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NATURAL Evolution

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▲ On The Road
PROVIDING FINANCING OPTIONS
FOR CUSTOMERS BENEFITS
YOUR COMPANY
Page 22

▲ Smart Business
RECRUITING AND HIRING METHODS
TO BOOST YOUR TEAM
Page 30

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Getting to Yes

Customer financing helps sticker-shocked customers afford major plumbing repairs.

- By Ken Wysocky



On the Cover

Miller's Services' commercial and residential plumbing manager Aaron West uses a pro-press tool from RIDGID to press copper lines for a commercial washing machine installation at William and Mary University in Williamsburg, Virginia. Miller's Services, owned by Jim, Sallie and Jamie Miller, opened in 1973 in Saluda, Virginia, and has grown to 70 employees and offers plumbing services as well as septic pumping and installation.

(Photography by Tristan Lorei)

Coming Next Month - Annual Buyer's Guide

- ▲ Plumber Profile: Modern Plumbing & Heating PLLC (Kalispell, Montana)
- ▲ Industry Insider: Anthony Pacilla
- ▲ On the Road: Marketing Leave Behinds

8 From the Editor: Can You Handle All the Calls?

Plumbing contractors need to evaluate how their companies handle the emergency calls and those where a customer might need more.

- By Cory Dellenbach

10 @plumbermag.com

Check out our exclusive online content.

14 Profile: Natural Evolution

Virginia contractor expands into plumbing, and many other services, to become a one-stop shop for his customers.

- By Ken Wysocky

24 Industry Insider: Ramping Up The Chatter

Text and chat programs have become tools that can easily be used for Plumbers to communicate with team members and customers.

- By Anja Smith

28 In the Shop: Tool Planning

Are you looking at all the options when it comes to equipment for your company? Renting might be an option for those jobs you don't get all the time.

- By Steven Anderson and Luke Fontenot

30 Smart Business: Expanding the Workforce

Trying different recruiting and hiring methods could be the key to turning around yours and the industry's labor shortage.

- By Mischa Fisher

32 Product Focus: Septic and Sewer Systems

- By Craig Mandli

38 Industry News

42 Product News: Product Spotlight: New drain pump a fit for compact basements

- By Craig Mandli

46 Calendar

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Cam Spray 36



Central Oklahoma Winnelson 41

Crane Pumps & Systems 27

Disston Tools 12



Duracable Manufacturing Co. 17

FloLogic 40

Flows.com 47



General Pipe Cleaners,
div. of General Wire Spring. 48



HotJet USA 3



IPP Solutions, LLC 19

Liberty Pumps 9

McCormick Systems, Inc. 46



Nexstar Network, Inc. 12



NuFlow Technologies 13

Omni Brass 29



Picote Solutions 39



Pipe Lining Supply 2



Pulsar 2000, Inc. 39

Service Nation/Roundtable. 7, 41



SPARTAN

Spartan Tool LLC 5

Supply Smart 11

TURBO FOG Division
of Kingscote Chemicals. 46

WWETT Show 45

Classifieds 46

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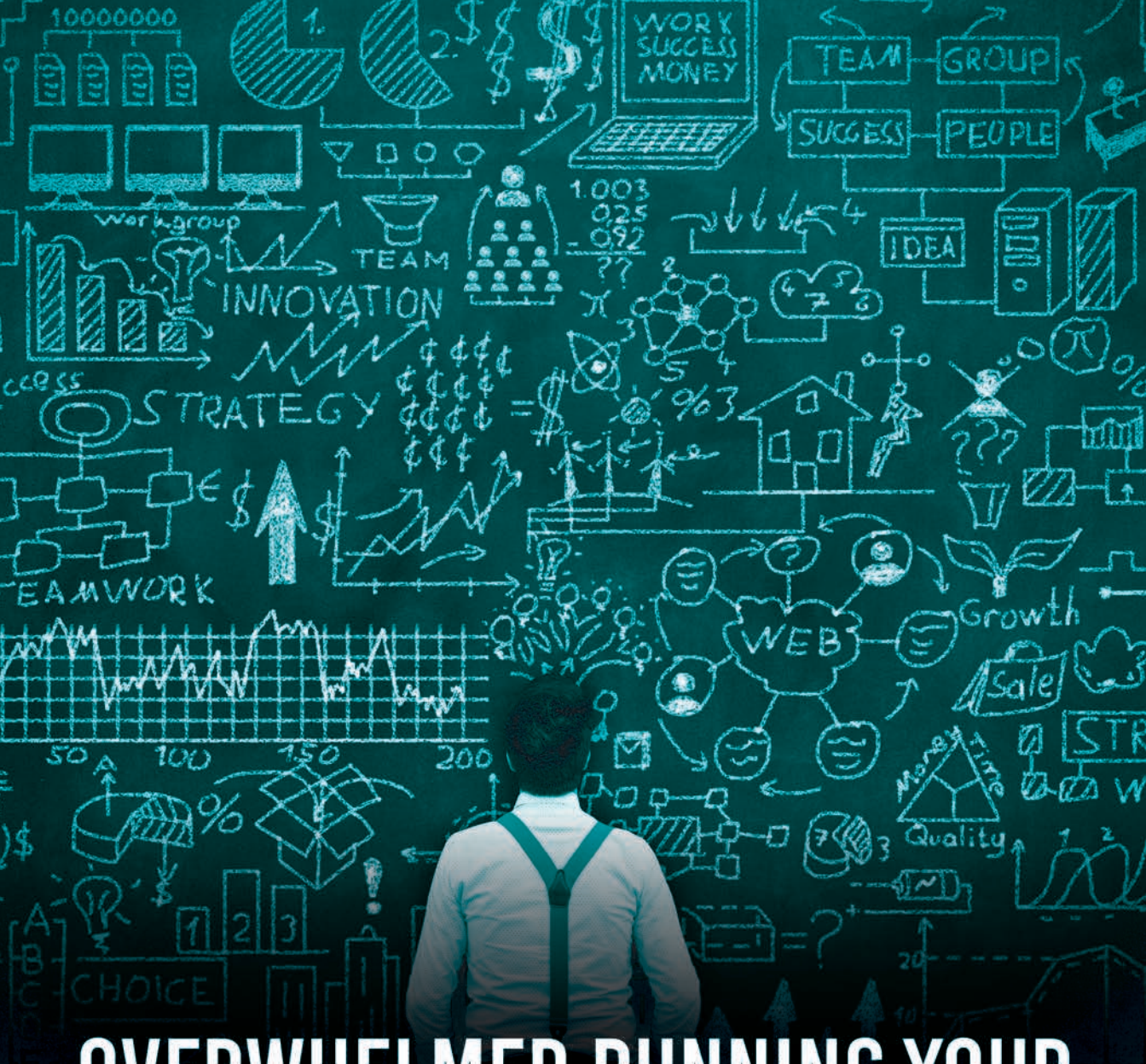
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Cory Dellenbach

Can You Handle All the Calls?

Plumbing contractors need to evaluate how their companies handle the emergency calls and those where a customer might need more

Y

ou've heard it before in the pages of *Plumber* magazine from our Industry Insider columnists and myself, but you are important!

If the events of the past year-plus haven't shown you that, I don't know what will. Plumbers were labeled as essential workers at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 because you provide needed services to homes and businesses.

If that alone didn't make you realize you and your job are important, look at what happened in Texas in February 2021. The temperature for a few days dipped down below freezing.

Plumbing systems in cold-weather climates are built for that type of weather, but those in Texas were experiencing troubles such as pipes freezing and bursting, issues with septic tanks, and many more. One of the newscasts I caught one evening during that cold spell had the national anchors praising plumbers and talking about how they would be busy for a while.

HANDLING EMERGENCIES

Plumbers often aren't contacted until there is an emergency. How you handle those emergencies can set you apart from your competitors.

Remember these tips if an emergency call is placed:

- 1. It Could Be You** — For the person reaching out it can be devastating. Just think how you would want to be treated and what you would be going through if it was your home or business. Be caring and understanding in their situation.
- 2. Offer Suggestions** — Listen to their problem. It could be something simple and they could be overreacting (it happens). If it is something you can help them out with on the phone and put them at ease, consider doing that.
- 3. Don't Waste Time** — If it is something that needs immediate attention, find a way to get over there that

same day. Even if it's to shut off their water for them for a day. Don't sit on the phone and tell them you are busy for the next week.

- 4. Be Patient** — They are likely stressed, and it may show on the phone with yelling, crying, cursing and so on. Try to be patient with the customer and remain calm. That will often calm them down.
- 5. Refer Them to Someone Else** — Don't be afraid to refer them to another plumber or another contractor if it's a problem that you can't help with or are just too busy for. Don't hurt them just because you don't want to lose some business.

By following these five simple tips, you will likely help the customer, put them at ease, and earn a customer for life.

EXPAND ON WHAT YOU DO


Every company reaches that point where they wonder if there is any more work they can do to pull in more customers. Jamie Miller, owner of Miller's Services is Saluda, Virginia, reached that point.

Miller was running a septic pumping company, but he would often get on a job and the customer would have plumbing-related problems as well. He had to refer those jobs out to other companies and he saw money flying out the window that could be his. What would you do?

Miller decided he had enough of that and expanded his company to offer plumbing and drain cleaning services. He's a go-to shop for any water or wastewater work a customer might need and made his company more valuable. You can read more about how he did that in this month's issue.

