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From Surviving to Thriving

Daughter of popular plumber proudly preserves her father's legacy.

- By Ken Wysocky



On the Cover

Keith McDonald Plumbing owner Lindsay Goodson stands near a Rinnai tankless hot water heater her company technicians had just installed on a residential property in Milledgeville, Georgia. The company was founded in 2002 by Keith McDonald and Lindsay took over operations after Keith's passing in 2021. The company had 18 employees and handles residential and commercial service/repair plumbing in a 30-mile radius of Milledgeville. (Photography by Matt Odom)

Coming Next Month -Residential Plumbing/ **Water Quality and Conditioning**

- Plumber Profile: Platinum Plumbing and Directional Drilling (Boise, Idaho)
- Industry Insider: Anthony Pacilla

From the Editor: **Embracing Technology**

Adapting to available tech can bring different ways of training and communicating with your plumbing teams.

- By Cory Dellenbach

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Rolling Billboard: Out of This World Home Services

Ottawa, Ontario

Smart Business:

Goina Online

Virtual meetings offer convenience for your workers in the truck cab or at remote offices. These tips will help you maintain in-person results.

- By Kate Zabriskie

Shop Talk:

Establishing Situational Awareness

We should all take on the responsibility for our coworkers' safety and well-being.

- By Ronnie Freeman

Industry Insider: Seeing the Dirty Secrets Upfront

> Conditions in one Alabama county were so bad it didn't take long for IWSH and other groups to commit to helping.

- By Randy Lorge

32 Annual Buyer's Guide

Product News: 74

Product Spotlight: Push-to-connect fittings offer speedy installs

- By Craig Mandli

Calendar

Industry News

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ADVERTISER INDEX

ALL AND GOLDMAN
ALLAN J. COLEMAN SINCE 1905
Allan J. Coleman Co7
American Jetter 80
ADUAGUARD
AQUAGUARD LLC77
Arcan Enterprises80
Ashland
P U M P Ashland Pump27
kan a market
BRADFORD WHITE
Bradford White Water Heaters49
CAM
Cam Spray
<u>2-33</u>
Winnelson
Central Oklahoma Winnelson
Century Chemical Corp77 Charlotte Pipe and Foundry Co45
Crane Pumps & Systems53
Delta Capital Group70
2763
DURACABLE
Duracable Manufacturing Co17
Easy-Kleen Pressure Systems Ltd79
Exact Fit, Inc76
FastEST, Inc
Flows.com
FORMADRAIN75
<i>General</i>
PIPE CLEANERS General Pipe Cleaners,
div. of General Wire Spring
W. 8
HammerHead Trenchless
Heat-Flo75
Hermann Sewerin GmbH65
Hi-Vac Corporation59
>
Hot Jetusa'
HotJet USA
Intellihot Inc23
Solutions, LLC
IPP Solutions, LLC
Jetters Northwest
Liberty Pumps71
Little GIANT.
frenklin Electric
Little Giant
MAXLINER
MaxLiner83

Milwaukee Tool11
MONGOOSE JETTERS Syndictowers
Mongoose Jetters by Sewer Equipment9
MyTana
MyTana LLC57
NuFlow Technologies
PICOTE
Picote Solutions
ROOTERMAN.
Premium Service Brands - RooterMan 41
PROGRESSIVE COMMERCIAL Progressive Insurance
Pulsar 2000 Line Tracer
Pulsar 2000, Inc
RauschUSA51
Rhaem
Rheem Mfg. Co
SERVICE NATION
Service Nation
SharkBite (RWC)5
SPARTAN
Spartan Tool LLC2
Sq Nuts - New Tools
SMOKE Superior Signal Company LLC
Supplies Depot.com
SuppliesDepot.com37
SUPPLY SMART Sove Time. Save Money. Shop Smart. Supply Smart
The Rudy Tool LLC
Thunderbolt Locks
WORLDWIDE INC. Trojan Worldwide, Inc55
VISTA WATER GROUP
Vista Water Group
Walton Company77
Western Drain Supply
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FROM THE EDITOR



Cory Dellenbach

Embracing Technology

Adapting to available tech can bring different ways of training and communicating with your plumbing teams

echnology can be good, or bad. It can be helpful, or make your life miserable. No matter how you feel about technology, it's a part of our lives and you need to learn to use it.

Let's take a look back at 2020, in terms of technology. COVID-19 forced many of us to learn Zoom and other online meeting tools, we had to learn to problem-solve computer and internet issues at home rather than running to the nearest IT person in the office, and some companies had to implement tech to help with customer payments.

Some of the technologies are cheap — or even free — and others might cost you more, but it might be time to take a look at some tech out there and see what it could do for your plumbing company.

TRAINING AND SUPERVISION TOOL

Lindsay Goodson, owner of Keith McDonald Plumbing in Georgia, has found a unique way to incorporate technology into her business. She has incorporated a camera system that allows her or another senior plumber to supervise junior technicians via livestreaming video.

It allows her to have more techs out in the field and still have them be surprised. It also allows the plumbers to get help figuring out a problem when they need to quickly rather than waiting for someone else to show up to the job.

"I can talk to technicians and they can talk to me," Lindsay Goodson says in the profile on her company featured in this issue. "Everything they can see, I can see, too. It's really quite cool."

I've often heard plumbing company owners say that it's a struggle finding new people or training the new team members because it pulls the more experienced ones away. This could be your way of getting around that obstacle. And it doesn't need to be expensive software. Open up Zoom — or any other meeting software — on your smartphone and you have a great tool right there at your disposal.

All of this technology is going to take some time getting used to and learning, but the beauty of it is that you can adjust it to fit what you need.

LEARNING WHAT WORKS

In the Smart Business feature this month writer Kate Zabriskie takes a look at communicating with techs on the road through virtual meetings as well.

The story gives you tips on how you can make the communication better when using technology and how to streamline it so you are maximizing your time and your team's time when doing online meetings — even from the cab of plumbing vans and trucks.

All of this technology is going to take some time getting used to and learning, but the beauty of it is that you can adjust it to fit what you need. If you need a better camera, go out and buy it. If you need better internet, find a way to get a hotspot on your work vehicles. It's really in your hands in the long run.

HAVE YOU TECHED OUT?

Have you done anything to make your company better by using technology? I'd like to hear how you've implemented different tech to improve your plumbing company. Email me at editor@plumbermag.com or call me at 715-350-8436.

Enjoy this issue — whether it be in print or through technology! ■

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DRAIN ARTIST

The Nuances of Cable Machine Operation

What is the best way to describe the proper approach to operating a cable machine? Slam it in and out and get moving? No. As he describes in this online exclusive, regular contributor Anthony Pacilla thinks of it as a smooth and subtle art. Over time you can develop a good "feel" for what the rods on a cable machine are encountering down pipe.

plumbermag.com/featured



UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Milwaukee Plumber Aces Honesty Test

Integrity is a big issue for consumers when they hire plumbers. Unfortunately, there's no honesty test or truth serum available to customers to ensure they're not being ripped off by unscrupulous contractors. But a Milwaukee TV station tried to make one once, investigating area plumbing companies in a sort of "sting" operation to assess their honesty. Heiden Plumbing, featured in the May issue, ended up being a target. Andy Wyderka, president and co-owner, talks about it in this online exclusive.

