 1/2- to 3/4-inch supply lines, and bracket markings allow for easy identification of supply line offset. **440-528-3316; www.nvent.com**



Webstone, a brand of NIBCO, Press × PEX

Press × PEX transition products from **Webstone, a brand of NIBCO** include transition tees in PEX × PEX × press and press × press × PEX configurations. Sizing options range from 1/2 to 2 inches, including bull head and reducing branches. Press × PEX transition unions are also now available in 1/2- and 1-inch sizes. All products are made from lead-free dezincification resistant brass construction and are compatible with popular press tools. **800-255-9529; www.webstonevalves.com**



Hydronic Heating

Taco Comfort Solutions 0034e and 0034ePlus

Taco Comfort Solutions 0034e and 0034ePlus easy-to-use, ECM high-efficiency circulators offer a maximum of 34 feet of head and 50 gpm, with up to 85% energy savings over a conventional circulator. They are available with cast iron or NSF/ANSI 61 and 372 certified stainless steel volutes, so they are suitable for closed-loop heating systems as well as domestic hot-water recirculation systems. Both circulators also offer a convenient, rotatable control box cover for a professional look, no matter the orientation of the installed circulator. The 0034e has an easy-to-use dial with five operating modes, including constant pressure, fixed speed, activeADAPT self-adjusting proportional pressure, and 0-10-volt capability. The 0034ePlus adds proportional pressure and more constant pressure settings, as well as a digital display with real-time feedback, including watts, gallons per minute, feet of head and rotations per minute. **401-942-8000; www.tacomfort.com**



Pipe

Asahi/America Asahitec PP-RCT

Asahitec PP-RCT piping systems for plumbing and HVAC applications from **Asahi/America** are comprised of two systems: Climatec for hydronic heating applications and Watertec for potable water. Pipe in both systems is manufactured with Fibercore technology, which minimizes expansion and contraction by up to 75%, in turn reducing installation costs by minimizing expansion loops and supports. Fibercore PP-RCT pipe consists of three coextruded layers that make one homogenous pipe. The middle layer is a mix of short fiberglass strands and PP-RCT, which is isolated by an inner and outer layer of solid PP-RCT. The systems include both molded socket fusion fittings and molded butt fusion fittings, as well as molded large-diameter fittings up to 630 mm. They are NSF 14-pw certified for potable water applications and have lead-free brass adapter fittings. **800-343-3618; www.asahi-america.com**



Valves



Flomatic Valves Model Cycle Gard IV C152SST

The Model Cycle Gard IV CB152SST from Flomatic Valves is a stainless steel, direct-acting, constant-pressure pump control valve with tappings. The body is equipped with 1-inch NPT-size female inlet threads and 1-inch NPT union end female outlet connection. The valve's standard pressure range is 15 to 75 psi with an optional 15 to 150 psi range. The valve body maximum pressure rating is 400 psi. All of the valve's internal parts are corrosion resistant with a stainless steel spring and fasteners for long service life. It maintains a preset operating pressure, reduces rapid pump cycling and is proven protection for wells and booster pumps. 800-833-2040; www.flomatic.com



Viega ProPress Automatic Recirculation Balancing Valve

Viega's ProPress Automatic Recirculation Balancing Valve ensures balanced domestic water recirculation by changing with varying conditions. It keeps water temperatures more uniform by adjusting flow with changes in temperature. The results are faster hot water delivery, minimized waste energy and water and less stagnation and chance of contamination. Temperature can be set once and be maintained automatically. Settings can be changed easily, if needed. It can be installed on risers or branches. Remote monitoring is possible with a temperature sensor. An optional thermometer provides visual indication of valve setting. Threaded ends allow use with ProPress or PureFlow fittings systems. It includes a bypass for thermal disinfection. 800-976-9819; www.viega.us



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\$15,299 • 690cc Honda
- CV2712H-HOT** • 12 gpm @ 2700 psi
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Hydronic Heating Systems and HVAC

By Craig Mandli

Circulators get apartment residents ready for the cold



Problem: An apartment complex in Indiana, Pennsylvania, needed reliable circulators to keep residents warm in the winter months.

Solution: Tom Gdaniec, president of G3 Clean Energy Marketing, suggested AquaMotion AMR-3FV1 cast iron, three speed pumps and isolation flanges be installed. The contractor installed 14 pumps. The pumps have flushable and replaceable stainless cartridges with long-life, carbon-infused sintered bronze bearings for long life.