YOUR TURN

How do you handle emergency calls or when a customer needs work done that you can't do? Email me at editor@plumbermag.com or call 715-350-8436.

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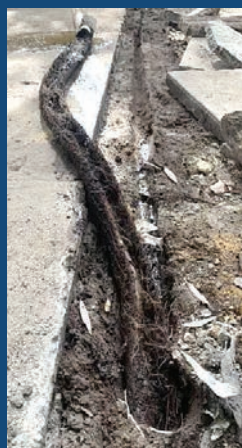
Why Should You Offer Customers Pipe Rehab?

In this online exclusive, John Heisler, owner of Pipe Lining Supply and Quik-Lining Systems, makes the case for giving clients a pipe rehab option, even if regular drain cleaning jobs for those clients are providing a lot of stable work. plumbermag.com/featured

QUALITY CONTROL

How a Plumbing Product Tester Helps Keep the Industry Strong

It's important that the products you use out in the field meet a high standard. That's where people like Reliance Worldwide Corporation's Pat Moore play a role. Moore works in the company's manufacturing facility testing T&P relief valves and other plumbing elements before they're sent out for use. Read more in this online exclusive. plumbermag.com/featured



KING CLOG

Plumber Discovers Anaconda-Sized Root Growth

Everyone in this industry has stories about clearing roots out of pipes. One such story that made the rounds back in March involved a root growth notable for its sheer size. The plumber who removed it described it as an "anaconda" and the worst root infestation in a pipe he's seen in 40 years. Check it out in this online exclusive. plumbermag.com/featured

OVERHEARD ONLINE

"In a normal disaster, you generally see it externally. But these disasters were inside the homes with frozen or burst pipes on the interior of the house. You drive up and the whole neighborhood looks just fine. It doesn't really strike you immediately."

— Texas Works to Recover From Plumbing Crisis

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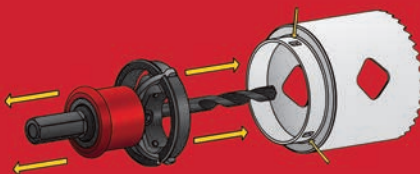
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Profile

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NATURAL Evolution

Virginia contractor expands into plumbing, and many other services to become a one-stop shop for his customers

By Ken Wysocky |
Photos by Tristan Lorei



Miller's Services, Saluda, Virginia

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◀ A family business going for 48 years, Miller's Services in Saluda, Virginia, has enjoyed a healthy growth spurt in recent years, ensuring a long and successful future. Brother and sister Jamie and Ashley Miller are shown with the company's newest vacuum truck, a 2019 International HV Series built by Imperial Industries with a 4,000-gallon aluminum tank and National Vacuum Equipment 4307 blower.

Some contractors like to focus on one service and one service only. But Jamie Miller, the co-owner of Miller's Services, prefers to take a broader approach: Develop an array of services, including plumbing and septic-system maintenance and repairs, and become a one-stop shop for customers.

That emphasis on service diversity is one of the primary reasons the company, based in Saluda, Virginia, has grown dramatically over the years. The company employs about 70 people, says Miller, who co-owns the company with his parents, Jim and Sallie Miller.

"Service diversity — being a one-stop shop for our customers — has been key to our company's success," Miller says. "We do more than just one thing because we truly want to service our customers."

Established in 1972 as a company that pumped septic tanks and performed septic system maintenance, repair and installation, Miller's Services started doing plumbing work full-time in 2014, in response to customers' requests.

"Our customers were asking for it," Miller explains. "We already were doing drain cleaning and one thing led to another. It's definitely a logical add-on service for septic companies."

The bottom line: Whether a plumbing company gets into septic system work or a septic-system company gets into plumbing, benefits abound from offering customers these complementary and interrelated services.

"They're both tied together," Miller notes. "Everything that feeds into a septic system comes from the plumbing inside a house. So when we'd do septic and drain cleaning work, it often would lead to needing a plumber."



▲ Miller's Services' plumbers Casey Jarrell, left, and Cord Jones, right, work with commercial and residential plumbing manager Aaron West, center, as they push a new shower base toward a shower at William and Mary University.

"It got to the point where that was happening every day," he continues. "We'd try to outsource the plumbing work, but when you need it that often, it just isn't feasible to keep outsourcing it. So that's how it evolved."

"Customers love the idea that we can do everything. When they have a problem, they hate having to figure out who to call," he adds. "And if we can't fix their problem, I'll find them someone reliable who can."

LEAVING MONEY ON THE TABLE

The problem with constantly trying to hire plumbers as subcontractors underscores two other reasons Miller opted to offer plumbing services: Lost revenue and customer satisfaction.

► Aaron West sanitizes the tools on the service van after use.



“I thrive on the growth and helping people out. So I want to keep growing all of our services and maybe even add some more. I want to truly be a one-stop shop for all of our customers.”

Jamie Miller

“We were leaving money on the table,” he points out. “Plus we can’t fully service our customers if we have to wait for a plumber. It’s a revenue thing, but it’s also a customer-service and customer-convenience thing, too.”

The company’s service area also influenced its service-diversity efforts. As Miller points out, it’s easy for a contractor who specializes in one service to succeed in a large metro area. But most of Miller’s Services’ service area is rural, which makes it harder for a single-service company to generate enough business volume to succeed.

The same business evolution occurred with electrical and HVAC work, the two other services the company now provides. The company entered the electrical-contracting market in 2016 and HVAC three years later.

The company focuses primarily on service and repair plumbing and its business volume is split roughly in half between residential and commercial work. The firm runs eight service vans, either GMC or Chevrolet box vans or Ford Transits.

Technicians generally use RIDGID and Milwaukee Tool power tools and hand tools made by DEWALT, Milwaukee Tool and RIDGID. The company relies mostly on faucets built by Delta Faucet, Moen and Kohler; toilets from Kohler and TOTO; water heaters

manufactured by Rheem, Bradford White Corp. and State Industries; and tankless water heaters made by Rheem, Navien and Rinnai American Corp.

The company also owns three mini-excavators and two skid-steers made by Kubota and a larger excavator built by John Deere. The machines are used to repair or install water and sewer lines and septic systems.

CONSULTANTS AIDED GROWTH

Help from consultants also keyed the company’s growth, as well as Miller’s professional development from a technician into a businessman, he says.

“We’ve grown so much because I learned how to be a business guy, not just a technician,” he explains. “And I’m still learning.”

Miller hired a consultant in 2014 to straighten out the company’s finances, a move that led to changes in pricing structure and raising accountability standards for employees.

Continued ►

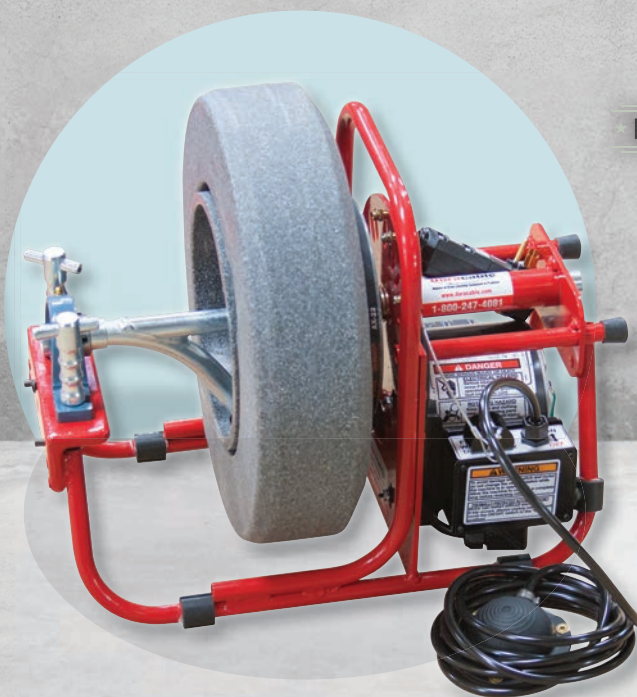
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Furthermore, to shore up his business smarts, Miller hired a service-business consultant that he heard speak at a seminar at a Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo International (now called the Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport Show).

"It was a total game-changer at the time and it still is today," Miller says. "The secret is there is no secret. You can pay all the money you want to consultants, but until you take action and make changes, it doesn't matter.

"You have to get in a mindset that you have no competition — that you are the competition," he says.

Miller also credits his sister, Ashley, the company's general manager, for the company's growth. "She's been instrumental to our success," he says, noting that she'll formally become a co-owner of the company during 2021.

ROOTED IN SEPTIC

The company offered only one service when James Miller Sr. and his wife, Mary, Jamie Miller's grandparents, established Miller's Septic Tank Service in 1973. Miller worked there part time while in high school and came on board full time in the fall of 1999 after a route driver quit.

In January 2002, Miller and his parents, Jim and Sallie Miller, bought the company and renamed it Miller's Septic Service. The company slowly grew by acquiring several other small septic pumping companies and by offering maintenance and repair service. The firm also expanded its drain cleaning services, he says.

Of course, offering so many services requires multi-skilled technicians. Miller is working on developing what he calls "super techs," cross-trained technicians that

Service agreements bolster customer loyalty

To better retain customers, Miller's Services has established service-agreement programs for both customers with alternative septic systems and customers that use the company's plumbing, electrical, heating and cooling services.

Customers can choose one program or the other or sign up for both and get \$100 off the total cost. The septic-system program is about 10 years old and the other program, called Total Care Club (TCC), was launched in early 2019, says Ashley Miller, general manager of the Saluda, Virginia-based company.