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Residential and commercial service/repair plumbing About a 30-mile radius around Milledgeville and Sandersville www.keithmcdonaldplumbing.com he unexpected death of Keith McDonald, who succumbed to COVID at age 59 in August 2021, left a gaping hole not only in his family, but in the small towns of Milledgeville and Sandersville, Georgia, where the master plumber had built a well-known plumbing company — Keith McDonald Plumbing.

"Every single person around here knew my dad," says his daughter, Lindsay Goodson, a master plumber herself who helped her father run the company, established in 2002. "He was a pillar in the community."

In the weeks that followed, Goodson and her mother, Robin McDonald, who co-owned the business with her husband, faced two options amid their grief: Keep the company and preserve the jobs of its roughly 30 employees at the time, or accept a purchase offer from another plumbing company.

In the end, Goodson opted to buy the company from her mother and keep Keith McDonald Plumbing in the family.

"It was very tough after my dad died," Goodson says. "He always was steadfast even when everything was falling down around him and I didn't know that I had that in me.

66 My dad never thought I'd be a plumber, but then I got good at what I was doing and sort of shoved my way out into working in the field to learn more."

Lindsay Goodson

"But I found out I did," she continues. "My goal always was to make him proud, so giving up after he was gone would have been awful."

CHANGES IN STORE

After taking ownership of the company, Goodson restructured the business. The septic-pumping arm of the company was sold to her sister, Natalie Hyman, and her husband, Kyle Hyman, and closed a company division in a nearby town after most of its employees left the company.

"We just don't service that area anymore," she says.

The company also shifted its focus from what was equal parts commercial and residential construction and service plumbing to primarily residential



Profile

and commercial service and light residential construction.

Furthermore, Goodson also modernized the company's operations by investing in business management software and a new GPS system for increased efficiency and introduced another new technology: a camera system that allows her or another senior plumber to supervise junior technicians via livestreaming video.

Amid all that, the company was on pace to generate roughly \$1.7 million in gross revenue through November 2022.

Not too bad for a self-admitted reluctant plumber who never planned to enter the field.



▲ Lindsay Goodson, center, along with fellow plumbers Bobby Lane, left, and Lincoln Vincent analyze the pipe connection at an installation project.

LATE-BLOOMING PLUMBER

McDonald became a plumber later in life. In 2001, when he was 39 years old, McDonald left his job as a maintenance supervisor at a local processing plant and founded his company in Sandersville in central Georgia.

Continued >

Livestreaming Plumbing Jobs Bolsters Efficiency, Productivity

Like so many plumbing-business owners today constrained by a tight labor market, Lindsay Goodson needs to make every minute of every day count. So to boost efficiency, the owner of Keith McDonald Plumbing is implementing a program where she and another experienced plumber can walk less-experienced plumbers through problems via a livestreaming platform.

"I can talk to technicians and they can talk to me," she explains. "Everything they can see, I can see, too. It's really quite cool."

The seeds for the livestreaming concept were planted when Goodson's late father, Keith McDonald, who founded the Milledgeville, Georgia-based company in 2002, was talking about ways to work as well as teach young plumbers more efficiently. They discussed using Apple's FaceTime app and also tried using a GoPro video camera, but the battery life wasn't sufficient, she says.

"So I hunted and hunted and eventually found a camera on Amazon that would work," she notes. (It's an Ordro EP7 headmountable video camera, which costs about \$210.) She also purchased a Craftsman pack-out box, a Wi-Fi internet hotspot device, a backup camera battery and charger, and a headlamp.

Total investment? About \$750. Benefits? Priceless.

"There aren't any plumbing trade schools anywhere near us and there's not a whole lot of people around here that go into the trades," she explains. "So the pool of plumbers basically is dry.

"So if we want to keep enough people out there to do the

work we need to do, I want to be able to train two or three people at a time — help them when they get stuck," Goodson continues. "But we can only train one person at a time out in the field, plus it uses fuel and takes valuable time to go out on jobs with them.

"But with this camera system, everything is right there in front of you."

Goodson plans to buy another camera; the two cameras will be used by the company's less experienced plumbers - not to livestream an entire job, but just to receive guidance if they encounter problems.

One side benefit: If a more experienced plumber goes out to help a less-experienced plumber, the former tends to jump in and do the work for the latter. But this way, the less-experienced techs must do the work themselves, just with remote guidance.

"It's like going to a virtual school," Goodson says.

Goodson and the company's lead service technician, John Methe, will each spend one day a week in the office, where they'll be ready to provide assistance. When Methe isn't providing livestreaming guidance, he'll stay busy putting job estimates together, submitting shop orders and the like.

"Sure, he's not out there generating income," Goodson agrees when asked about the downside of keeping a lead technician in an office one day a week. "But our younger guys will learn things 10 times faster by getting more training — and they will then be able to generate more revenue in the long run. It's a win-win situation."









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- ◀ The company's employees are its most valuable asset according to Goodson. Included in that group are plumbers John Methe, left, and Jon Hollis, right, pictured with Goodson. The company has 18 total employees.
- ▼ Plumber John Methe uses a Milwaukee Tool drill to make holes for pipes while installing a new Rinnai tankless water

66 Being a female in this industry isn't normal, especially one that owns a plumbing company in Georgia. There were guite a few guys that didn't respect me or my position, so I cleaned house and paid my remaining guys better." Lindsay Goodson

The business grew dramatically from about 2009 to 2013, when McDonald bought four small plumbing companies, including one that also pumped out septic tanks. At its peak, the company employed nearly 40 people, Goodson says.

Goodson joined the company in 2009 after she lost a job as an office assistant during the Great Recession. She had three two-year associate degrees under her belt, but jobs were impossible to find, she recalls.

"So my dad said I should come home and work for him until I figured out what my big-girl job was going to be," she says. "It was hard — I hated it for a long time. At first, I literally cried every day."

Nonetheless, Goodson discovered she enjoyed learning how things work and dealing with customers and contractors.

"I found out I loved working with the community as well as solving problems," Goodson says. "My dad never thought I'd be a plumber, but then I got good at what I was doing and sort of shoved my way out into working in the field to learn more.



"And he kept putting more and more and more on my plate — meeting with contractors, checking jobs, running the guys and problem-solving when he wasn't available," she continues. "It just became fun."

By 2015, she had proven herself to the point that her father put her in charge of running the company's Milledgeville location.

"He said I could involve him as little or as much as I wanted," Goodson says. "He told me, 'Show me you can run it better.' And dad-gummit, I did."

