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Page 14

**PRODUCT FOCUS:**  
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Page 26







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**8 FROM THE EDITOR: Is Canada Leading a Flushing Restroom Revolution?**

British Columbia PROs brace for change as a political leader calls for portable sanitation upgrades at larger construction sites.

By Jim Kneiszel

**12 AT YOUR SERVICE: Disposal Rate Hikes, Limited Access Plaguing PROs**

Blending waste streams in the truck tank, considering a dewatering system are among tips to address dumping challenges.

By Jeff and Terri Wigley

**20 BUSINESS INCUBATOR: On the Right Track**

South Carolina's Al Graber abandoned a NASCAR-related business in favor of a life in portable sanitation and has never looked back.

By Betty Dageforde

**24 PRODUCT NEWS**

Product Spotlight: Vacuum-flush technology offers advantages at busy event sites

By Dodie Wiesner

**COVER STORY**

**14 PROfile: Special Deliveries**

Kentucky's A&A Porta Potty's has grown to specialize in large-scale industrial plant maintenance projects.

By Peter Kenter

**COVER PHOTO:**

Andy Zabrieszack, of A&A Porta Potty's in Danleyton, Kentucky, with an International service truck carrying a Masport pump and built out by Hull's Truck Bodies. (Photo by Bill Strauss)



**26 PRODUCT FOCUS: ADA/Handicap Restrooms, Cleaning and Maintenance**

By Craig Mandli

**28 WHERE'S THE RESTROOM?: Sidewalk Restroom Service for Throngs of Visitors**

A single unit shown here will be joined by hundreds more for a major national event to be held in this mystery city.

By Jim Kneiszel

**30 INDUSTRY NEWS**

COMING NEXT MONTH – AUGUST 2024    PROfile: Massachusetts PRO expands | TAKE 5: Started with trash, added restrooms

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## Advertiser Index

AirVote .....	25
 American Tank Co. American Tank Company LLC ...	17
Armal, Inc. ....	9
 Century Paper Products .....	4
 Deal Assoc. ....	9
 FlowMark Vacuum Trucks .....	6
 FMC Advisors .....	10, 27
 Imperial Industries, Inc. ....	31
 KeeVac Industries .....	9
 McKee Technologies - Explorer Trailers .....	30
 Milwaukee Rubber Products, Inc. ....	17

 National Vacuum Equipment .....	25
 NuConcepts .....	25
Odyssey Group LLC .....	19
 PolyJohn .....	back cover
Portable Sanitation Association International .....	11
 PortaLogix .....	13
 Ready2Go Restroom Trailers Sales LLC .....	5
 Robinson Vacuum Tanks Inc. ....	19
 ROEDA .....	17
 Satellite Industries .....	29

 ScreencO Systems, LLC .....	29
Slide In Queen .....	29
 Surco Portable Sanitation Products .....	30
 T.S.F. Company, Inc. ....	2

 Tank World Corp .....	24
 TOICO Industries .....	7
Vacuum Tank Sales .....	23
 Walex Products Company .....	3



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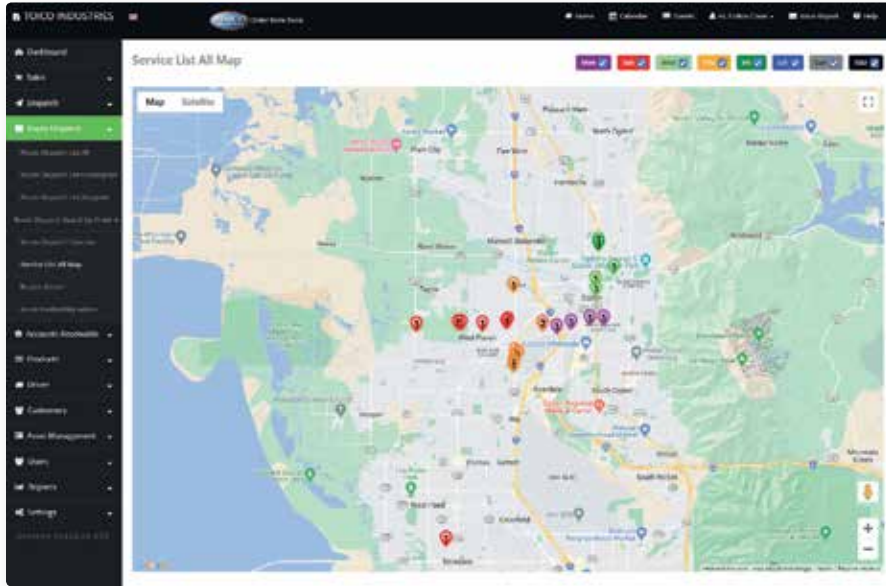
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By Jim Kneiszal

## Is Canada Leading a Flushing Restroom Revolution?

British Columbia PROs brace for change as a political leader calls for portable sanitation upgrades at larger construction sites

Will a proposal to upgrade construction site restrooms in British Columbia generate more revenue for Canadian PROs? Or will the province requiring flushing and other comforts for larger construction sites prove a burden too difficult for PROs to satisfy and too expensive for their customers to afford?