"The success of the first program had a lot to do with starting the Total Care Club," Miller says. "A lot of contractors use these kinds of programs, so we wanted to offer them to our customers as well. We keep the programs separate because not all of our customers have septic systems."

Customers that enroll in the septic-service program pay an annual fee. In return, they get an annual maintenance inspection; sampling service (if required); a 10% discount on septic system work; and two free diagnostic alarm calls.

Furthermore, Miller's also notifies the Virginia Department of Health that a system has been inspected and is in good operating condition; such reports are required by the state. Technicians also take pictures of all components and of any maintenance procedures performed during the inspection and customers get a copy of the inspection report that's filed with the state, she says.

By joining the TCC, customers get priority scheduling and guaranteed response times on service calls; a 10% discount on service work; and no evaluation fee for service work. Customers also receive two free maintenance inspections: one in spring for cooling and electrical systems and one in fall for heating and plumbing systems.

The company has about 2,000 customers out of a database of 20,000 signed up for the septic-service agreement and/or the TCC. A team of service experts do the inspection visits, not route drivers, Miller says.

Educating customers about their septic systems is key to getting them to sign up. "It's definitely a lot easier to work with homeowners that understand their system," Miller says. "It helps them to understand that alternative septic systems really do require regular maintenance.

"It's not just about the regulatory requirements," she continues. "There are a lot of electrical and mechanical components, like pumps and control panels. So just like when you run into issues if you don't change the oil regularly in a car, you're going to start having problems without regular inspections."

But the best reason for service programs is that they motivate customers to keep calling Miller's instead of a competitor. Furthermore, it embodies the company's one-stop-shop mentality of providing everything customers might need, all under one roof.

The programs did require the company to hire more employees to handle the extra office/administrative duties, as well as perform the field inspections. But overall, the customer-retention component still makes it worthwhile financially, she says.

Of course, first providing great customer service is critical because no one will sign up for a service program if they have a bad experience on a service call. "After we build rapport with customers and provide them with great service, they feel comfortable with us," she says.

To bolster that comfort level, the company also answers phone calls 24/7 and always has service technicians on call during nights and on weekends, she adds.

can do, for example, plumbing, septic and electrical work.

"I would love nothing more than to have my electrical service expert come to a customer's house to hang two ceiling fans, for example, then while he's there, offer to check out a toilet issue or an HVAC issue," he says.

If there's a wet spot in yard, the technician can check that out, too, and then provide repair options for all the home's issues, along with a menu with upfront pricing. Depending on the severity of the problem, the repairs could be done during the same visit or scheduled for another time, Miller says.

"It's not about being able to fix everything right then and there," he says. "It's about the ability to recognize what's going on and eventually get the right guy out there to do what's needed."



▲ Mark Nichols digs in a crawl space as he attempts to connect a water line to a pressure tank during the installation process.

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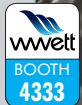
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Plumbers Nick Radwani, left, and Mark Nichols work on assembling a new pressure tank (Amtrol) for a client on a residential call near Saluda.

it does business. The company pays for the school fees and books, and the employees sign a contract in which they agree to remain employees for one year for every year of school they complete, Miller says.

“I’m also sending some of my septic experts to HVAC school,” Miller adds. “All of this (developing super techs) isn’t going to happen overnight because they still have to work and generate revenue while attending school at night. But we’re getting there.”

Out of roughly 40 field technicians, about a half-dozen are what Miller would consider super techs. These employees work under the auspices of company-owned licenses for electrical, plumbing and HVAC work.

The more skills the technicians acquire, the more they get paid. This not only provides motivation; Miller says it also works as a retention tool because cross-trained technicians are much less likely to get bored or burned out doing the same thing all the time.

“They’re more loyal when they see a company investing in them,” he explains. “It helps us to both attract and retain employees because we have so much more opportunities to offer them — so many different directions they can go.”

The company also attracts and retains employees by offering benefits such as health insurance, a company-match retirement plan and paid vacations, holidays and training.

INVESTING IN EQUIPMENT

Over the years, Miller’s has invested heavily in new equipment. The company currently owns four vacuum trucks and a combination sewer truck.

All of the vacuum trucks are built on International truck chassis. One truck was built out by Lely Tank & Waste Solutions with a 3,600-gallon steel tank and a blower manufactured by National Vacuum Equipment. Another truck was rigged up by Abernethy Welding & Repair with a 2,500-gallon steel tank and a Masport pump.

The two other trucks were bought used and feature 3,600- and 2,500-gallon steel tanks and Masport pumps. All three trucks also are equipped with jetting units.

The combination vacuum truck was built by Vactor on a Freightliner chassis. It features a 10-cubic-yard debris tank; a 1,200-gallon water tank; a blower made by Roots blowers (a brand owned by Howden); and a water pump made by Vactor. It’s primarily used to remove old peat moss from peat-moss septic systems.

“We sometimes use Ecoflo septic systems made by

“You have to get in a mindset that you have no competition — that you are the competition.”

Jamie Miller

To motivate technicians to get cross-training, Miller offers pay incentives. For example, electrical technicians earn a raise if they get a commercial driver’s license and gets trained to pump septic tanks. The company offers in-house CDL training, he says.

“Does that mean I want an electrical technician on a pump truck all day? No,” Miller says. “But if someone calls in sick or breaks a leg, I have backups.”

COMPANY-PAID EDUCATIONS

The company currently has 12 employees enrolled in apprenticeship programs across the various trades in which

Premier Tech Water and Environment and Puraflo systems made by Anua International, which both use peat moss as the filtering media,” Miller explains. “The peat moss breaks down in the tank, turning from dry and fibrous into a mud-like consistency.

“When that happens, we have to take out the old peat moss and replace it,” he continues. “It’s really wet and heavy — too heavy for our vacuum trucks. So we use the combo truck.”

The company also owns two trailer-mounted water jetters made by Spartan Tool (4,000 psi at 18 gpm); two JM-1000 toolbox jetters built by General Pipe Cleaners (a division of General Wire Spring Co.); eight RIDGID pipeline-inspection cameras; and a variety of RIDGID, General Pipe and Spartan cable drain machines.



▲ Miller’s Services’ technicians Kenney Boyette, right, and Pierce Rained, left, replace pipe on the air pump from a septic system in hopes of repairing it. The company not only does plumbing service work, but also handles septic tank installation and pumping.

MORE GROWTH ANTICIPATED

In the coming years, Miller’s goal is to keep building his super-tech, cross-trained workforce while becoming a national leader in the home-services industry.

“I definitely want to see even more growth,” he notes. “And it’s not just for me — it’s for our employees, too. The more we grow, the more opportunities we have to offer employees and the more we can offer to our customers.

“I don’t know when and where I’ll stop,” he adds. “All I know is that I’m an entrepreneur — it’s in my blood. I thrive on the growth and helping people out. So I want to keep growing all of our services and maybe even add some more. I want to truly be a one-stop shop for all of our customers.” **P**

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Getting to Yes

Customer financing helps sticker-shocked customers afford major plumbing repairs

By Ken Wysocky

When people can't afford large plumbing repairs, technicians at Rozga Plumbing Corp. in suburban Milwaukee are equipped to provide a convenient solution: customer financing.

For projects that cost \$1,000 or more, the company started offering customers financing through Payzer, a financial-services and technology company, about five years ago. Since then, it's become an important part of the company's operations and has contributed to its growth and profitability, says owner Sam Gillis.


"We started to realize that as projects got more and more expensive — more so on the sewer and water side — and money got tighter, people couldn't always afford needed repairs," says Gillis, who bought the West Allis-based company about three years ago.

"When people wake up in the morning, they're not expecting to spend, say, \$10,000 on replacing a sewer lateral or a waterline," he continues. "But offering financing has allowed customers to say yes to so much more work that they otherwise couldn't afford."

"Being able to solve their problems affordably, as well as not force them to hire less-qualified side-jobbers and handymen, has been a game-changer."

"When people wake up in the morning, they're not expecting to spend, say, \$10,000 on replacing a sewer lateral or a waterline. But offering financing has allowed customers to say yes to so much more work that they otherwise couldn't afford."

Sam Gillis



COMPANY	Rozga Plumbing Corp., West Allis, Wisconsin
OWNER	Sam Gillis
TOOL	Customer financing via Payzer
FUNCTION	Making expensive water and sewer repairs affordable for customers
FEATURES	A wide range of convenient payment terms; no pre-payment penalties; credit approval in minutes; apply via cellphone or tablet
WEBSITE	www.rozgacorp.com

The company used to try to help out cash-strapped customers by letting them pay off large repair bills in installments over six months, for example. But that gets risky in terms of cash flow, Gillis points out.

"As your customer base grows, the ability to provide in-house financing starts to get expensive," he notes. "The bottom line is we're not a bank or in the bill-collecting business."

WORD-OF-MOUTH REFERRALS

To find a good, reputable finance company, Gillis says the company relied on referrals from supply houses and vendors.

"We asked them who they trust, and they recommended Payzer, which has been a good partner with us," he says. "Your vendors know who's doing things right and who's doing things wrong."

Other factors played into the decision, such as the ability for customers to get credit approval quickly. As Gillis points out, customers in need of a sewerline repair can't wait two or three days to get approval.

"Payzer can approve credit in a couple minutes," he says. "Fast approval is very important."