Result: The owners of the complex could not be happier how the project came together, according to Gdaniec. 401-785-3000; www.aquamotionhvac.com

Wall-hung condensing boiler excels for retrofit



Problem: Pennsylvania-based Jason Golden of J. Golden Plumbing Heating and Cooling needed to replace a 30-year-old chimney-vent gas boiler and an electric water heater that

served as a hot water backup. The homeowner wanted a hot water solution that provided energy savings and used less space than the existing system.

Solution: Golden used a Bradford White Brute FT wall-mounted combination boiler and water heater, capable of providing both domestic water and radiant heating, with a 95% AFUE for a residential plumbing and heating retrofit job. The unit has a low pressure drop fire-tube stainless steel heat exchanger design with finned aluminum core fire tubes, sealed combustion chamber, pre-mix ceramic fiber burner, and welded construction. It meets low NOx requirements at 17 ppm. It may be vented horizontally or vertically to lengths up to 100 equivalent feet.

Result: Bradford White factory representatives visited the worksite during the retrofit to provide insights and best practices for operating the unit. According to Golden, his customers increasingly are seeing the value of the energy savings they can get from high efficiency heating equipment like the Brute FT. 800-523-2931; www.bradfordwhite.com

Internal water heater installation solves frozen well line problem



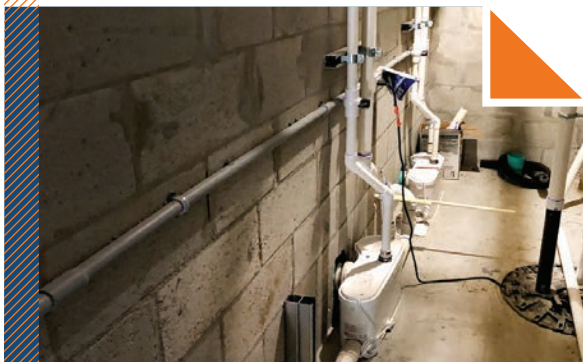
Problem: Premier Pump Service of Fairplay, Colorado, provides water system sales and service to homes and businesses. Some of Premier's customers are at elevations exceeding 10,000 feet, with winter temperatures plunging to negative 30 degrees F or lower. Premier owner John Lazanas was contacted by a mountain homeowner with a well waterline freeze problem. The waterline was a 1-inch, 175-foot poly pipe and was only buried two feet deep, far too shallow to

keep it from freezing. Because the installation required a tee, Lazanas needed something that would install easily through the tee and feed straight down the line.

Solution: Lazanas chose the **HotLine Internal Water Pipe Heater** system. But, as HotLine is low voltage, its maximum length is 120 feet. Lazanas needed 175 feet to completely protect the line. So what to do about the remaining 55-foot run? He installed two opposing HotLines, one from the house to 120 feet and one 55-foot HotLine from the well, completing the entire 175-foot run. Then he ran electricity to the well to power the HotLine in the well.

Result: The dual opposing HotLines permanently solved the homeowner's water pipe freeze problem. Lazanas reports installation was easy, and the homeowners are happy with HotLine's permanent trouble-free and economical low-voltage solution. **877-881-2980; www.nofrozenpipes.com**

Plumber installs above-floor drain pump and grinder system at riverfront restaurant to comply with FEMA regulations



Problem: The Widow Fletcher's is an 18,000-square-foot restaurant and bar in the historic community of New Port Richey, Florida. Their riverfront location resulted in a unique remodeling scenario and involved collaboration with not only the city, but also engineers and architects, to overcome a major obstacle: The building is 8 feet below the floodplain. According to Florida's building department, when a building is even 1 inch below floodplain, the plumbing must be equipped with backflow, and impervious to outside elements.

Solution: The project team decided to move forward with **Saniflo's** above-floor plumbing solution. "We had to go to the building department and show the inspectors and jurisdiction authority what we were planning to do," says Mark Spier, owner of Widow Fletcher's. "Saniflo came back and told us exactly what we needed to make sure that the plumbing plan was engineered correctly and that the setup would work correctly." Based on the recommendation from the supply house and product recommendations from Saniflo, Spier felt comfortable installing three **Sanibest Pro** grinder systems for the male and female restrooms, plus a **Sanicom 1** drain pump to handle three hand-sinks and three tub dishwashing sinks for the bar.