Along the way, Goodson earned her journeyman plumber's license. And in the wake of her father's death, she also passed her master plumber's exam after the state allowed her to take the test only a year after she received her journeyman's license, instead of waiting for the required two years, she says.

BAPTISM UNDER FIRE

Goodson's first year of ownership was tumultuous. She fired underperforming employees and others left because they didn't want to work for a female owner.

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Profile

"Being a female in this industry isn't normal, especially one that owns a plumbing company in Georgia," she says. "There were quite a few guys that didn't respect me or my position, so I cleaned house and paid my remaining guys better."

On the other hand, many employees rallied around her and stepped up to take care of the company when things got really difficult, she notes.

"They did a really great job," Goodson says. "That first year was God-awful, but we have a great customer base and our employees are top-notch. I love all of them."

Goodson did great, too, says her mother.

"Lindsay kept things together when I wanted no part of it," says Robin McDonald. "She is a real spitfire, to say the least.

"Keith had an unbelievable reputation in several counties and his death created a massive hole in so many ways," she adds. "It was an unbelievable struggle for our family for more than a year now, but my girls (Lindsay and Natalie) have stepped up to carry on Keith's legacy."



Keith McDonald Plumbing's Bobby Lane, right, watches Lincoln Vincent as he works under a sink at a residential property. The company handles residential and commercial service and repair plumbing.

A FOCUS ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION

The company's employees are its most valuable asset, particularly in a tight labor market where tradesmen are scarce to begin with. As such, Goodson says she tries to create a positive atmosphere that keeps employees from jumping ship. Continued >



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46 I don't micromanage my guys or yell at them if they make mistakes. We try to have fun. I also let them know that they're important to our success and I do everything I can to ensure this is a quality place to work." Lindsav Goodson

"I don't micromanage my guys or yell at them if they make mistakes," she explains. "We try to have fun.

"I also let them know that they're important to our success and I do everything I can to ensure this is a quality place to work," Goodson continues. "My philosophy is we work to live, not live to work. So their personal happiness ultimately is the priority.

The company also boosts employee retention by investing in good equipment. The business runs nine service vehicles, including Chevrolet Express and Ford Econoline cut-away cargo vans, Isuzu NPR box vans and Dodge Ram pickup trucks to pull heavy equipment. Some of the vehicles feature box bodies made by Knapheide Manufacturing Co. and Reading Truck.

The company also relies on RIDGID K-1500 and K-50 sectional drain machines, K-400 drum cable machines and Milwaukee Tool sink machines; RIDGID standard SeeSnake pipeline-inspection cameras and a microReel camera; Milwaukee Tool M-Spector push cameras; and a trailer-mounted water jetter from General Pipe Cleaners (a division of General Wire Spring Co.). Technicians use power tools from RIDGID and Milwaukee Tool and RIDGID hand tools.

 Stephen Long, a plumber for Keith McDonald Plumbing, addresses a leak under a restroom sink at a commercial property.

A Kubota excavator and a Ditch Witch trenching machine with a boring attachment and a blade attachment round out the equipment fleet.

TAPPING ON THE BRAKES

While her father always had the business in full-bore growth mode, Goodson says she's content where the company is at the moment. Her plan is to focus more on her employees and ensure they keep honing their skills and become the best plumbers

they can be, she says.

"Then when it's time to grow, people will be ready to step up into leadership roles," Goodson says.

The entrepreneur also doesn't rule out eventually expanding the company's service area. But in the meantime, the current business base was solidified when a regional utility selected the company as a preferred plumber for working on natural gas lines. Furthermore, the company has developed a close working relationship with a local municipality, she notes.

"After my dad was gone, I used to worry a lot that we'd lose business because people wouldn't have the same confidence in me that they had in him," Godson says. "But I've picked up some major customers. ... I feel like he's up there pulling strings.

"I can't wait to talk to him about all of it someday."



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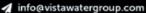
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ut of this World Home Services owner Dave Smythe wants to be the first plumber to go to space. He's had that dream for a while, which is evident when you just look at his company's vans covered with a space-scene wrap, including a rocket ship flying around the moon. The company, based in Ottawa, Ontario, decided to go with that look as it went through a rebranding process in 2019, shifting its name from DS Plumbing to Out of This World Home Services. Smythe thought the former name was getting old and wasn't interesting and engaging enough to grow the company to the point he wants. He always had the dream and ambition to go to space and to become the first plumber in space. Using that passion of his, the company incorporated it into the rebranding of the business. Jamie Smythe then came up with the new logo that represents the company's excellence and Dave's dream. The van pictured here is the newest in its fleet, a 2022 Highroof extended wheelbase Ram ProMaster. Signarama Ottawa installed the wrap for the plumbing company. On the inside, and on all the other company's vans, the Milwaukee Tool packout storage systems are used. The company says because the system is so modular it allows them to set up a van to house materials and equipment for any of the services they deal in. The shelving system can be completely removed within 30 minutes if more space is needed. The company, which Dave Smythe co-owns with his wife Wendy, services the whole greater Ottawa area. For more information on Out of This World Home Services, go to www.outofthisworldhomeservices.com.



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See How It Works





Kate Zahriskie

Going Online

Virtual meetings offer convenience for your workers in the truck cab or at remote offices. These tips will help you maintain in-person results. Bv Kate Zabriskie

he world rapidly adopted virtual meetings, but many small business leaders struggle while attempting to translate the in-person experience to an online format. This includes pumping company owners who need to communicate with drivers via tablet or staff working in a remote office away from the headquarters.

Luckily, there are tried and true actions you can take to get online meetings running like clockwork. By following eight strategies for surviving in the virtual world, a newbie can perform like a pro in record time.

Strategy 1: Know what you want to accomplish

Just as it's important to have a game plan for an in-person meeting, it's essential that you have a goal for any online get-together. Are you informing, gathering information, looking for opinion, making a decision or something else? If you don't know, your meeting is not going to feel as tight as it could, and you won't look as put together as you might had you done some thinking in advance.

Once you know the goal, it should inform the meeting's length, number of attendees, and desired level of interaction. For example, if you're discussing new company plans or policies, you're probably not seeking opinion but instead providing information and perhaps answering questions. Given the one-way nature of the bulk of that gathering, you can probably accommodate far more people than you could if your goal were to elicit opinion and seek input.

Strategy 2: Communicate your expectations

Most people will do what you ask them to do if you ask them to do it and you model the behavior. Be specific and direct. If you want people to share their cameras, outline your request as people join the meeting. If you want them to raise their hands to answer a question, raise your hand when you ask it. If you want people to type something in the chat box, you should type as they are typing. The more deliberate you are in your instruction and actions, the better your chances of seeing what you want to see.

In the virtual world it is helpful to show the agenda several times during the meeting and point out where you are on the schedule.