Perhaps a bigger question: Will Canada's efforts to upgrade portable sanitation regulations gain support in the larger U.S. construction market? And if construction customers demand and receive mandates for these amenities, will the same hold true for special event service? This could have a dramatic impact on the industry.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. What happened in Canada's western-most province to spark these questions? Last October Premier David Eby — responding to demands for better portable sanitation service by the B.C. Building Trades Council — committed to a requirement for restrooms with flushing toilets and hot and cold-water hand-washing at construction sites employing 25 or more workers. The union representing 40,000 workers had started a public relations campaign calling the condition of many drop tank restrooms unsanitary and undignified.

At a union convention, Eby said construction workers should have the same access to hygienic bathrooms as workers in other fields. Media outlets said this response prompted a standing ovation.

"If we want people to work in the trades, if we want to show people that this is a great way to support your family and build your community, the basic ability to go to a bathroom that doesn't stink, that isn't a mess, where you can flush a toilet, is a basic requirement for a decent job site," he said.

### BETTER CONDITIONS

The trade group had just reintroduced a Get Flushed campaign that started during the COVID-19 pandemic, calling on the government to raise standards for portable sanitation.

"Enough is enough," said the group's executive director, Brynn Bourke, in a press release. "Nearly every other industry from film to events and tourism has found a way to bring clean, flushing toilet facilities to mobile sites. ... Construction workers have been faced with unsanitary and undignified washroom conditions for too long. We need the provincial government to step in."

The trades group argues upgrading to plumbed flush toilets with other amenities can be done because it has been the rule in the eastern province of Quebec since 2015. Additionally, updated service requirements — includ-

ing employing flush restrooms and hot running water whenever practical — have been in place for some time in Ontario.

What is the specific ask from the B.C. Building Trades Council? The group would like the following included in formal legislation:

- Supply plumbed washroom facilities — including the option of portable plumbed washrooms
- Provide access to hand-washing facilities close to washrooms
- Ensure washrooms are properly cleaned, disinfected and maintained
- Equip washrooms with proper heating and illumination
- Place washrooms within appropriate walking distance for workers. (No more than 200 feet, according to a 2021 recommendation.)

### DEFINE "FLUSHING" TOILET

What constitutes a "flush" toilet? That is unclear in the current discussion in British Columbia, but B.C. Building Trades, on its Get Flushed website, seems to be calling for restroom trailers based on its example of how flushing toilets could cost about \$1 a day to serve a site with 100 workers. They argue that a deluxe restroom trailer with multiple toilets on men's and women's sides would cost nearly \$3,000 per month, or 97 cents per worker per day.

The B.C. government hasn't introduced any formal legislation to require flushing toilets as promised by Eby.

Companies in the wastewater sector certainly already have plenty of rules to follow and it can seem like the list gets longer every day. But I also recognize there is always room to raise standards for portable sanitation.

But in Ontario, acceptable restrooms not connected to a municipal sewer may include those "equipped with a trap or positive seal separating stored waste from the bowl," according to regulations. These would appear to describe the common plastic units provided by the industry with a flap that allows waste to enter the holding tank where it can't be seen by the user. Quebec also allows this type of unit where it is not "reasonably practical" to connect the restroom to a municipal sewer system.