TECHNICIANS PLAY A ROLE

Customers can apply for financing through a secure link on the Rozga website that takes them to a Payzer portal. Or they can access a contractor-specific Payzer app by using a technician's iPad, he explains.

"This streamlines the process and can allow customers to get the necessary work performed the same day, if time permits," Gillis says.

Getting technicians involved in the process required training. "We're good tradesmen, but that doesn't mean we're good financial advisers, too," he says. "So we train technicians about things such as when to bring the subject of financing up, how to offer it, what the options are — in short, explain how to have that conversation.

"We also give them some pointers on how to be discreet and confidential about these discussions and how to give customers some privacy while they're entering in financial information, a Social Security number and so forth."

Most technicians have responded well to the additional responsibility, which allows them to broaden their skills and expand their comfort zones. But if they don't feel comfortable in a sales role, or need more information, office staff is always available as a backup, Gillis says.

FLEXIBILITY MATTERS

A wide range of payment plans also made Payzer attractive. Gillis says Payzer offers 10 different programs, but most customers opt for either one-, three- or 10-year payment terms. The 10-year plan is the most popular because it keeps the monthly payment small.

On the other hand, the longer the loan terms, the higher the interest rate, although Payzer does not impose any pre-payment penalties, he notes.

"They even offer options for customers that don't have stellar credit," Gillis says.

Offering customers financing isn't free, however.



▲ When Rozga Plumbing Corp. customers learn they need a major plumbing repair, the company can offer them financing options, such as Payzer to help them afford it. (Photo by Michael McLoone)

Finance companies typically charge contractors a percentage of the total cost of a project, in much the same way that retailers must pay credit card companies a percentage of a transaction total.

As such, contractors typically build that expense into the overall price of a project instead of "eating" the cost.

MUST-HAVE OPTION

Looking at the big picture, Gillis says plumbers are missing out if they don't offer financing, especially since customers now are more comfortable with loans and monthly payments than ever before.

"People live in a world of monthly payments," he says. "Companies that are stubborn and don't want to learn new things are the companies that will fade and fizzle out.

"You can be the best plumbing company in the world, but if you can't make yourself affordable, you'll soon become irrelevant." **PI**



Anja Smith

Ramping Up the Chatter

Text and chat programs have become tools that can easily be used for plumbers to communicate with team members and customers

By Anja Smith

SMS, often called text messaging, has been around since 1992. Since then, it has been flourishing as a communication medium between family and friends. However, this historically casual form of communication is becoming more popular in the business world.

Nowadays, most people don't think twice about receiving a business text message. Once smart phones became ubiquitous and the vast majority of billing plans included unlimited texts, the shift occurred.

Business to consumers

Service plumbing is a mobile and appointment-based, making SMS customer communications particularly appealing to our industry. Appointment confirmations

Service plumbing is a mobile and appointment-based, making SMS customer communications particularly appealing to our industry.

and reminders, estimated arrival time texts, and requests for reviews are common for plumbing companies.

More robust field management software programs, like ServiceTitan, have these features built in and automated, decreasing the workload of the office staff.

SMS marketing is also growing. Here's an example: Text "PLUMBER" to 8675309 to receive a free camera inspection!

This form of marketing is relatively new. Advocates claim that consumers read nearly 100% of texts and like that texts are cheap to send. Essentially, their argument is high visibility for a few dollars, giving SMS marketing a high return on investment.

However, studies are still out about how consumers feel about text marketing. Younger consumers seem to prefer text marketing to email marketing. For the brave out there who like trying new ideas, let the rest of us know how that goes!

Regardless of how brave you get in your business-to-consumer text communications, be sure you are following the rules.

Actually, in the U.S., there are laws governing text marketing and text message privacy. Much like email, spamming contacts and sending texts without permission is a big no-no. There is a whole alphabet soup of federal agencies that monitor and regulate text communications.

Be sure to get explicit approval to send text messages to your customers. Having their number in your database is not implied consent. If you want to read up on these laws, the big one in the U.S. is the Telephone Consumer Protection Act.

Business to employees

Millennial workers expect employers to communicate with them via text. In fact, a growing number of employees prefer and expect mobile-first communication.

For some older employees and managers, this may be frustrating. There are, however, some advantages to text communications.

Speed is one advantage. It's much faster to text a group of employees about a weather delay or morning meeting than to call everyone individually. Time-stamped documentation is another enormous advantage. Much like email, you can often see a read-receipt on a text message.

Most people would agree that conversations shouldn't take place over text — don't discipline or explain ideas over SMS. However, much like with consumers, texting

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is great for reminders, quick updates, FYIs and other productivity boosting communications.

The rules and limitations that guide consumer communications don't apply to employees, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't be clear about policies and expectations.

CHAT

Chat communication — or instant messaging, if you are old-school — is about as old as the internet itself. It started gaining popularity in 1996 with programs like ICQ and AIM.

Chat never really went away, but some new technology and programs have made it easier for businesses to implement chat for marketing and internal communications.

Business to consumers

Facebook Messenger has been a game-changer for small businesses to connect directly with their consumers in a quick and less obtrusive way. While custom website chat programs have been available for a fee, these programs weren't too interesting to most plumbers.

Messenger is widely used touting over a billion users per month. There is a benefit to using software that is familiar to your consumer and works on desktop or mobile. It's free to install on most websites and connects directly to the business Facebook page you are likely already managing.

Besides being able to install a Messenger widget on your website, you can dig into some advanced options on Facebook and really take advantage of the technology for marketing.

Chatbots are available that mimic one-to-one conversations and guide a customer through common questions and answers. You can run ads that prompt the user to start a conversation with you and book appointments right in the app.

Dedicated chat services are also popular in the plumbing industry. Several options exist with various special features including artificial intelligence, 24/7 live response, and seamless desktop to mobile experiences. Depending on your customer demographics, you might find chat a popular option and smart marketing tool.

Chat never really went away, but some new technology and programs have made it easier for businesses to implement chat for marketing and internal communications.

Business to Employees

Chat in a business environment is nothing new for office workers. Cubicle workers have long embraced this tech. New options on the market have widened the possibilities in the past few years. Slack, for instance, has some really powerful tools with the ability to organize conversations, advanced search filters, and built-in collaboration tools.

There is no reason field workers couldn't be included in a well-organized Slack environment. The key is to keep your "channels" — the defined chat spaces — clear and minimize chatter on "general" channels that everyone can see. If not, at some point, the notifications become overwhelming and get tuned out.

Slack has a well-earned reputation for integrating with other online tools. You can create to-do lists, share documents, and even use Slack for payroll time keeping by connecting other free and paid tools within your setup.

Worth mentioning are Microsoft Teams and G Suite, which work more like traditional chat apps. For an office-only setting, these tools can help cut down on disruptive phone calls and desk "pop-ins" that increase the overall noise level of an office environment.

Technology is constantly changing the landscape of communication. Both personally and in business, the most important thing to remember is that we communicate often and clearly with customers and coworkers. **PI**

Anja Smith is the managing partner at All Clear Plumbing and writer/speaker at Tradebiz Toolbox. Contact Anja at www.tradebiztoolbox.com.



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Tool Planning

Are you looking at all the options when it comes to equipment for your company? Renting might be an option for those jobs you don't get all the time.

By Steven Anderson and Luke Fontenot

Having the right equipment for a project is a game-changer for plumbing and mechanical contractors. But it can seem like a waste of resources to invest in tools that might be used infrequently. Plumbing professionals could see increased labor costs and missed deadlines if they do not have the right tools to get the job done correctly.

Is investing in new equipment for the crew always the best solution? It's an age-old question, rent versus buy, and the answer is in the numbers.

Evaluating the total cost of ownership provides a helpful checkpoint at almost every stage of the project — from bidding to close. Although tools tend to be smaller line items on the overall budget, it's easy to lose sight of their cost and end up overspending.

Most companies purchase equipment, so they have the inventory for the peak project period. Since downtime can often be attributed to not having access to the right tool, that makes sense. That also means that those tools sit underutilized during the off-peak times or any project delays. Those unused assets equate to real dollars and time lost, and especially now, companies may not have much flexibility for either one.

Typically, contractors do not revisit pre-job estimates after a project closes. However, identifying those gaps in estimates early on could allow reallocation of dollars elsewhere and minimize dilution of anticipated returns.

There are so many variables that go into a contractor's decision to buy or rent. However, teams are increasingly looking to create smarter equipment strategies that include rental solutions to get the right equipment in the right hands within the right timeframe. These strategies can also help contractors reduce large capital expenditures.

SOURCING EQUIPMENT SOLUTIONS

Equipment availability and reliability are essential in daily operations and contractors rely on rental providers to have the right equipment at the right time. Look for

- ◀ Equipment availability and reliability are essential in daily operations and contractors rely on rental providers to have the right equipment at the right time. Look for mechanical equipment rental inventory that includes various tools to knock the job out quickly and safely. (Photo courtesy United Rentals)



Evaluating the total cost of ownership provides a helpful checkpoint at almost every stage of the project — from bidding to close. Although tools tend to be smaller line items on the overall budget, it's easy to lose sight of their cost and end up over-spending.

mechanical equipment rental inventory that includes various tools to knock the job out quickly and safely.

These inventories should include hand tools, hoisting, surface prep, threading, torqueing and welding equipment. Look for solutions that group tool packages for crews instead of work sites. This equipment should include cordless technology, which can help remove trip and fire hazards from the work environment.