Strategy 3: Share a roadmap

Just as an in-person meeting can benefit from an agenda, virtual meetings need a roadmap or itinerary. Furthermore, in the virtual world it is helpful to show the agenda several times during the meeting and point out where you are on the schedule. An agenda check refocuses people who may have drifted off and it gives them an easy onramp back to the meeting. Furthermore, acknowledging where you are in the process gives people a sense of movement and helps the group stay on task.

Strategy 4: Recognize technology diversity

When it comes to technology, the virtual world is not equal. In a typical meeting, some participants will have equipment and bandwidth worthy of a Hollywood production, while others will appear to have a dial-up line reminiscent of equipment from the previous century. For that reason, it's important to think about what could go wrong and how to troubleshoot potential problems before they occur. For example, will you record and post the meeting for people who have difficulty joining? Do you have a dial-in number for those attendees who can't get VoIP technology to work correctly? Will you send slides in advance for people who have difficulty logging in altogether and must rely solely on a PDF? The more you prepare for problems, the easier they are to deal with should they arise.

Strategy 5: Arrive early and start on time

If at all possible, it's a good idea to arrive to your virtual meeting well in advance of your participants. The time you

have in the virtual room before it fills will give you an opportunity to troubleshoot your technology, get comfortable in your seat, and welcome early birds as they enter the room. Your early arrival also allows you to avoid having participants wait for you.

Strategy 6: Accept you are in a competition for attention

Nothing says multitasking opportunity like a web-based meeting. Even the most effective presenter competes with a participant's inbox, other work and just about any activity that is potentially more interesting. You will have to double or even triple your efforts to keep virtual attendees involved. Putting yourself on camera and asking participants to appear on camera is only the first step. Next, you have to think about ways to keep people's eyes on the screen or handout and their hands busy about every two minutes. Two minutes? Yes! People want to be engaged. If they don't engage with you, they will engage with something else.

Strategy 7: Balance conversation

Just as people participate in in-person meetings at various levels, the same thing will happen in the virtual world. A good meeting facilitator will take action to add balance. For instance, "I'm going to throw this next question to Jane, Josh and Juan." Those three participants know that at least one of them is on deck to speak next. In addition to calling on a few people, you should also consider directing people to different channels.

"If you would like to answer in the chat box, do that. If you would prefer to open your microphone, go ahead. If you would like to send a message just to me, send a private chat." The variety of avenues offered in that example accommodate people who like to talk, those who prefer to write, and others who are less comfortable speaking up in public.

Strategy 8: Limit your time and use it wisely

No adult wants to sit for more than two hours at a time, and this is especially true in the virtual world. For meetings that are essentially information-sharing exercises, consider limiting yourself to one-hour blocks. For interactive conversations, as a rule of thumb, you should be able to get away with two hours at a time. Include generous breaks if appropriate. Consider running smaller meetings with fewer people, spreading a long meeting over several days, or sharing video recordings instead of bringing people together if they would accomplish the same result.

A FINAL THOUGHT

It's a new world for many people taking the plunge into the world of virtual meetings, and now is the time to get comfortable. Take the time to leverage a few simple strategies that will get you on solid footing. Paying attention to what you like and don't that others do in their meetings will help you grow. Asking for feedback from your attendees will further accelerate the process. May your next online meeting be a smashing success.





Establishing Situational Awareness

We should all take on the responsibility for our coworkers' safety and well-being By Ronnie Freeman

aybe you have heard of the phrase "situational awareness" recently. It has been used here and there in different settings and maybe you understand what it refers to, but do you know what it means?

Situational awareness can be useful in many areas of our lives. From going out shopping, being on vacation, being at the airport, driving our cars, walking in our neighborhoods, going to the park and answering an unexpected knock at the door. We can get complacent when nothing in our lives ever seems to be out of place. This is where employing situational awareness can be a great benefit in preventing incidents from happening whether at work or in our daily lives.

The definition of situational awareness has three parts: (1) perception of the elements in the environment, (2) comprehension of the situation and (3) projection of future

Perception – What information do I need?

Comprehension – What does this information mean to me?

Projection – What do I think could happen next?

Situational awareness has been recognized as a critical, yet often elusive, foundation for successful decision-making across a broad range of situations, many of which involve the protection of life and property. In the workplace, situational awareness is a great tool in injury prevention.

Simply put, situational awareness is knowing what is going on around us. What are the hazards? Understanding the consequences of our actions. Knowing how to respond

When hazardous situations arise, we are "shocked" and either do not know what to do or panic and do nothing at all.

should a critical situation arise. Knowing how to work safely in the environment we find ourselves in each day, whether it be in the office or in the field excavating a trench.

Simplifying the term situational awareness a little further, the following color codes give us a guideline so we know what state of situational awareness we might be in:

White — The lowest level. You are basically unaware of what is going on around you and you are not ready for anything to happen. Reasons affecting your status could be fatigue, stress, distractions or apathy.

Yellow — You are alert and aware yet relaxed. You are familiar with your surroundings and the employees and visitors who are in your area. You know where the emergency response equipment is located just in case, and you are prepared if needed to respond.

Orange — You are in a state of heightened awareness. You sense something is not right. This is the time to make important decisions in case something must be done. This is also the time to mitigate the situation if needed.

Red — Something has happened! You are taking decisive and immediate action. You recognize a threat is ongoing and you are responding to limit the damage done and promote recovery.

Black — Something is happening and you are now in panic mode because you are unprepared and do not know how to respond. There is a breakdown of mental and physical performance.

Sadly, too many of us live in the "white" status far too often. We have become so comfortable in our everyday lives that we tend to go through the motions of daily living whether it is at work or at home or in our communities. Therefore, when hazardous situations arise, we are "shocked" and either do not know what to do or panic and do nothing at all.

Situational awareness should be important to all of us, and it is important that we are aware of the potential hazards in our work environment. We all should take on the responsibility for each other's safety and wellbeing while at work and when we are out in public and at home as well.

Wavs to improve situational awareness

- 1. Do not allow yourself to be distracted. When you allow yourself to become distracted, you take away any chance at a proper response. Any response is then delayed and, in some cases, too late. Keep your phone someplace where it is not a distraction or temptation to constantly look at.
- 2. Have a plan, just in case. Always ask the "What if?" questions regarding your work situation and tasks at hand. What if the trench collapses? What if another employee passes out in a confined space? Have you been trained in the proper response to these major incidents?
- 3. Scan your area. Be alert and stay alert to what could potentially be a hazardous situation. Look for things

- that are out of the ordinary or just not right. An unusual loud noise in your equipment could be an early warning sign that failure is about to occur.
- 4. Have a designated escape route. If there is the potential for a situation to go bad, always have a plan of escape to minimize the danger and/or damage.
- 5. Train and practice being situationally aware. Safety training does not do anyone any good if it is ignored or just so routine employees doze off during the training and do not hear important information. Practice helps employees retain the training.