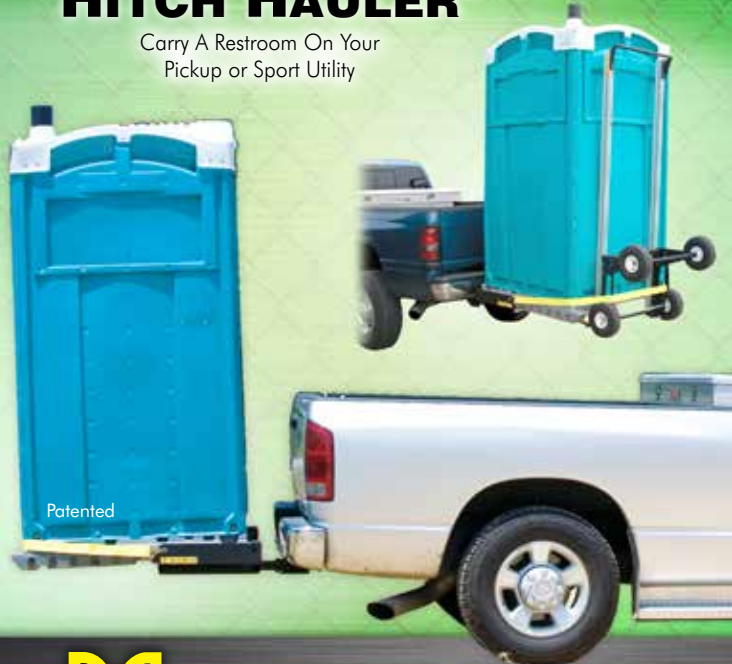
Ontario also qualifies its requirement for hot and cold water sinks as only if "reasonably possible." The regulations also call for an open-front toilet seat, a self-closing door that can be locked from the inside, adequate natural or artificial light, adequate ventilation and heating "if that is possible." Regulations say one stand-alone sink may serve two restrooms if they are located in the same project area.



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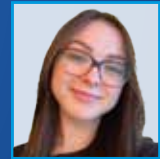


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## ON ONE HAND

I reached out to one B.C. restroom operator who voiced frustration over the proposal for flushing toilets. The PRO with 20 years in the industry says Eby's promise to require the upgrades came with no timeline for legislation. It left construction customers confused over if this is a mandate and restroom companies worried about the future of their equipment inventories. Should they buy what PROs know as the simple plastic flusher units or budget for more restroom trailers to satisfy requirements that might come down the road?

This contractor may reflect a concern of other contractors in not wanting to send his restroom trailers onto construction sites when they have typically been reserved for special event work. "I don't want my nice trailers being thrashed on a construction site," he says. "Typically construction workers are not easy on them, and I'm not going to put my nice assets out to be ruined."

Rather than forcing PROs to provide restroom trailers or flushing units in general, this PRO suggests construction clients need to adjust their mindset and spend a little more money for higher quality service of basic restrooms. "I guarantee everyone will cut corners and skirt the rules, just like it's being done in every industry," the PRO says. "Every construction site is trying to minimize their costs. Instead of having 20 restrooms on site, they have 10 and wonder why they're full to the brim every time we go to service them."

If the government is going to tighten restroom rules, the PRO would prefer to see the restroom-to-user ratio changed or construction customers increase the number of services from once to twice or three times a week. Those changes alone would greatly improve cleanliness and reduce complaints about portable restrooms in general. "We take care of our units and service them well. If you take care of the guys and have enough units, it's never been an issue," he says. The PRO says raising the industry standard from one to two units for 10 workers on a construction site would make a significant difference without requiring flushing toilets.

## ON THE OTHER HAND

I understand the perspective of small businesses that have a negative knee-jerk reaction to regulation in general. Companies in the wastewater sector certainly already have plenty of rules to follow, and it can seem like the list gets longer every day. But I also recognize there is always room to raise standards for portable sanitation, and regulations like the one proposed for British Columbia can provide enhanced revenue opportunities for PROs.

After all, moving from a drop tank to a plastic flushing unit or a restroom trailer is an upsell to a pretty significant customer base for most portable restroom contractors. So is the prospect of increasing the number of hand-wash stations, lowering the ratio of restrooms to workers and cleanliness standards that push clients to add more service calls. Customers might complain about the changes at first, but the added cost may be justified in the long run if it keeps their workers happy on the job site.

And the portable sanitation industry has its reputation to consider. PROs are constantly criticized when restroom users have a bad experience. Many of you believe this criticism should first be directed at customers looking for cut-rate service; that the negative perceptions heaped on the industry are the result of poor service driven by the clients who ignore the sound recommendations of restroom providers.

Maybe government regulation can be a positive thing if it forces construction companies — and other users of your services — to adhere to more rigorous cleanliness standards. And if a trend toward stricter regulation of job site restrooms in Canada is successful, maybe U.S. states and local health departments will follow suit, raising the standards for hygiene across North America. ■

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*Jeff and Terri Wigley are portable sanitation industry veterans, having owned and operated Atlanta-based Pit Stop Sanitation Services for 25 years. Send your questions or comments to editor@promonthly.com.*

# Disposal Rate Hikes, Limited Access Plaguing PROs

Blending waste streams in the truck tank, considering a dewatering system are among tips to address dumping challenges



Jeff and Terri Wigley

By Jeff and Terri Wigley

**QUESTION:** We are looking for some tips and suggestions for dealing with waste disposal. We have two wastewater treatment facilities in our area, and each one has unique requirements, rules and rates. One, with a lower rate per gallon, requires sampling of the waste prior to disposal, and we have been turned down on several occasions. The hours at this facility are Monday through Friday only. The other facility is much higher in its rate, but is open seven days a week and has no sampling requirements. What are some ways that we can handle these situations?