Renting equipment can help level out inefficiencies during a project's life cycle. Typically, different stages of a project require different sets of tools, but by working closely with on-site teams, a rental provider can supply the right equipment based on the project's craft curve. These equipment solutions can also help eliminate the need to carry capital expenditure should a project get delayed and no work occurs.

CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

As mechanical contractors manage through the COVID-19 crisis, they must have more options when renting needed equipment safely and efficiently. Besides having equipment delivered to a work site or available to an equipment rental provider branch, providers should offer a "contactless" drive-up experience to pick up or drop off equipment that helps serve contractors faster and keeps them safe.

Contractors should also have many options to order equipment to get what they need without going inside a branch. These include the ability to browse and reserve equipment online, on the phone or with mobile apps from smartphones.

Contractors need to check to ensure their equipment rental provider is taking the necessary steps to safeguard its equipment is sanitary and ready for use. Measures may include prerenal safety and mechanical checks on equipment and additional cleaning and disinfecting protocols.

If the rental provider is dropping equipment off at a work site, be sure their drivers perform a "last touch" precautionary disinfecting of the equipment. They should

use a government-approved disinfectant and spray or wipe the surfaces touched by the driver when delivering the equipment.

DEVELOPING A SMARTER STRATEGY WITH A PARTNER

Having the right equipment at the right time is the name of the game when it comes to productivity.

Plumbing and mechanical contractors that rent top-quality, well-maintained tools find they boost productivity and streamline operations through on-site availability, decreased downtime due to tool failure, and lower loss rates. Renting also gives companies the flexibility to free up capital and invest in other areas of the business. It's a smart strategy that reduces overall tool cost and lets contractors add dollars to the bottom line. **PI**

Steven Anderson is sales manager – tools at United Rentals, based in Augusta, Georgia. Luke Fontenot is sales manager – tools at United Rentals, based in Austin, Texas.



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Mischa Fisher

Expanding the Workforce

Trying different recruiting and hiring methods could be the key to turning around yours and the industry's labor shortage

By Mischa Fisher

Is growing your business and expanding your profit important to you and your company? I suspect so. Unfortunately, the trade labor shortage is likely getting in the way.

According to HomeAdvisor's new annual report, *The Skilled Trades in America*, 40% of plumbing business owners are suffering from delayed and stunted business growth as a result of the lack of available workforce.

The report highlights some of the industry's pressing issues including the consequences of leaving problems unaddressed. It also uncovers some practical solutions for solving these pressing problems and — most critically for you — the opportunity available to industry leaders that are the first to do so.

With nearly half of all trade business owners currently saying the shortage is stunting their growth, it is no surprise that 80% of plumbers believe there is a shortage in trade labor and only 3% think the problem has improved in the last five years. Despite the strong housing and remodeling markets, the shortage of labor is presenting a huge challenge for plumbing companies.

Maybe your business has already been held back by the labor shortage or maybe you're fortunate in that it has yet to impact you. Either way, it is an industry-wide issue that needs your attention.

BECOMING A PRIORITY

Why should you make fixing the labor shortage a priority?

The answer is that every business is only as good as its people. Whether you're running a plumbing service business focusing on maintenance and repair, a construction plumbing business installing new systems from scratch as part of the building process, or some combination of blended service, your business can only scale, grow and increase revenue if you are bringing in new talent, training them well and making them available to your clients and customers.

The solution to this problem, and the business opportunity available to early and effective problem solvers, lies with you. How you recruit, train and retain talent will impact your ability to outgrow your competitors and capitalize on any potential consumer demand.

The Skilled Trades report highlights three specific solutions you can use to lessen the labor shortage and gain a competitive edge in recruitment, training and growth.

1. Change the benefits you highlight.

Many skilled construction and remodeling jobs pay above market average wages for their area and many employers in the plumbing industry highlight those competitive wages as one of their main tools of attracting talent.

However, the most striking insight we found about working in the trades is not about wages but about the very high levels of job satisfaction. The overall level of satisfaction across the trades is 82%. Plumbers are a particularly happy group with less than 5% dissatisfied in their profession.

Why are plumbers so happy? It is not just the great pay and potential for flexible hours. Rather, finding meaning and value in work is the number one driver among those who are highly satisfied.

At a time when the younger generations prioritize finding value in their work and believing in its importance, this is a huge competitive advantage in recruiting new people to the industry.

Unfortunately, 60% of plumbers believe there is a lack of respect for blue-collar work in America. One of the ways

Despite the strong housing and remodeling markets, the shortage of labor is presenting a huge challenge for plumbing companies.

to change this perception — and attract new people to the field — is by talking about the very high levels of job satisfaction and meaning in the purity of the work itself that the skilled trades have to offer.

2. Change how you recruit.

A total of 63% of tradespeople still rely on word-of-mouth recommendations as their number-one method of recruitment. The second closest method, online job posting websites, is less than half as popular at 28%.

You make investments in your vehicle fleet, equipment, consumer demand and business development channels, so why not in recruiting the best possible talent?

The industry has long relied on passive, word-of-mouth recommendations, but it's time to modernize and innovate how it recruits new talent. As broad as your word-of-mouth network may be, using new digital and online tools and working with local high schools, colleges and other community organizations is going to significantly expand how effective your efforts are at attracting top talent.

3. Expand and diversify your talent targets.

The plumbing industry is suffering from a trade labor shortage while simultaneously limiting itself to a workforce that is less than 10% female. With women making up nearly half of the population, we should expect to see somewhere between five and 10 times as many female plumbers as there are today.


What's more, the women who are working in the trades are about twice as likely as their male peers to believe that providing a clear pathway for women to enter the trades would make a difference. Plainly put, there is a natural inertia in implementing the sorts of clear pathways and cultural focus that would help us to broaden the workforce.

Fortunately, we have a few industries to look to as examples of successful rebalancing of gender in the workforce. Looking back a few generations, the medical and legal industries were missing out on the untapped potential of half of the population but today, medical and law school graduates are evenly split 50/50 between men and women. It's now up to the trades to follow suit.

This dynamic also applies when looking at racial diversity in the trades. While not quite as pronounced as the shortage of women, there is a major underrepresentation of people of color in the trades.

Using recruitment methods that do not rely strictly on word of mouth, as well as making a concerted effort to build a broader talent recruitment pipeline are two immediate solutions to this underrepresentation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The skilled trades and nearly half of plumbing businesses are not growing like they could because of the trade labor shortage. By adjusting what benefits are highlighted, changing your choice recruitment tools and expanding your target audience for recruitment and training, you can be one of the early problem solvers with a larger, higher quality talent pool available to expand, innovate and grow your business. 

Mischa Fisher is the chief economist for HomeAdvisor and ANGI Homeservices.



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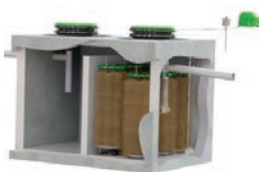
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Advanced Treatment Units

Aero-Stream NSF 40 Aerobic Treatment Unit

NSF 40 Aerobic Treatment Units from Aero-Stream provide a simple and robust design achieving 26-week average of 11.39 mg/L CBOD5 and average 5.00mg/L TSS from startup. These systems provide massive surface area on Bio-Brush for an attached growth extended aeration process. The products are designed to fit in locally available tanks, reducing lead times and transportation costs. The simple-to-install systems require minimal maintenance. The air compressor is a corded UL-listed outdoor appliance that plugs into a standard 115-volt AC power outlet. The Aero-Alert alarm system requires no high-voltage wiring and operates on a self-contained power cell, reducing installation costs. Models are available from 450 to 1,500 gpd treatment capacities in single to multicompartment applications. 877-254-7093; www.aero-stream.com



BioMicrobics MicroFAST

Available from 500- to more than 9,000-gpd applications, **MicroFAST** wastewater treatment systems or MicroFITT-ee (energy-efficient version) from **BioMicrobics** are advanced, integrated wastewater treatment systems with aeration and submerged fixed-film, suitable for residential and commercial applications. With the SFR feature of the FAST technology, alternate modes of operation include intermittent operation to reduce electricity usage up to 45% and extra denitrification from the already approximately 70% nitrogen reduction (NSF 245). Its biosolids treatment and sludge digestion enable cost-effective treatment with less maintenance. The effluent meets secondary quality requirements and can be distributed to a soil treatment system or water reuse applications. 913-422-0707; www.biomicrobics.com



Norweco Singulair Green

The **Singulair R3 Green** water reuse system reduces water consumption, reuses treated effluent and recycles water to conserve and recharge water resources. It provides a solution to chronic water shortages and reduces energy costs associated with water and wastewater treatment. The system quietly, efficiently and automatically treats all incoming wastewater to the highest level for restricted indoor and unrestricted outdoor use. The system exceeds the effluent requirements of NSF/ANSI Standards 40, 245 and 350. It qualifies for Green Building credits under both the LEED rating system and the NAHB ICC 700 National Green Building Standard. By using the system and following local building code, a homeowner can expect to dramatically reduce water usage. 800-667-9326; www.norweco.com



Presby Environmental Advanced Enviro-Septic

Advanced Enviro-Septic (AES) from Presby Environmental is a combined treatment and dispersal system for residential, commercial and community use that's designed to remove 99% of wastewater contaminants. It requires no replacement media or additives and no electricity or mechanical devices. The NSF 40 Class 1-certified system treats effluent efficiently, providing long system life and protecting the environment, according to the maker. It quickly and naturally establishes multiple bacterial treatment environments throughout the system that break down and digest wastewater contaminants that leave the septic tank. Following the filtering of suspended solids, it releases highly purified wastewater to the soil, recharging the groundwater and preventing soil and groundwater contamination. It is BNQ certified for secondary and advanced secondary treatment. 800-473-5298; www.presbyeco.com