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



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Randy Lorge

Seeing the Dirty Secrets Upfront

Conditions in one Alabama county were so bad it didn't take long for IWSH and other groups to commit to helping By Randy Lorge

y the time this article rolls off the presses, it will have been three months since we celebrated World Plumbing Day (March 11) and World Water Day (March 22). These two days bring us a moment to reflect on the importance of what so many people take for granted, which is, of course, safe plumbing and potable water.

Both days always draw me back to the basics of what you and I do for living. We don't just turn wrenches, we change lives.

As you might recall from my last article, "Addressing America's Dirty Secrets," I wrote about the fact that over

2.2 million U.S. citizens live without safe water and sanitation. Now remember, that's here in the United States alone and doesn't include the other two billion-plus people across the globe who are currently in the same situation.

In that article I also reflected on a few of the unique plumbing projects I've had an opportunity to work on over the years with the International Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Foundation and how we've "chipped" away at the staggering number of U.S. citizens that still live without safe water and sanitation.

This month, I want to tell you about a project that IWSH became involved with just before the COVID pandemic broke out and then re-established again in 2022. I also want you to Google "Lowndes County, Alabama" and read for yourselves a few of the incredible stories about the horrific conditions some of the

We don't just turn wrenches, we change lives.

residents there are currently living with. I say this to you because if someone wouldn't have told me to do it, I would have never known about this part of America's Dirty Secret.

Lowndes County is in the central part of the U.S. and one of 67 counties in Alabama. As of the 2020 census, the county's population was 10,311. More than 40% of this

county lacks access to clean sanitation. I'm not a big fan of flashing percentages and statistics when it comes to things like living without access to clean sanitation, so let's say it like it is, we're talking about 4,125 men, women and children here. Kind of smacks you in the face and makes it sting a little more when you think about it like that, doesn't it?

Back in 2019, my IWSH team and I were connected with an organization by the name of the Black Belt Unincorporated Wastewater Program. We were asked if we could visit Lowndes and determine how we might be able to help with the situation.

When we arrived, we met with BBUWP staff as well as staff from the University of South Alabama, members from The Lixil Group and other local officials. Together we toured various homes throughout Lowndes County and observed firsthand the crisis which was



The high rate of septic system failures in Lowndes County, Alabama, can be attributed mostly to the soil type.

happening there. Every rural home we visited was experiencing the exact same thing, septic system failure.

The high rate of failures can be attributed mostly due to the soil type. They have thick brownish loamy sand A and E horizons over strong brown sandy clay loam Bt horizons that are underlain by a lower sequence of a strong brown loamy sand B/E horizon and strong brown sandy clay loam and sandy clay Bt horizons.

Another fact that needs to be mentioned is that Lowndes County experiences a poverty rate of approximately 22.4% (2,320 people). Now add to that, an engineered septic system is going to range from \$10K to \$30K. Individuals not living in poverty would struggle with taking on a debt of that size much less someone who is simply struggling to make ends meet.



A simple fix for many of those homeowners in Lowndes County was to install "straight-pipe" systems a pipe connected to the home's building drain and piped straight to ground surface.

Put yourself in those shoes for a moment if you will. What would you do? Good question, right? The folks living there wanted to do things right. They wanted safe septic systems installed. We visited with families that hired "contractors" who claimed to be qualified septic systems installers. These families were literally scammed out of thousands of dollars by individuals that simply dug a hole in the resident's backyards, installed a burial casket tomb for septic tanks, (yes, you read that right, burial casket tombs) charged them thousands, and left them with even bigger headaches.

In more cases than I care to mention, the simple fix for most of these homeowners was to install "straight-pipe" systems. These systems were exactly that, a pipe that was connected to the home's building drain and piped straight





It didn't take long for our group to decide that we needed to come together and find a way to help the residents of Lowndes County.

to the ground surface. Yes, on top of the ground! It was hard to witness this but yet, easy to understand in that, sometimes, you have to do what you need to do, in order to survive.

With that being said however, you can only imagine the health risks this type of system opens up. Untreated sewage can lead to bacterial infections and intestinal parasites. It was unnerving visiting these homes and seeing this in real life. We were not off in some Third World country. We were right here in the United States.

It didn't take long for our group to decide that we needed to come together and find a way to help the residents of Lowndes County. In March of 2022, we did just that. We implemented a plan and began carrying it out. In my next article, I'll explain more about what we did together last year and how our next trip this month has exemplified the fact that plumbing is more than turning wrenches, it truly is about changing lives for the better!

For more information the soil conditions in Lowndes County, Alabama, go to:

https://soilseries.sc.egov.usda.gov/OSD_Docs/L/LOWNDES.html#:~:text=The%20Lowndes%20series%20 consists%20of.These%20soils%20are%20bisequal



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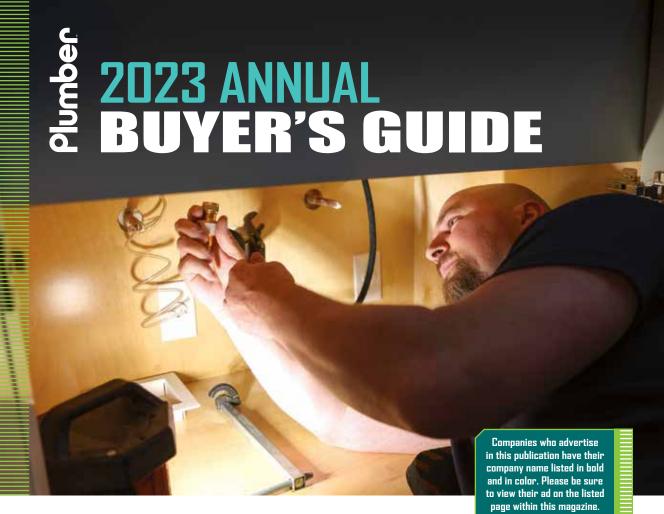