Result: As with any construction or remodeling project, the cost is a key consideration. "I felt very comfortable with the cost-versus-benefit comparison," says Spier. He adds approvingly that installing the three grinders and the drain pump took less than two days. **800-571-8191; www.saniflo.com**

Boiler unit up to the challenge at high-water-use car wash



Problem: Mudbusters Carwash Co. in Wasilla, Alaska, is a family-owned business that only uses soft water and high-pressure nozzles instead of brushes or friction. Therefore, they require more water than a traditional car wash. With expanding to a new location, they were looking for a heating system to handle a large continuous load to heat the building and also heat the water being used in the wash.

Solution: Mat-Su Mechanical, a Wasilla based contractor, was hired. **Triangle Tube's Prestige Cascade** unit was their product of choice for radiant and snowmelt. Triangle Tube boilers have a 95% AFUE rating, which allows for cost-effectiveness. The Prestige Cascade is controlled internally so no need for an external zone panel -- saving money and setup time. The team decided to save space within the mechanical room. Prestige boilers can be cascaded in a system that saves space in tight areas.

Result: The boiler has performed admirably, keeping the car wash in full operation. **856-228-8881; www.triangletube.com**

"We work off of the three-win rule,

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Richard Hart
Harts Services
Tacoma, Washington

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Snow melt system makes commuter platform safe for riders



Problem: The Northstar commuter rail in Minnesota provides a critical link for commuters along one of the most congested highways in Minnesota. Each platform is 425 feet long and 26 feet wide, and crosslinked polyethylene (PEX-a) tubes are embedded in the platforms to keep riders safe from slipping in the icy and snowy Minnesota winter weather.

Solution: Installing contractor Greg Koba of Klamm Mechanical chose a snow melt system manufactured by **Uponor** that circulates a 50-50, water-and-glycol solution through PEX-a tubing buried in concrete. Warmed by a high-efficiency boiler, the water/glycol solution then heats the station surface until it is warm enough to melt snow and ice. "We laid down a total of 48,000 feet of tubing for the Big Lake station," says Koba. "We took advantage of Uponor's Wirsbo hePEX 3/4-inch tubing for the two platforms." In addition to the tubing, there are also eight 2-inch PEX main lines for each platform that run from two manholes in the landscape area, then enter the slabs and stub into the manifold boxes. The two manholes connect through a 16-inch jacket housed beneath the track that also holds the two 4-inch mainlines that supply the platform.

Result: "By using large-dimension tubing to feed all the manifolds, we were able to route the system efficiently and correctly," says Koba. In addition, the crew was able to turn around a design in just 48 hours to avoid slowing down the installation timelines. **800-321-4739; www.uponor-usa.com** 



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Mainline Sales joins SJE Rhombus as new rep for Nevada

Mainline Sales is SJE Rhombus' new manufacturer's representative for the state of Nevada. Mainline Sales has nearly 40 years' experience as a professional manufacturers' representative firm covering California, Nevada, Arizona and Hawaii. They serve the following markets: commercial and residential plumbing, mechanical, fire protection, industrial, irrigation, and water and sewer waterworks. Mainline operates multiple distribution centers located in Anaheim, California, San Diego, Sacramento, Las Vegas and Phoenix.

Caleffi teams up with CSA Georgia sales

Caleffi North America has teamed up with Carolina Sales Associate's subsidiary, CSA Georgia Sales, to provide representation in Georgia. CSA has represented Caleffi for over three years in the Carolinas. Now the company's representatives will provide sales and support for Caleffi's line of plumbing and hydronic products throughout the expanded territory, including the LEGIOMIX line of electronic mixing valves with optional thermal disinfection for *Legionella* control.

Hino Trucks announces Project Z zero emissions plan

Hino Trucks' Project Z outlines the company's development path to zero emissions vehicles, ranging from class 4 to class 8. A live, virtual event showcased the comprehensive lineup of zero emissions trucks, formed by partnerships with technology leaders in advanced electrification drive systems. Some of the ZEV products include a battery-electric class 7 tractor with Hexagon Purus' full-electric drive system, and a Hino XL Series class 8 box truck powered by Xos Trucks' X-Pack battery and electric drive system. Over the coming months, Hino Trucks will unveil more details about the technologies and vehicles to come out of Project Z.

Triangle Tube increases sales support

Triangle Tube announced the appointment of three additional sales representative firms within the past year. The additional support has strengthened the company's dedication to ongoing technical training throughout North America, allowing for virtual training courses and developing future plans for in-person training following health guidelines from the CDC. Triangle Tube is pleased to be working with Monti and Associates, Empire State Associates and J&K Sales Associates.