**ANSWER:** Waste disposal issues have become the most prevalent topic of discussion in our industry over the past year. PROs are completely subservient to the wastewater treatment plant in terms of dump fees, hours of operation and whether they will/will not accept portable restroom waste. We believe that communication and education are the keys to this dilemma.

## Why the concern over portable restroom waste?

The waste from our industry is more concentrated than that of septic tanks, which contain a large percentage of water as compared to waste. Our waste contains high levels of BODs (biological oxygen demand) such as phosphorus, potassium, nitrogen and zinc. Zinc can kill the “good bacteria” that breaks down the waste in the wastewater treatment process. These concentrated levels of BODs “shock” the treatment system. This is why some treatment facilities will sample the contents of the route service truck prior to allowing it to dump.

There has also been a longtime misconception about the “blue chemicals” used in our industry. Formaldehyde use in our deodorizers has been a longtime “negative” in acceptance of our waste. Today a vast majority of PROs use nonformaldehyde deodorizers, and this is a fact that can be used in the education process with wastewater officials. Even formaldehyde-based deodorizers today have a maximum concentration of 37%. This also dispels the misconception that formaldehyde deodorizers are the same as they were many years ago when the concentrations were significantly higher.

Another educational note is that deodorizers are used in a ratio of 4-6 ounces per five gallons of water. Further, after a week, the components are completely broken down, hence the need for once-a-week service.

## Suggestions for wastewater plants that require waste sampling

One of the primary measurements that most plants use to assess or evaluate portable restroom waste is pH. Simply stated, this scale measures the acidic or basic nature of a solution. A pH of 7.0 is considered neutral and a range of 6.5-7.5 is optimal for the microbes in the treatment plant to thrive

and to break down the waste. If the load is too acidic, lime can be added to raise the pH to acceptable levels. Conversely, if too basic, muriatic acid or sulfuric acid can lower the pH.

We recommend PROs do not get into this practice unless it becomes a constant barrier to you disposing at a certain location due to pH concerns. A pH meter and specialized training on the use of these chemicals is needed, and the acids are quite caustic.

You need to weigh the cost of subcontracting this task against the expenses of time, labor and your cost of disposal at the treatment facility.

As a result of the COVID pandemic, portable restroom waste today is more diluted than it was prior to that time due to the abundance of sinks and hand-wash stations. These additional sources of water decrease the percentage of portable restroom waste in the service tank.

For plants that require sampling of the load before disposal, here are a few tips that will help to further dilute the waste:

- Where feasible, try to include a holding tank on the daily route. Holding tanks have a much higher water ratio, which will dilute the contents of the waste in the truck.
- At special events, if there is a hand-wash/sink area, use more than one truck to pump these units. Each truck will then have more water in the tank than total portable restroom waste.
- In the yard, use holding tanks for smaller pumping vehicles to dump into. This waste may be in the tank for several days before being pumped up by a larger route truck and taken to the disposal facility. During this time, the waste further breaks down and begins to decompose.

## Subcontract for waste disposal and avoid trips to disposal plants

Some PROs have large tanks (5,000 gallons or so) in the yard where all trucks dump into at the end of the day. These tanks are then pumped by a septic or pumping company on a periodic basis and these subcontractors dispose of the waste.

This strategy eliminates the need for dealing with wastewater treatment plants and, in general, allows route trucks to stay on route all day since each truck begins the daily route with an empty tank. You need to weigh the cost of subcontracting this task against the expenses of time, labor and your cost of disposal at the treatment facility.



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### Dewatering

While this option has many rules and regulations we cannot cover in this short column, the basic idea is that a giant roll-off type unit is installed on the company yard and all waste is unloaded into this unit. The waste will separate and the effluent, or liquid waste, can be pumped and transported to a treatment plant or, better yet, per local governmental and environmental permitting and compliance, discharged into the sewer system with a meter recording the gallons of liquid discharged. Expect frequent inspections by environmental officials. Compliance must be a top priority.