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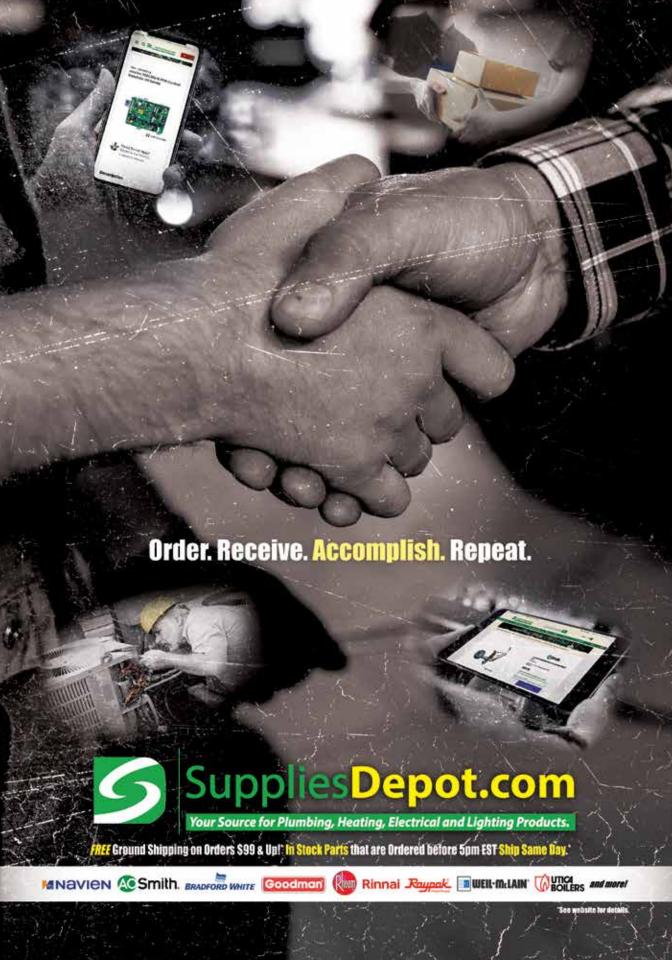
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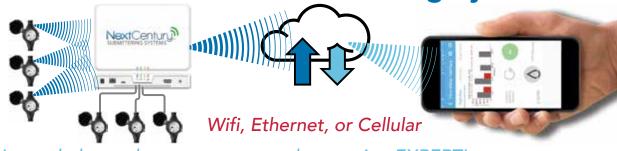


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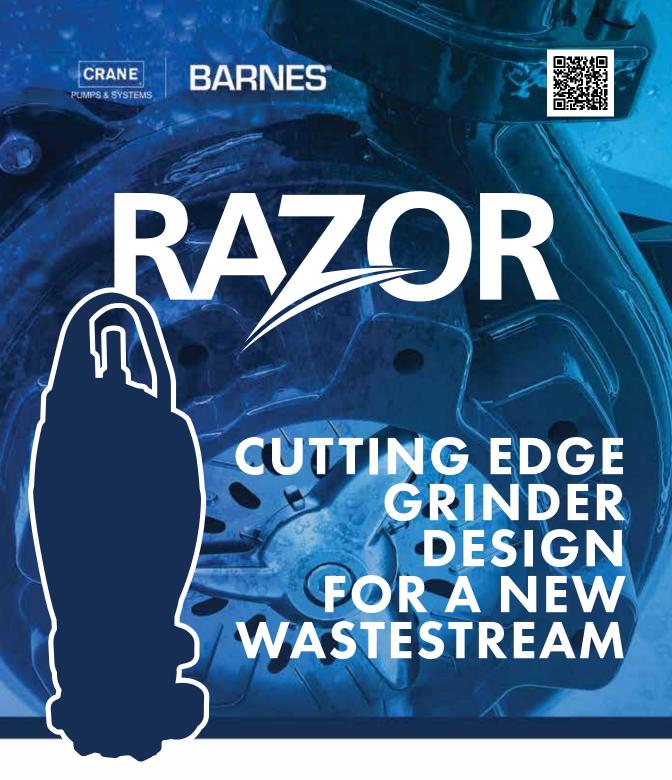
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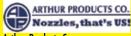
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Product Spotlight

Push-to-connect fittings offer speedy installs By Craig Mandli

or many common residential plumbing applications, push-to-connect fittings are the easiest to use. They provide ideal performance in tight spaces that can be prohibitive to other types of fittings and they can be installed quickly, saving time and money. Uponor recently



took the technology a step further, launching TotalFit — a professional-grade, engineered polymer push-to-connect fitting solution for residential projects that provides the same versatility and install speed as more-common brass push-to-connect fittings.

Designed for use with PEX, PE-RT, CPVC and copper piping systems, TotalFit is designed for service repair, maintenance, remodels and retrofits for potable hot-water and cold-water distribution piping systems in single-family homes, townhomes, apartments and condominiums. Featuring technology to provide a strong, lasting connection, the product line includes 33 different high-volume pushto-connect fittings in sizes from 1/2 to 1 inch to meet the greatest need in the market. Their use allows plumbers to benefit from an easier transition to other Uponor products while eliminating the need for torches, solvents or expensive tools during the installation process. The process itself is a simple five steps — cut the pipe, deburr, mark the depth, insert the fitting and confirm the depth. According to Aaron Stotko, director, segment marketing at Uponor, TotalFit is one of the only full-featured EP push-to-connect fittings on the market.

"Uponor has a strong leadership position in residential plumbing with AquaPEX pipe and the ProPEX fitting system," says Stotko. "Now with TotalFit, we are expanding into the

plumbing repair, maintenance, and renovation segments with a high-quality, reliable fitting solution from a brand professionals trust."

TotalFit meets or exceeds all performance requirements of the PEX system performance standard, ASTM F877, as well as the push-fitting performance standard, ASSE 1061. The complete offering is approved by the Uniform Plumbing Code and International Plumbing Code for direct burial in soil or concrete (with 4 to 6 mil poly wrap) as well as behind walls without access panels. According to Stotko, using push-to-connect fitts speeds projects along by eliminating 60% of the transitional fittings that keep contractors on site making repairs.

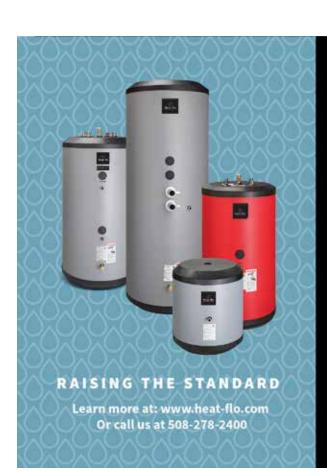
"Uponor has long been the leader in transforming the plumbing industry — with PEX-a pipe, with ProPEX expansion fittings, and with transitioning the market from brass to EP," says Stotko. "With TotalFit, we are again providing professionals with a versatile, reliable, efficient solution that will help make jobs faster, easier and more profitable." 800-321-4739; www.uponor.com

Hydra-Flex Revolution sewer jetting nozzle

Hydra-Flex's new Revolution by Reaper sewer jetting nozzle features a forceful front-rotating stream and powerful back jets to cut and clear the toughest blockages. And it goes a step further with a 360-degree rotating subhead with dual jets that completely clean and descale the pipe. The all-in-one tool simultaneously cuts, clears and cleans to help work faster, save water



and money. The Revolution is built for 6- to 36-inch sewer pipes and can take on the biggest jetting challenges. The nozzle operates between 1,000 and 2,500 psi with a flow range of 40 to 80 gpm. The subhead is designed to maintain consistent speed throughout the nozzle's life, and a stainless steel centralizer is included to ensure the nozzle stays centered within the pipe. 952-808-3640; www.hydraflexinc.com





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Hino Trucks Me and Le Series electric medium-duty trucks