SALCOR 3G UV Wastewater Disinfection Unit

The 3G UV Wastewater Disinfection Unit from SALCOR is used for residential, commercial and municipal applications, and it is UL-certified NEMA 6P flood-proof and NSF/Washington State Protocol six-month tested (with 21 upstream treatment systems). It inactivates bacteria/virus pathogens, including superbugs. Rated at 9,000 gpd gravity flow, it is meant as a reliable building block for large water recovery/reuse systems. When installed in 12-unit parallel/series arrays with ABS pipefittings, systems can disinfect more than 100,000 gpd. Gravity flow equalizes without distribution boxes. Each unit has a foul-resistant Teflon lamp covering, two-year long-life lamp with efficient installation, minimal annual maintenance and energy use of less than 40 watts. **760-731-0745; www.salcor.world**



SeptiTech STAAR



Designed for both multifamily domestic and high-strength commercial wastewater, **SeptiTech STAAR** (Smart Trickling Anaerobic/Aerobic Recirculation) filter systems range from 100 to more than 150,000 gpd treatment applications. The technology allows for

simple, automatic and reliable equalization and clarification processes. The biological trickling filter technology also maintains low levels of Nitrate-N and achieves lower operating costs and power requirements with all below-grade components that fit readily in available concrete, plastic or fiberglass tanks. It is suitable in areas where large tracts of land are not available for land intensive wastewater treatment systems, and may qualify for equivalent secondary discharge standards. Systems are appropriate for small-to-medium-sized communities to rapidly reduce soluble BOD5 with efficient nitrification and denitrification for environmentally sensitive areas. They utilize partially submerged media to treat high organic loads with durable process elements and low power requirements. **207-333-6940; www.septitech.com**

Drainfield Restoration

Lenzyme enzyme-bacteria product

Lenzyme is an enzyme-bacteria product used as a septic biological maintainer, drain cleaner and sewage treating agent in the home and in industrial, commercial and municipal installations. It can be packaged in the existing brand name or private labeled. It may also be used in formulations designed for a given condition or application. Various formulas have been developed for use in drains, septic tanks and cesspools, and for industrial and commercial application. It is used to attack the biomat, condition the soil bed, and help restore balance in the field. High count helps clean up the leftover organics. **800-223-3083; www.lenzyme.com**



Excavation Equipment

Ditch Witch HX30G

The **HX30G** vacuum excavator from **Ditch Witch** boasts high-profile

power in a low-profile design that eases navigation in congested and height-restricted areas. It is powered by a 31 hp Vanguard gas engine for optimal suction power and water pressure. To boost efficiency on any job, it comes with a powerful 542 cfm blower, 3,000 psi water pressure and 4.2 gpm water flow. It is offered with the choice of a 500- or 800-gallon tank for a variety of job requirements. The machine is available in multiple trailer configurations, including the VT9 trailer that, when equipped with the 500-gallon tank, does not require a CDL to transport. **800-654-6481; www.ditchwitch.com**





Hydra-Flex Reaper

The **Reaper** rotating jetting nozzle from **Hydra-Flex** has a rotating front jet that provides a 0-degree, straight water stream that blasts at up to 4,000 psi while rotating. Optimized stream quality results in greater impingement, allowing the technician to use one tool for various applications, including cutting, cleaning and removal. Its four rear jets create a 20-degree angle for maximum thrusting and pulling power. This heavy-duty, high-impact nozzle is constructed with a stainless steel housing and tungsten carbide wear surfaces to withstand harsh environments and provide long life. **952-808-3640; www.hydrflexinc.com**

Pumps



Ashland Pump SW Series

The **SW40**, **SW50** and **SW75** Series from **Ashland Pump** are equipped with cast iron vortex impellers. The nonclogging vortex design on the fractional horsepower pumps allows better passing of materials that may get flushed (wipes, rags, etc.), while maintaining the same performance. The vortex impellers are well suited for today's waste stream, as they are low profile and resistant to clogging. The pumps have been updated to 3,450 rpm to achieve the same performance as the previous two-vane design model. **855-281-6830; www.ashlandpump.com**

Crane Pumps & Systems Barnes Pressure Sewer EcoTRAN

The **Barnes Pressure Sewer EcoTRAN** from **Crane Pumps & Systems** provides a practical and environmentally safe alternative to traditional gravity sewers. Even in locations with difficult terrain, it reduces sewage infrastructure costs by allowing smaller diameter piping to be used in place of large complex septic sewage systems, making it a suitable sewer choice. It collects and grinds sewage in an underground basin, then transports it to a remote private or municipal wastewater treatment plant. **937-778-8947; www.cranepumps.com**



Franklin Electric Little Giant 16G Series

The **Little Giant 16G Series** 1 hp grinder pump from **Franklin Electric** is offered in 115-volt and 230-volt versions, with multiple switch options. It has a silicon carbide mechanical seal that provides up to six times longer seal life with lower thermal expansion and higher abrasion resistance when compared to carbon-ceramic seals. The cutting mechanism is designed based on the system used in larger Franklin Electric grinder pump models. The heavy-duty 1 hp class F motor provides optimal power to prevent flushable debris from clogging and causing unwanted downtime. When installing, users can choose to utilize either the 1 1/4-inch discharge or the 2-inch adapter pre-assembled to the pump, making it a suitable replacement for any effluent or sewage pump struggling with clogs and binding. **800-269-0063; www.franklinwater.com**

Liberty Pumps ProVore

The **ProVore** grinder from **Liberty Pumps** is designed for use in applications where the addition of a bathroom or other fixtures below sewer lines requires pumping. It has the same V-Slice cutter technology used in the Omnivore series, brought down to a more cost-effective level. Powered by a 1 hp motor, this smaller grinder is designed to operate on a standard 115- or 230-volt circuit, requiring only a 20-amp breaker. No special wiring is needed. The pump comes with a 2-inch vertical-style discharge and a standard leg pattern matching the LE Series. This allows for an easy retrofit into existing systems. Compact factory-assembled systems are available in both simplex and duplex versions: the **ProVore 380** and **ProVore 680**. **800-543-2550; www.libertypumps.com**



Polylok PL-CPE4A

The **Polylok PL-CPE4A** is a submersible, 4/10 hp, 115-volt, single-phase effluent pump with a 2-inch NPT vertical discharge. It has a maximum head of 38 feet and a maximum flow of 56 gpm. The pump is designed with a 3,450 rpm oil-filled permanent split-capacitor motor and has an amp rating of 6.6 for 115 volts, a rugged cast iron housing and volute equipped with a cast iron vortex impeller capable of passing 3/4-inch-diameter solids. The stainless steel shaft is supported by two single-row, oil-lubricated ball bearings. The shaft seal is an inboard design with a secondary Exclusion V seal. It has a 20-foot UL/CSA-listed power cable suitable for submersible service and fitted with a three-prong plug. The unit is supplied with an integrated clip for the included piggyback mechanical float switch and used for automatic operation. **888-765-9565; www.polylok.com**



Webtrol VE Series

Webtrol VE Series pumps are designed for low pressure dosing systems in cases where flow equalization in the drainfield is critical. The 1/2 hp VE5A46 can produce heads up to 49 feet and flows up to 65 gpm. Motors are continuous duty and housed in stainless steel for corrosion resistance. The volute, impeller, and all wetted parts are rugged cast iron to resist abrasion, and a double mechanical seal is housed in an oil chamber, preventing any solids from entering the sealed motor cavity. The VE also is provided with a unique removable stainless steel screen, preventing solids from entering the drainfield. The series include models that can produce 80 feet of head and over 200 gpm. **800-769-7867; www.webtrol.com**



Pump Controls

Alderon Industries Power Post control panel



The **Power Post** control panel pump connection and monitoring system from **Alderon Industries** can be used for a variety of applications, including mound systems, pressurized drainfields or any system requiring timed- or demand-dose pumping and monitoring. They allow the installer to make a professional and safe connection for power and float switch wiring connections, with available models that include a 120- or 240-volt AC pump power receptacle. Systems include an integrated outdoor alarm with LED indicators (various colors), buzzer and test/silence push button. The top of the enclosure changes color along with system function displayed text on the OLED screen. Menu keys are provided to program settings and view data such as pump run, pump cycle counts, pump amps, elapsed time, peak/extended pump run, total gallons pumped, pump dosing events, pump fail and alarm conditions. **218-483-3034; www.alderonind.com**

Jet Inc. Model 196 control panel

Model 196 control panels from **Jet Inc.** are prewired electrical control panels designed to control and monitor operation of the Jet system aerator or aerators, as well as the function of one or two 120/1/60 or 240/1/60 pumps for flow equalization and various pressurized distribution system applications such as time dose, demand dose and night spray. The series of control panels allow for optional cycle timer, cycle counter, remote telemetry and auxiliary alarms. All controls and audible and visual alarms are housed in a NEMA 4 control enclosure. **800-321-6960; www.jetincorp.com**