### Education and communication with wastewater and environmental personnel

There are several misconceptions about portable restroom waste today and PROs need to be armed with the facts in order to educate those in both the disposal and the environmental arenas. Here are a few suggestions:

- Develop a good business relationship with wastewater treatment personnel. Be on a first-name basis with key contacts. Share information with them as needed. New articles and studies about disposal in our industry could be very effective.
- Consider joining an industry association where additional information and support can be obtained throughout the membership. The Portable Sanitation Association International, National Association of Wastewater Technicians and the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association are prime examples. Local homebuilder associations are also valuable organizations as they deal with local governmental and environmental officials.
- Consider trying to obtain business from your local city or municipality for their events, parks, public spaces and building projects. You will be interacting with local officials, and if problems arise at the local wastewater treatment facilities in terms of accepting waste, your company

can leverage those personal relationships and the fact that the waste came from the city or municipality in which the treatment facility is located.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Waste disposal is one of the areas in which PROs have limited control, but rates, hours and days of operation, and access in general greatly affect your operation. Many wastewater plants are old and reaching capacity. Portable restrooms are much more accepted by the general public and many more are in use today than when some of these aging plants were constructed.

The general population has also increased over the decades and household sewage is now considerably higher in volume. There are no easy answers to this situation; however, education and communication are the best strategies to adopt in dealing with disposal issues. ■

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The A&A Porta Potty's team includes, from left, (front row) Andy Zabrieszack, Christy Zabrieszack, Catherine Hale; and (back row) Jessica Gilliam, Michael Campbell, Kyle Welder, Charles Holbrook and James Hale.



# Special Deliveries

Kentucky's A&A Porta Potty's has grown to specialize in large-scale industrial plant maintenance projects

STORY: Peter Kenter | PHOTOS: Bill Strauss



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**A**ndy Zabrieszack started small more than 30 years ago. But the owner of A&A Porta Potty's in Danleyton, Kentucky, believes that a dedication to service and a willingness to jump quickly on business opportunities has catapulted his company to taking on some of the largest industrial contracts in his service area.

His grandfather and his father were in septic service, and he and his twin brother, Allen, worked in the family business, AZ Septic Tank Service, through high school.

"In our senior year, my dad asked us what we were going to do with our future," Zabrieszack recalls. "I said I wanted to try out port-a-potties. For graduation, my dad bought me 10 port-a-potties and let me borrow one of his septic trucks, and Allen and I launched A&A Porta Potty's in 1992."

The truck was a bare-bones 1977 Chevy C10 with manual transmission and steering. "It sounded like a hot rod, but was slower than dirt," he recalls. "I would load up 10 five-gallon drums of water every day for freshwater. It was torture."

Competition was fierce and Zabrieszack was looking to differentiate his offerings in the market.

"Cleaning these units every two weeks was standard in the area, and I decided to clean my units weekly so

we could beat them on service," he says. "It made a big difference."

In the company's second year, Zabrieszack bought his own dedicated vacuum truck just as the brothers decided to strike out on their own. Allen chose the septic field and began to slowly take the reins at AZ Septic.

## LOAD OF CHEAP UNITS

Fortune smiled on A&A when a PRO in Indiana placed an ad in *Pumper* magazine offering to sell some of his old portable restroom inventory at \$10 per unit.

"My dad and I took a weekend trip up there and I bought 200 potties, some of them for \$1 apiece," he recalls. "[He] just told us to get them out of there, and he even loaned me a trailer. I made more than a dozen round trips. That was our breakout year because I could now start bidding on festivals and other big jobs I couldn't handle before."

A&A hired its first employee in 1995 and three more the following year. Clients included a produce stand and numerous construction contracts. The company's big break with industrial clients occurred just as the contractor concluded its first major contract with a music festival held in Mount Sterling, Kentucky.



Technician Michael Campbell adds a company sticker to a restroom from PolyJohn.

“We were loading up 100 restrooms after the festival and got a phone call from American Electric Power,” Zabrieszack says. “They had a maintenance shutdown going on, and they asked if I could get them 43 potties and 23 hand-wash stations. I said we could have the restrooms there in an hour and a half. I called up PolyJohn and ordered 23 hand-wash stations, which arrived the following morning.”

Following the two-month contract, Zabrieszack received a call from Marathon’s Catlettsburg Refinery which was also scheduling maintenance. The company took 100 portable restrooms and all 23 hand-wash stations.

“From there on, we developed a reputation for handling big outages,” he says.

### MANY OFFERINGS

Today, the company employs nine people. Its service offerings have expanded to septic system installation and pumping holding tanks at sewage plants. A&A also rents holding tanks, office containers, storage containers, freight containers, portable guardhouses, tables and chairs.