Hino Trucks has

expanded its product range to include electric vehicles. The electric version of their M- and L- Series medium duty trucks, branded as Me Series and Le Series, will integrate SEA Electric's SEA-Drive power system. The Hino Class 5 M5e cab over and Class 6 L6e conventional models come equipped with battery capacities of 138 kWh and 220 kWh respectively. To complement the EV transition, Hino Trucks is building infrastructure to support the electric vehicles with Hino INCLUSEV, a portfolio of end-to-end electric vehicle enablement exclusively available through Hino's nationwide dealer network. 248-699-9334; www.hino.com

Isuzu Commercial Truck N-Series EV

Isuzu Commercial Truck of America announced its first all-electric production model. the N-Series EV. The



2025-model-year Class 5 truck will be available in the first

half of 2024, and features a full 19,500-pound gross vehicle weight rating, a battery electric platform developed by Isuzu Motors Limited and an all-new cab design. The trucks will offer wheelbases ranging from 132.5 to 176 inches to accommodate a variety of body lengths, four choices of battery capacity, the largest of which has a range up to 235 miles, DC fast charging and AC (level 2) charging capability, and an optional Advanced Driver Assistance System package designed to improve driver, passenger and pedestrian safety and to help reduce the number and severity of collisions. Every N-Series EV will be powered by a number of 20 kWh, lithium-ion battery packs, and users will be able to choose from three-, five-, seven- and nine-battery-pack models. 866-441-9638; www.isuzucv.com

SharkBite Max push-to-connect fittings

The new SharkBite Max pushto-connect fittings have been re-engineered to deliver the same



reliability as its first generation fittings, but with new product enhancements that provide more strength and an easier installation. The original brass body now has a reinforced

Continued >



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stainless steel collar for added strength, allowing the fitting to handle up to double the burst pressure compared to the first generation fitting. The fittings require half the insertion effort as the original fitting, allowing for seamless installations and quicker emergency repairs in wet lines. SharkBite Max fittings are compatible with PEX, copper, CPVC, PE-RT and HDPE pipe, and they no longer require a tube liner for PEX connections. 877-700-4242; www.sharkbite.com

Stiebel Eltron instant hot water dispensers

Stiebel Eltron UltraHot Plus and Ultra-Hot Premium instant hot water dispensers deliver near-boiling water conveniently, easily and reliably at the touch of a tap for a variety of uses, including instant hot drinks, food preparation and more. Ultra-Hot is manufactured with high-grade 316L stainless steel and has a system that automatically determines altitude and sets the



UltraHot to deliver near boiling hot water at the maximum for that elevation. The UltraHot Plus is designed for residential use only. It is equipped with a 750-watt element and dispenses 34 cups per hour of 203 degrees F. The UltraHot Premium is designed for light commercial use plus residential use. It is equipped with a 1,440-watt element and dispenses 66 cups per hour of 203 degrees F. Both appliances plug into a standard 120-volt outlet. 800-582-8423; www.stiebel-eltron-usa.com



GROHE GrohSafe 3.0 pressure balance valve

GROHE's GrohSafe 3.0 pressure balance valve has an integrated diverter and matching two-handle trims. New to the GROHE portfolio, the GrohSafe 3.0 is designed to make installation easier by eliminating the need to install and align a separate diverter and separate trims, thereby reducing labor costs and saving time during the build-and-install process.

The valves feature convertible functionality and utilize the same body for both two- and three-way water applications. This enables effortless control of body sprays, hand showers, and showerheads from a single two-handle trim to deliver a luxury showering experience. 800-444-7643; www.groheamerica.com

SJE Rhombus WellZone pressure controller

SIE Rhombus' Well-Zone pressure controller works with any single phase 115/230-volt well



pump. It is longer lasting than a standard pressure switch, easy to set up and has a wide range of pressures and pumping differentials. The controller eliminates the traditional pressure switch, which is a common system failure point. It provides pump protection against rapid cycling, low pressure, run dry, overpressure, overcurrent and undercurrent. It is housed in a NEMA 4X enclosure so it can be installed indoors or outdoors. The WellZone provides pressure control for single phase two-wire submersible well pump applications. It uses a 0 to 150 psi pressure transducer to monitor the discharge pressure and turns the pump on and off according to the start and stop setpoints. The LCD display is visible through the clear cover of the enclosure to allow for quick view of the system pressure, run status, hours run and pump cycles. The rotary button provides the user with a simple navigation method through the menu and program settings. 888-342-5753; www.sjerhombus.com

NIBCO LD-3000 and LD-7000 Series large-diameter butterfly valves

NIBCO new line of LD-3000 and LD-7000 Series large-diameter butterfly valves offer enhanced performance with pressure ratings of 232 to 250 psi, depending on the



size range. The butterfly valves are designed for commercial mechanical construction and general utility service applications. Constructed of ductile iron, the epoxy-coated valves feature a molded-in seat liner (available in either EPDM or Nitrile rubber) that is rated for full pressure endof-line service, a one-piece, high-strength, stainless steel stem and a double-flanged U-section. LD-7000 butterfly valves range in sizes 14 to 60 inches, with a pressure rating of 232 psi and are available with an option of aluminum bronze, nylon-coated ductile iron and stainless steel discs. LD-3000 butterfly valves range in sizes 14 to 24 inches, with a pressure rating of 250 psi and are available with an option of aluminum bronze and stainless steel discs. 800-234-0227; www.nibco.com

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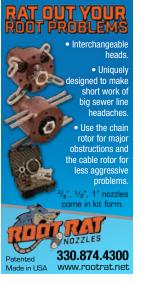
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Safety 2023 Professional Development Conference & **Exposition.** Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center. San Antonio. Visit www.safetv.assp.org

June 11-14

AWWA Annual Conference & Exposition.

Sheraton Centre Toronto, Toronto. Visit www.events.awwa.nra

June 12-14

Women in the Mechanical Industry 2023 Conference. Renaissance Cleveland Hotel, Cleveland.

Visit www.mcaa.org/events/

June 18-20

Canadian Institute of Plumbing & Heating Annual Business Conference. Delta St. John's Hotel and Conference Center. St. John's. Newfoundland. Visit www.ciph.com

June 28-29

Houston Build Expo. NRG Park Center - Hall E1/E3. Houston. Visit www.buildexpousa.com

Aug. 30-31

Atlanta Build Expo. Cobb Galleria Centre - Halls C & D. Atlanta, Visit www.buildexpousa.com

Sept. 24-28

International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials 94th Annual Education and Business **Conference.** Hvatt San Antonio. San Antonio.

Visit www.iapmo.org/ibu/events

Sept. 28 - Oct. 1

American Society of Plumbing Engineers Tech **Symposium.** Maydenbauer Center, Bellevue, Washington. Visit www.aspe.org/conventions-symposiums/

Service World Expo. Phoenix Convention Center. Phoenix. Visit www.serviceworldexpo.com

Oct. 3-5

WaterSmart Innovations.