ClearPathGPS expands management team

ClearPathGPS expanded their management team with several software-industry experts. Heather Burleson, an experienced sales leader in the business solutions software space, joins the company as vice president of sales. Jill Bender, a proven SaaS marketing strategist, is the company's new director of marketing. And Kelsey Jones, an experienced operations and customer-service leader in the mobile-app space, joins as director of customer success.

ESS aligns with U.S. rep agents

Easy Sanitary Solutions strengthens its North American sales presence with the appointment of four agencies in key geographical areas including Northern and Southern California, Texas, Oklahoma Louisiana and the entire state of Florida. Repcor, with offices in Sacramento and Hayward, provides a substantial footprint servicing the California and Northern Nevada plumbing markets. Form Sales covers Southern California and focuses on the decorative plumbing and hardware industries, for both retail and project sales. Premier Sales and Marketing brings over sixty years of combined experience to the decorative plumbing and hardware markets in Texas, Oklahoma Arkansas and Louisiana. And GS Marketing, based in Florida, has over 28 years' experience in their high-end plumbing business. **P**

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Product Spotlight

Heat pumps provide an economical alternative

By Craig Mandli

There are many commercial applications in which heat pumps are an economical, dependable alternative. The units are essentially air conditioning condensers configured to work “in reverse” in the wintertime when heat is needed rather than cooling. They serve as an efficient alternative to traditional furnaces.

Lochinvar recently launched 20 commercial heat pump models, ranging from 25,000 to 250,000 Btu/h and with modular installation capabilities up to 2 million Btu/h. The product line gives contractors additional options to meet energy-savings and sustainability goals when bidding on large commercial properties.

“Heat pump technology continues to gain momentum in the industry, and we are proud to now offer this product line as a solution to our customers’ biggest challenges, while providing their customers with the most environmentally-sound, cost-effective and reliable products for the job,” says Mike Lahti, vice president of sales, marketing and business development at Lochinvar. “As an industry leader, we feel this product line is a natural fit for our portfolio and marks another big step toward our continued tradition of excellence in sustainability and innovation.”

Unlike typical HVAC heat pump systems, heat pump water heaters are designed to provide hot water using atmospheric heat (air source) or geothermal/waste heat (water



source). The air source models cool and dehumidify the surrounding ambient air, cutting down on air conditioning usage and costs. The water source units absorb heat from water sources, including return chiller water, process and groundwater.

Designed for indoor or outdoor use, heat pump water heaters work in conjunction with storage tanks and can be tailored to meet specific application

requirements. Lochinvar’s line of glass-lined domestic water storage tanks offers engineers and contractors a wide-variety of solutions to integrate with most systems, offering turnkey solutions.

The Lochinvar commercial heat pump line offers six air source, six water source and eight modular water source units. The air and water source models range in capacity from 25,000 to 250,000 Btu/h and generate 50 to 500 gallons of hot water per hour. Modular water source units range in capacity from 270,000 to 2 million Btu/h and generate 323 to 2,584 gallons of hot water per hour. All units feature a maximum 160-degree water temperature and an ambient operating range of 40 to 120 degrees. They are designed for both new construction and retrofit projects and work well in large commercial applications, including universities, health care facilities, apartment buildings, hotels and restaurants. 615-889-8900; www.lochinvar.com.

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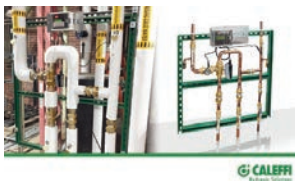
ServiceTitan Marketing Pro software

ServiceTitan launched new marketing tools as part of the company's Marketing Pro platform. The

features equip users to generate, monitor, and manage online reviews and listings and create and distribute targeted direct mail campaigns, all from a single integrated platform. With the tools, users can maximize and streamline online business listings by providing consistent information across over 60 websites and platforms; generate targeted mailing lists of existing customers; automate direct mail campaigns to trigger postcards to send at the right time; and close the loop on performance metrics and see which campaigns are profitable and which techs bring in the most reviews. **855-899-0970; www.servicetitan.com**