The portable restroom inventory includes 450 from PolyJohn, 250 from T.S.F. Company, 100 from Armal, 48 from J&J Portable Sanitation Products, and an assortment of older units from defunct manufacturers. ADA units include 25 from Satellite Industries and 20 from PolyJohn.

A&A also manufactures its own multistation restrooms from shipping containers.

“We rent shipping containers and decided to convert some of them into what we call restroom boxes,” Zabrieszack says. “They’re steel boxes with steel doors and they were designed for the rough treatment they get at industrial outage jobs. It’s cheaper to build them than to buy them and they’re a lot tougher. You can beat the brakes off them, touch up the paint and they’ll keep rolling on.”

A&A offers four 40-foot units, one 24-foot unit, six 20-foot units, and three 14-foot units, all with exterior holding tanks. The smallest offers one toilet each for men and women, with the largest containing three for women, three for men and two urinals.

The company also converts shipping containers into construction site offices and guardhouses for rental. Zabrieszack’s own office was built from a converted shipping container.

A&A offers 150 hand-wash stations from PolyJohn, Satellite and T.S.F. and holding tanks from both PolyJohn and Kentucky Tank.



“We’re doing very well here right now, with a capable team serving the clients we’ve served forever, picking up new business and finding new opportunities in the area.”

**Andy Zabrieszack**

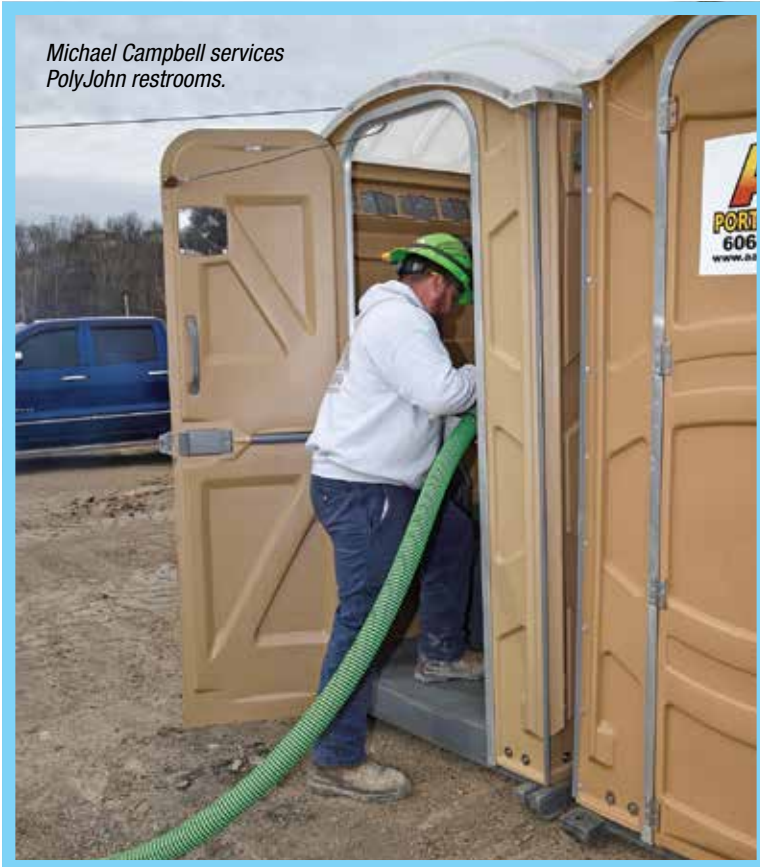


Charles Holbrook inspects a shipping container slated for conversion into what the company calls a restroom box, a heavy-duty restroom for industrial settings.

## HARDWORKING FLEET

Restrooms are hauled into place by four transport trucks: 2000 and 2017 Ford F-350 flatbeds; a 2014 Kenworth Rollback with hydraulic winch; and a 2000 Volvo semi tractor. Several trailers used to carry portable restrooms include two 10-unit trailers from Liquid Waste Industries and a 20-unit trailer from McKee Technologies. A TRAIL-EZE trailer carries the heavy box restrooms.

The service fleet includes a 2000 Mack with a 1,500-gallon steel tank and Wallenstein pump, a 2001 Sterling with a 3,600-gallon steel tank and Masport pump built out by McKee Technologies, and a 2019 Peterbilt with a



Michael Campbell services PolyJohn restrooms.

2,500-gallon steel tank and Moro USA pump built out by Hull's Truck Bodies.

An additional nine Ford F-Series trucks ranging from 2001 to 2014 are outfitted with stainless steel tanks and Westmoor Condé pumps. All of the trucks feature 300 gallons of fresh water with waste capacities ranging from 500 to 700 gallons.