Septic Tanks

Infiltrator Water Technologies IM-Series Tanks

Injection-molded IM-Series Tanks from Infiltrator Water Technologies are available in



multiple sizes including the IM-540 pump tank, IM-1060 and large-capacity IM-1530 septic tank. Lightweight, strong and watertight, the tanks enable shallow, multiple and serial tank installation options in septic and pump applications. All have integral heavy-duty lids that interconnect with the watertight click-and-lock EZsnap riser. The tanks also have structurally reinforced access ports, reinforced structural ribbing and fiberglass support posts to provide additional strength. The two-piece tank design nests for efficient shipping, and inboard lifting lugs make delivery and handling easier. The tanks frequently house advanced wastewater treatment systems such as the ECOPOD fixed-film bioreactor system or the ECOFILTER pump vault tank filtration system. 800-221-4436; www.infiltratorwater.com

Septic Tank Component

Pagoda Vent septic vents

Septic vents from Pagoda Vent are designed to help enhance system function with landscape appeal and homeowner approval. The units are designed to provide the necessary ventilation to the drainfield and have a durable, lightweight exterior that won't fade or rust, according to the manufacturer. The units encourage a healthy sub-surface environment, mitigate harmful gases, and preserve concrete component integrity by diminishing the opportunity for microbial-induced corrosion. Optional odor filter cartridges are available and fit concealed in the vent unit. 888-864-1468; www.pagodavent.com





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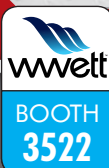


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NuFlow welcomes vice president of product development

NuFlow Technologies welcomed Jim Foresi as NuFlow's vice president of product development. Foresi was most recently vice president of product development at TriLumina. Previous positions include roles at Sandia National Laboratories and Emcore. Foresi has a Ph.D. in materials science and engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in addition to a Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering from Boston University and a master's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Michigan.

Franklin Electric announces recipients for outstanding achievements

Franklin Electric held its 2021 Commercial Summit, which included educational sessions, keynote presentations and celebrated sales achievements for its U.S. and Canada water operations. The winners of the company's awards are: Franklin Electric Salesperson of the Year, Alex Bracht, territory manager – Western Region; Field Service Engineer of the Year, Todd Hofstra, senior field service engineer – Western Region; and Team of the Year, Northeast Region – sales, field service, marketing and customer relations, Jim Sacriponte, Bryan Defoe, Dan Kolath, Robert Ruffh, Tom Mitchell, Jennifer Ford, Ilse Gallegos, Jim Hartmann, Ryan Horner and Bob McClain.

HammerHead Trenchless announces leadership transition

Jeff Gabrielse has been named managing director of HammerHead Trenchless, assuming leadership of the HammerHead brand within the newly formed Rehabilitation and Replacement division of The Toro Co. Gabrielse will be overseeing the HammerHead Rehabilitation and Replacement business, continuing its focus on delivering innovative trenchless equipment and solutions for the water, wastewater and gas markets.



Boshart Group announces leadership appointments, transitions

Gary Boshart, founder and chair of the Boshart Group, and its newly appointed CEO, Jeremy Kuepfer, announced leadership appointments and transitions in their North American operations. Kuepfer most recently served as the senior vice president of IT and operations.



Kuepfer announced that as of March 1, Bo Andersson, who has served Flomatic for over 50 years, most recently as president, will transition to a new role as director of research and development for Boshart. Also effective March 1, Kuepfer said Nick Farrara will be appointed president of Flomatic.

W.E. Rawson adds Joiner as marketing services manager

Jennifer Joiner has joined W.E. Rawson's group of companies Applied Felts, Maxliner and Ferratex Solutions as marketing services manager. In this new role, her responsibilities will be market development, new product promotion and maintaining a positive experience with current and prospective customers. She brings over 13 years' experience in CIPP for the water and wastewater pipeline rehabilitation industry. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting with a minor in business management and is a licensed commercial and residential general contractor.



Neighborly experiences network growth in 2020

Neighborly, a franchisor of 28 home-service brands, ended 2020 with 382 new franchise agreements awarded, setting new records for signed agreements in three quarters. Neighborly's presence consists of 4,500 franchises representing 28 total brands across nine countries.

Bradley Corp. names new vice president of business development

Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin-based Bradley Corp. appointed Mark Whittington to vice president of business development. In his role, Whittington will be responsible for growing Bradley's plumbing products business. He has held various sales, operations and supply chain leadership positions in the plumbing industry for 20-plus years, most notably with Elkay Mfg. as executive vice president, plumbing.

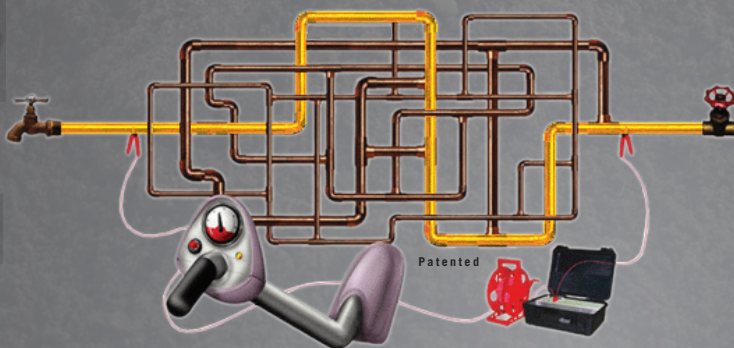


RIDGID products used for Elyria City schools building project

The Elyria City School District and Emerson's RIDGID headquarters both call a small corner of Northeast Ohio home. The school district is constructing five new schools for their more than 4,000 pre-K to eighth grade students, and several of the tradespeople working on the project

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are using RIDGID tools. The \$120 million project is on target to be completed by the end of 2021. Over the years, RIDGID has sponsored many key projects within the district, including a technology lab, new computer equipment for students, and the district's Maker Space, a learning area dedicated to fostering science, technology, engineering and math education.

RWC joins forces with Home Builders Institute to address labor gap

Reliance Worldwide Corp. is partnering with Home Builders Institute, a national leader in career training for the building and construction industry, as the exclusive trade sponsor for its 22 plumbing programs across the U.S., primarily serving Job Corps students and justice-involved individuals. HBI's programs help approximately 10,000 students each year receive hands-on training and find meaningful careers in the trades. HBI also provides them with job placement and transition assistance, and qualified graduates are able to enter advanced training programs to expand their education and experience.

Ranger Design announces new team members

Ranger Design named Michael Diaz as director, fleet upfit solutions, to help meet demand for its van solution manufacturing needs for small and large fleets. Diaz joined Ranger Design in 2019 and previously led business development for Ranger Design's central U.S. market. Prior to Ranger, Diaz spent 13 years with Enterprise Holdings including 11 years with Enterprise Fleet Management.

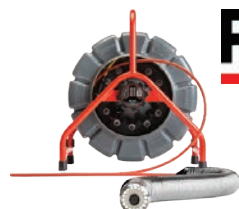
The company also announced Jim Bigelow joined Ranger Design and will be responsible for clients in the telecommunications and utilities sectors. During his 30 years in the fleet industry, Bigelow held senior fleet positions with DHL Express, Pinnergy, ServiceMaster and UPS. Most recently at Cox Enterprises, Bigelow oversaw a national fleet of more than 16,000 vehicles. 



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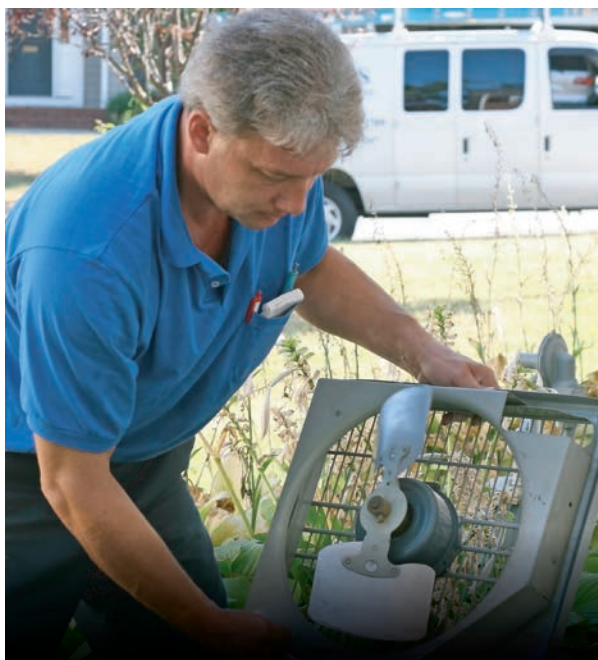
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Product Spotlight

New drain pump a fit for compact basements

By Craig Mandli

If you do any residential plumbing below grade, you know how important a job drain pumps can be. While many basements utilize a sump pump, due to various reasons not every situation allows for them. That's where a drain pump — like the Liberty Pumps 406 Series — can save the job.

The short profile of Liberty's 406 is specially designed for compact areas, giving you the freedom to install fixtures where gravity drainlines are not available. For gray wastewater applications, the 406 is ideal for basement bathrooms, laundry tray sinks, bar sinks, washing machines and other basement remodeling projects. The system arrives fully assembled and ready to install.

"Its smaller size allows it to be easily installed in compact areas like under a sink cabinet," says Randall Waldron, Liberty's vice president of sales and marketing. "It also has an access cover that allows serviceability of the unit while inlet and discharge piping remain connected. It also features a more contemporary appliance-style design for better aesthetics."