South Point Hotel and Conference Center, Las Vegas. Visit www.awwa.org/events-education/watersmart-innovations

Nrt. 22-25

Mechanical Service Contractors of America Annual Education Conference. JW Marriott. Marco Island. Florida. Visit www.mcaa.org/events/calendar/msca-2023-annualeducational-conference/

Oct. 25-27

PHCC Connect 2023. Huntington Convention Center. Cleveland. Visit www.phccweb.org/connect

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Isuzu's Brian Table ioins NTEA board

Isuzu Commercial Truck of America announced that Brian Tabel, the company's executive director of marketing, has been selected to serve a three-year term on the board of directors



of The Association for the Work Truck Industry. Tabel is the first representative of an import chassis brand to be elected to the board in NTEA's 59-year history.

Franklin Electric launches new employee resource group

Franklin Electric formed a new employee resource group dedicated to providing an avenue for women to grow both professionally and personally through education, networking and advocacy. Known as Franklin Women's Network, the group's goal, according to a release, is to "build a welcoming, inclusive community, provide professional alliances, equip Franklin women with relevant development tools and resources, and guide Franklin women to identify and achieve career milestones."

CUES Accurate Mapping Probe used in Project of the Year

RAVAN AIR, alongside their sister company, Tru-Tek, completed a project installing a natural gas line underneath Chartiers Creek in Washington, Pennsylvania. During the pipeline inspection process, RAVAN AIR located a 70-inch steel wastewater pipe that was unable to be located using traditional means underneath a state road using the CUES Accurate Mapping Probe. This underground mapping method prevented major traffic disruptions, saved considerable time and resources, while providing the means to safely perform future projects without the possibility of crossbores or other damage. Chosen as the Gas Distribution Project of the Year, it was honored at the 2023 Underground Construction Awards.

Safe Piping Matters offers educational webinar

Safe Piping Matters released a one-hour webinar, "Material Considerations for Plumbing Systems." The course is appropriate for architects, engineers and plumbing industry professionals who want to know the latest research-based recommendations for piping materials such as copper, iron, PVC, CPVC, HDPE and PEX. Interested parties can visit the safepipingmatters.org website to schedule a free session. The course is approved for continuing education from the American Institute of Architects, including health, safety, welfare credits.

Waterless Co. offers tips on public restroom safe habits

Waterless Co. offers tips on good restroom habits. However, public health officials are concerned that many of these protective measures are now being tossed out the window.

Toilet and urinal plume — the releasing of germs and bacteria into the air when toilets or urinals are flushed - continually adds germs and bacteria to surfaces. To help protect ourselves, Klaus Reichardt, CEO and founder of Waterless Co., marketers of no-water urinals, suggests the following safe habits for public restrooms. Cover your hands with a paper towel when entering a restroom. Also, be quick. The longer you linger in a restroom, the more chances you encounter pathogens. Wearing a mask in a public restroom is optional, but still a good idea. Stay off your phone. A Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease study found that mobile phones are a hotbed for bacteria, viruses and fungi. Don't ditch the paper towel. Instead of tossing used paper towels, use them when exiting the restroom.

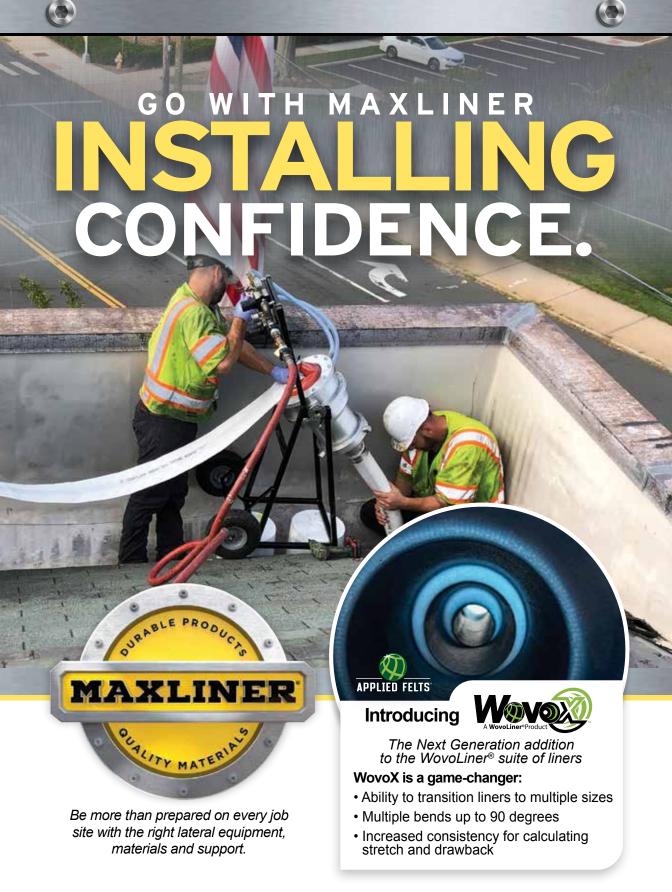
Oatey names RKR as Rep of the Year

Oatey has named RKR its 2022 Wholesale Manufacturer Representative of the Year. The annual award highlights a top agency's successes and shows appreciation for its outstanding support of Oatey's business. RKR also received the award from Oatey in 2020.

Chicago Faucet and Geberit celebrate partnership with EPA

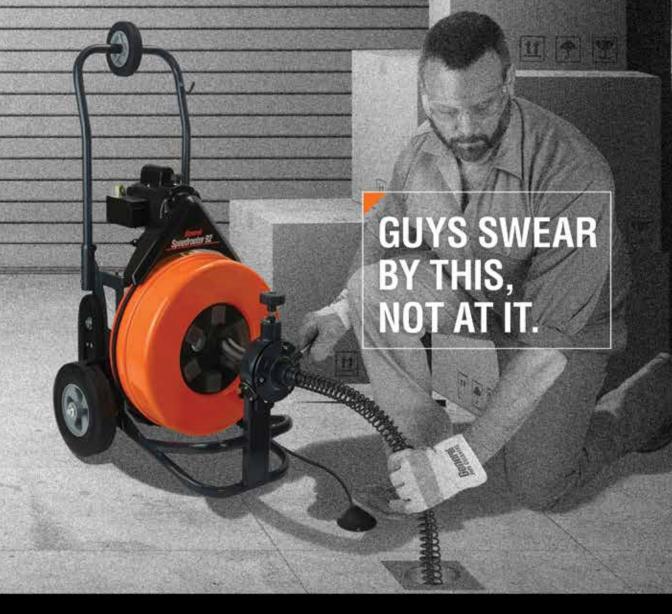
Chicago Faucet Co. and Geberit North America, part of the Geberit Group, are celebrating a 15-year partnership with the EPA's WaterSense Program. Both company brands join WaterSense in promoting efficiency and enhancing the market for water efficient products, programs and practices while protecting the future of the nation's water supply.

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