A 2014 International carries an aluminum tank split three ways — 650 waste/300 fresh/100 chemical — and Masport pump, also built out by Hull's Truck Bodies.

"That extra chemical tank comes in handy when you fill it with con-

"There's so much pumping between the holding tanks, digesters, port-a-potties and hand-wash stations. We often replace 1,000 rolls of bathroom tissue and 40,000 paper towels a day."

Andy Zabrieszack

centrated cleaner," Zabrieszack says. "You can mix it on the spot to clean those portables."

J&J Portable Sanitation Products supplies deodorizing chemicals.

## TURNAROUND SPECIALTY

About 85% of the company's work involves industrial maintenance contracts for steel mills, refineries, chemical plants and power plants, which typically run from 60 to 90 days. The remaining contracts service construction, events and local parks. A&A has become something of a go-to company in the area for industrial maintenance work.

"Many companies in the area don't work after normal business hours, and it's not an area you enter easily," Zabrieszack says. "I don't know how you get a reputation for doing maintenance work other than doing it."

Some of the largest contracts support as many as 2,500 workers, requiring as many as 300 restrooms and trailers and 40 hand-wash stations. The company also sets up a laydown area at each site with up to a dozen spare poly restrooms to replace units that are damaged. Vacuum trucks are parked on site 24/7 and units are serviced as many as four times a day.

"There's so much pumping between the holding tanks, digesters, port-a-potties and hand-wash stations, it's just pump, pump, pump," Zabrieszack says. "We often replace 1,000 rolls of bathroom tissue and 40,000 paper towels a day."

At any given time, A&A has 100 portable restrooms loaded and ready to go in case an industrial client requires them in a hurry. The contractor dips into these reserves for local festivals and one-off events, which typically require about 15 to 20 units for a weekend.

Kyle Welder loads a restroom onto the carrier of an International service truck built out by Imperial Industries.











Welder straps down a PolyJohn restroom for delivery.

**LOOKING AHEAD**

Zabrieszack still helps his brother at AZ Septic from time to time — they occupy opposite corners of the same lot. Their father, Allen, has stepped back from an active role, but still makes appearances as an adviser.

Zabrieszack continues to search for new opportunities for incremental growth. Fence rental is next on the list and he’s also looking at potential opportunities in tent rentals. In addition, three team members have recently started classes to become licensed sewer plant operators, a requirement to perform sewer plant maintenance work under Kentucky regulations.

He’s considered expanding the service area, but realizes this would involve establishing a satellite office, probably across state lines.

“If we need to expand to remain profitable, we have plans in place on how it would happen,” he says. “We could do it in a heartbeat. But we’re

doing very well here right now, with a capable team serving the clients we’ve served forever, picking up new business and finding new opportunities in the area.” ■



Andy and Christy Zabrieszack

**PRICING FOR A PROFIT**

When Andy Zabrieszack founded A&A Porta Potty’s in 1992, he reckoned the best way to gain market share was to deliver the cheapest quotes in the area. One conversation with another portable restroom professional changed his mind.

“I hadn’t been in business very long,” he recalls. “I was driving my route and saw a truck from another company parked off the road. A fellow was cleaning out one of the units, and I stopped off and we began to talk about the business.”

The conversation covered a wide range of topics, including Zabrieszack’s strategy to increase market share by competing on price.

“He told me that if I was out there hustling potties at a cutthroat price, I could grow the number of units I was renting and make absolutely no money in the process,” Zabrieszack says. “He explained that I wasn’t just cutting my margins, but my ability to pay my employees well, replace truck transmissions, fix flat tires and buy new portable restrooms. If you can’t afford to do those things, your service will suffer.”

Reflecting on the conversation on the drive home, he told his mother, who was working the office in the company’s early days, that he was through being the area’s cheapest portable restroom company and would be raising the price of rentals by 40% the next day.

“My mom was worried that I wouldn’t rent any units at that price and I told her that maybe she was right, but for every unit I did rent, we would actually be making money,” Zabrieszack says. “After that day, I never looked back.”

“Cleaning these units every two weeks was standard in the area, and I decided to clean my units weekly so we could beat them on service. It made a big difference.”

**Andy Zabrieszack**

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# On the Right Track

South Carolina's Al Graber abandoned a NASCAR-related business in favor of a life in portable sanitation and has never looked back

By Betty Dageforde | PHOTOS: James Nix

The Grand Restrooms crew includes (front row) Alexa Graber and shop dog Luna; (standing, from left) Tonya Tessneer (not an employee), Hey Watts, Cindy Graber, Daniel Timmons, James Bond, Raul Perez, Jesse James Bond and Al Graber.