The 406 Series drain pump allows installation of a sink, washing machine, shower or other gray wastewater fixture in residential and light commercial applications, where the water needs to be pumped to an existing sewer line. The unit comes factory pre-assembled and ready to install. It features quiet automatic operation, and at only 10 inches tall (from the base to the top inlet flange), its short profile is ideal

for compact areas. Its float switch can be accessed and serviced without disconnecting piping, and its air-cooled motor includes thermal-overload protection for safety.

According to Waldron, the new 406 Series is a great fit for the market, although because it is new, feedback has been minimal. "Liberty has been a pioneer in the development of the drain pump technology," he says. "Our first unit — the model 400 — was produced in the late 1960s. Since then, we have designed many upgrades and features. The 406 Series is just the latest example of the advancement of drain pump technology. We're looking forward to getting it into the plumbing market." 800-543-2550; www.libertypumps.com

SUPERIOR 5E ELECTRIC SMOKER FINDS FAULTS, ODORS, LEAKS AND INFLOW

When testing laterals, building plumbing, or pumping or inspecting septic tanks, smoke testing is a quick and effective way to find plumbing faults that lead to odors, leaks and inflow. Superior Signal Company's Superior 5E Electric Smoker easily connects to any clean-out, port or vent to smoke test the entire system in just a few minutes. The Superior 5E Electric Smoker gently pushes smoke throughout a system to find cracks or leaks and quickly identify problems. Made in the U.S., the durable Superior 5E Electric Smoker is



competitively priced and comes complete with 8 feet of industrial grade hose. Used with Superior Smoke Candles, this costeffective solution is ideal for hard-to-find odors, leaks and other faults in commercial, residential and municipal facilities. 732-251-0800; www.superiorsignal.com/PL5



General's JM-1000 Mini-Jet braided hoses

General Pipe Cleaners' JM-1000 Mini-Jet now offers optional stainless steel braid supply and jetter hoses. The upgraded supply hose sports a durable, 10-by 3/8-inch stainless steel

braid design with a compression fitting for attachment directly to angle stops beneath sinks. The abrasion-resistant, stainless steel braid jetter hoses smoothly traverse 1 1/2- to 3-inch drain lines and easily navigate tight bends. Available in 30- and 50-foot lengths, the 3/16-inch Teflon core also reduces water flow resistance, improving small-line cleaning power. **800-245-6200; www.drainbrain.com**

Brass Knuckle SmartCut BKCR303 gloves

Brass Knuckle's SmartCut BKCR303 gloves succeed on three fronts by providing dexterity, grip and ANSI cut level A2 protection. This is accomplished with a glass fiber and ultra-high-molecular-weight polyethylene shell, a composite yarn that has a strength-to-weight ratio eight to 15 times greater than steel, and polyurethane coating. The thinner, 13-gauge material delivers deftness without trading away its inherent cut-resistance. The nonsticky polyurethane coating on the palm and fingers features excellent grip, even against oils, fats and greases, and can deliver enhanced puncture protection and abrasion resistance, all without adding bulk or reducing touch sensitivity. The glove's uncoated back and wrist improves ventilation, and a seamless and stretchable full-knit wrist provides a snug fit and prevents dirt, debris and cold from getting inside the glove. **770-674-8930; www.brassknuckleprotection.com**



Perma-Liner LightWay LR3 UV repair system

Waterline Renewal Technology's new LightRay LR3, from Perma-Liner Industries, incorporates the latest in UV trenchless technology, reducing curing time during installations. A modular design and enhanced electrical connections for rapid packer attachment and removal are among the key highlights. Transitions, cast iron and vertical stacks can all be serviced by LightRay LR3 which easily navigates 45- and 90-degree bends. Its non-VOC resin is pre-impregnated into the high-performance fiberglass liner and shipped ready to install for no-dig small diameter pipe infrastructure repairs. Once the install site is prepped, casting times in under 10 minutes can be achieved eliminating the risk of premature or prolonged curing times due to temperature variations. **866-336-2568; www.perma-liner.com**



Niagara new suite of toilet products

Niagara's new full suite of toilet products are designed for professionals who install, repair and specify toilets. The new line offers a powerful, clean flush (between 0.8 and 1.28 gpf) that is virtually clog-free while achieving water efficiency. Featuring Niagara's Stealth Technology, the products have a vacuum-assist pull and a noise-cancelling tank. A pre-assembled tank makes toilet installation quick and efficient. The four categories of products include the Liberty, Sabre, Shadow and Barron product lines. **800-831-8383; www.niagaracorp.com**



Navien combi-boilers and boilers

Navien's three new boilers include the NCB-H condensing combi-boiler, NFC-H condensing fire tube combi-boiler and NFB-H condensing fire tube boiler. The NCB-H series includes five models ranging from 160,000 to 210,000 Btu/h for domestic hot water and 60,000 to 150,000 Btu/h for heating. Both the NFC-H and NFB-H offer turndown ratios up to 15-to-1, powered connections for three zone pumps or three zone valves, easy to use Setup Wizard for improved installation, 2-inch venting up to 65 feet and 3-inch venting up to 150 feet. **800-519-8794; www.navieninc.com**

Sencentric SimpleSENCE water leak and freeze detector

Sencentric's SimpleSENCE Enterprise is a scalable, commercial version of its SimpleSENCE Water Leak and Freeze Detector. While the unit itself remains the same as the residential version, the web-based user interface and cost-effective pricing model make SimpleSENCE ideal for commercial businesses. It offers 24/7 monitoring and instant alert notifications from an easy-to-monitor desktop interface, convenient and secure Wi-Fi operation, easy setup and installation and alerts via text, email and the desktop interface. The system can easily scale leak protection with unlimited sensors deployed in multiple locations, offers unlimited alert notifications and unlimited (and encrypted) notification contacts, and the ability to monitor the sensor battery life and Wi-Fi strength of each individual sensor. It is also 100% compliant with new 2020 state-enacted cybersecurity regulations. **844-573-6767; www.sencentric.com**





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Lochinvar KNIGHT XL boiler

KNIGHT XL commercial boiler from Lochinvar is available in five models, ranging from 399,000 to 1 million Btu/h. The advanced units feature a 97% thermal efficiency, a 10-to-1 turndown ratio and an updated heat exchanger. The new KNIGHT XL models offer extended venting up to 150 feet, backside connections and the ability to cascade multiple units for increased output, making it ideal for retrofit and new construction applications. It also comes standard with CON•X•US Remote Connectivity and SMART TOUCH operating control technology, providing connectivity and system control for easy monitoring and adjustments. 615-889-8900; www.lochinvar.com



Grundfos UP 10-16 digital timer

The Grundfos UP 10-16 digital timer is designed for energy-efficient hot water recirculation in residential homes. The pump's low-noise permanent magnet motor reduces energy consumption to as little as 5 to 8.5 watts. The pumps are easy to install and deliver reliable operation for buildings with a footprint of up to 2,000 square feet. The lead-free bronze housing complies with the latest U.S. safe drinking water standards. Three control modes — Basic, Temperature and Auto — make it easy for installers to select a pump that matches the needs of the homeowner. 630-236-5500; us.grundfos.com



HoldRite HydroFlame 703 in-slab tubing support

HoldRite 703 in-slab tubing support helps prevent the common issue of in-slab tubing damage on the jobsite. Designed to accept 1/2-inch PEX tubing with 3/4-inch protective smurf tubing or 3/4-inch conduit, the support provides a protective recessed cavity in the upper portion of the concrete floor, allowing space for the protection of one to two 1/2-inch PEX tubes or 3/4-inch conduit. It also includes a protective cover plate and the HoldRite's locator whiskers, providing a simple and fast way to find buried tubing after a concrete pour. 800-321-0316; www.holdrite.com **PI**



Send us your plumbing product news: Email new plumbing product news, photos, and videos to editor@plumbermag.com.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing safety glasses and a dark jacket, is working on industrial equipment. She is wearing yellow gloves and is focused on a task. The background shows various pipes and machinery, suggesting a wastewater treatment or industrial setting. The image is overlaid with a blue wavy graphic at the bottom.

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The logo for WWETT 21 features a stylized blue wave graphic above the text "wwett 21". The "wwett" is in a lowercase, sans-serif font, and the "21" is in a larger, bold, blue font.

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National Hardware Show,
Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas.
Visit www.nationalhardwareshow.com

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AWWA Annual Conference & Exposition (ACE),
San Diego Convention Center, San Diego.
Visit www.events.awwa.org

June 22-23

Wastewater Equipment (WEQ) Fair,
York Fairgrounds, York, Pennsylvania.
Visit www.weqfair.com

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Water & Wastewater Equipment Treatment & Transport (WWETT) Show,
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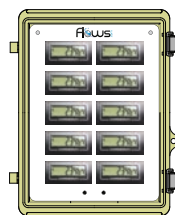


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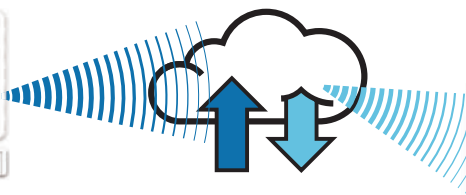
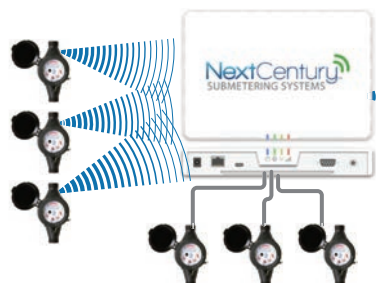


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Thank you and be safe.

General
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