Caleffi LEGIOMIX Station digital mixing valve

Caleffi North America has expanded its commercial digital mixing valve offering with the LEGIOMIX Station. The Station features a 6000 Series LEGIOMIX electronic mixing valve to provide high-performance temperature control for commercial domestic hot water systems. A unique self-cleaning function features daily exercising of the internal ball valve mechanism to prevent scale build-up and ensure smooth operation. LEGIOMIX has automatic scheduling of thermal disinfection to control Legionella bacteria, a globally proven approach to maintaining safe and sanitary domestic hot-water systems. The Stations are prebuilt for ease of installation and include a mixing valve with union connections, serviceable stainless steel check valves, purge test ports, isolation valves and a LEGIOMIX controller, all premounted on a powder-coated painted steel strut frame. The Stations are available in five sizes from 1- to 2 1/2-inch copper pipe connections. **414-238-2360; www.caleffi.com**



GROHE Rainshower 310 SmartConnect shower head

GROHE's Rainshower 310 SmartConnect shower head has a wireless remote control. This sleek, smart digital duo allows the user to easily switch between two spray functions, or a combination of both sprays, with push-button



ease. With a wireless remote that can be placed anywhere, GROHE SmartConnect provides consumers with an easy DIY upgrade to instantly transform the shower experience. Installation is as easy as unscrewing the existing angled shower arm and shower head and swapping it out for a rain shower arm and the GROHE SmartConnect shower head. The wireless remote control can be attached to the wall within a comfortable reach with the provided double-sided tape or screwed in, and it automatically pairs with the shower head with batteries that last an average of four years for a family of four. **800-444-7643; www.groheamerica.com**



Flomatic Model 4082 ball check valves

Flomatic's AIS-compliant Model 4082 ball check valve family expands with new sizes in 8- and 12-inch. The Model 4082 family is now available in a complete size range from 3- through 12-inch. The valves are designed and built to meet AWWA C508 standards. The valve is constructed of a strong ductile iron body coated internally and externally with a fusion-bonded epoxy coating in compliance with ANSI/AWWA C550 standards. The epoxy coating provides superior abrasion and corrosion resistance. The valve features a clean-out cover permitting access to the inside of the valve without removing the valve from the pipeline. The Model 4082 has ANSI class 150-pound flanged end connections, a NITRILE (Buna-N) covered metal sinking ball and stainless steel fasteners. The valves also include bosses to accommodate NPT tappings for additional optional components. The maximum pressure rating is 150 psi and the maximum temperature rating is 180 degrees F. **800-833-2040; www.flomatic.com**



Matco-Norca lead-free Y-strainer series

Matco-Norca's new lead-free Y-strainer product, the 146TLF Economy Series, comes in six sizes. With a compact forged brass body and bonnet design, the strainer is available in sizes ranging from 1/2 inch up to 2 inches. The 146TLF has a maximum working pressure of 200 psi and a working temperature range from 32 up to 212 degrees F. Its threads conform to ANSI B1.20.1. **800-431-2082; www.matco-norca.com**



Milwaukee Tool M18 PACKOUT Light/Charger

Milwaukee Tool's M18 PACKOUT Light/Charger equips users with all-day, multidirectional lighting and charging in one dedicated solution that is fully compatible with the PACKOUT Modular Storage System. The charger delivers 3,000 lumens of TRUEVIEW High Definition Output to easily light the site. For complete control of lighting preference, the light is equipped with three independent rotating lights so users can choose between task or area lighting. To easily manage output and run-time, the light is complete with nine total modes — All Lights, Main Panel or Back/Front Lights — each including high, medium and low settings. **800-729-3878; www.milwaukeetool.com**

QuickDrain USA shower bench

QuickDrain USA's QuickDrain shower bench balances elegant style with the universal design and accessibility that is essential to many consumers today. The bench accommodates the ADA standards for height and exceeds ADA weight guidelines of 250 pounds. It is also available in three configurations: a rectangle bench and large or small corner bench options. Custom sizes are also available upon request, ensuring consumers have access to the configuration that best meets their needs for accessibility and aesthetics. **866-998-6685; www.quickdrainusa.com**



Dearborn True Blue Bath waste line



Dearborn, a part of the Oatey family of brands, announced that its True Blue Bath Waste line is now available with Finished Drain Spuds in all designer finishes. True Blue's integrated locking features reduce the number of tools needed for installation, saving time and frustration. Now offering drain spuds in five designer finishes, True Blue is more versatile than ever. The new Finished Drain Spuds have the same great features and benefits as the existing Chrome Drain Spud, and come in brushed nickel, oil-rubbed bronze, white and matte black designer finishes. Constructed out of brass, the True Blue Drain Spud is built for durability and longevity. Featuring two heavy duty crossbars, it provides a greater flow rate than standard four crossbar designs. **800-321-9532; www.oatey.com**

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