**A**l Graber has been starting businesses since he was 12. So, as an adult, he was comfortable pivoting to different things as the situation required. Which explains how he got into portable sanitation from his NASCAR-related business buying and selling racecar parts and memorabilia.

In the 2008 economic downturn, his company took a hit and he started looking for options. His daughter is an avid fan of the local minor league hockey team. As a volunteer, she set up a bounce house at events to help promote the team — which gave Graber an idea. He bought inflatables for her, and together they established ABT Events. In five years, after expanding into other party equipment, it was a million-dollar business.

Then one day Graber, 55, noticed something. “When we did big corporate events, we’d be out there setting up for eight, 10 hours in 100-degree weather. Then you’d see a guy come in with a restroom trailer and literally set it up in a half hour.”

When he attended the next American Rental Association trade show in February 2020 he talked to the owners of Lang Specialty Trailers. “They gave us tickets to the WWETT Show and I wound up purchasing two trailers,” he says.

Graber returned home and started a luxury trailer business, Grand Restrooms, while his wife Cindy and daughter Alexa continued with the event business, both located in Clover, South Carolina.

But things did not go according to plan.

“One of the first things our driver is supposed to do is meet the superintendent. Let them put a face to your name. And always keep in mind, what are their needs, what can we do, do they need a different kind of unit, a different air freshener?”

Al Graber

## THE FIRST CHALLENGE

“I left the WWETT Show with that tingly, excited-but-scared feeling,” Graber says. Reality hit two weeks later when the country shut down during COVID.

“The great thing was I had nothing better to do than sit there and look at every potential renter — wedding venues, event planners, hospitals, townships, you name it,” he says. “I’m a volunteer firefighter, so I also talked with the county — that if there’s going to be any COVID protocols where extra restrooms are needed, I got you covered.”

Business trickled in and by May some restrictions were lifted. “And then everything went bananas,” Graber says. “All my time sitting there contacting these folks paid off.”





## CHANGING DIRECTION

Graber once said, “no way, no how” to standard portable restrooms. But, again, he had to face reality. Even with COVID restrictions lifted, wedding sizes were limited and couples were hesitant to rent a \$1,300 trailer for 35 people.

He had to do something to avoid losing customers. “I took a shot and started saying, ‘How about if I get you an ADA plastic portable?’ We bought our first ones in April 2020 and dressed them up with sinks, mirrors, lights, plants. People started jumping on those.”

Large events eventually came back, and those ADA customers are now some of the company’s top trailer customers.

## A GROUP DECISION

With the addition of ADAs, Graber bought a vacuum truck to retain profits lost by paying pumping companies to service the units. Then it was decision time. He sat down with the team.

“These were guys from ABT Events who for years had been wrestling 1,000-pound waterslides, working in the heat,” he says. “I gave them the option — ‘If you want to become full-time employees and you’re OK servicing portable restrooms, I’ll bring them in.’” It was unanimous and the company placed its first order.

That led to an unexpected expansion into construction when one of their trailer customers told him, “If you handle construction portables the way you handle your trailers, we’ll give you all the business you can handle.”

Construction now accounts for 60% of their work. That called for a change in branding, which Graber is currently working on. “The branding was geared towards luxury — crisp, black tie,” he says. “Now we’ve got portable restrooms and we also added temporary fencing (ZND Temporary Fence Panels) so we need something more encompassing.” He’ll keep the Grand Restrooms name, but change the logo.



**Below:** Daniel Timmons uses a Mahindra tractor to move a Satellite Industries restroom in the company yard.



## PEOPLE AND EQUIPMENT

The company now has about 300 standard and ADA-compliant units and 30 hand-wash stations (PolyJohn and Satellite Industries) and 10 restroom trailers (six Lang, two DRE Custom Trailers, one Satellite Suites, one Rich Specialty Trailers). Transport trailers are from F.M. Manufacturing.

Service trucks include a 2020 Ram 5500 from PortaLogix with an 800-gallon waste/350-gallon freshwater aluminum tank and Fruitland pump, a 2011 Ford E-450 with a Robinson Vacuum Tanks 650-gallon waste/250-gallon freshwater aluminum slide-in tank and Masport pump, and a 2022 Chevrolet 6500 with an

**Above:** From left, technicians James Bond, Raul Perez and Daniel Timmons work together to load Satellite restrooms onto a trailer from F.M. Manufacturing for delivery.



Raul Perez moves a Satellite Industries restroom on the company grounds.



Al Graber, with his wife Cindy and daughter Alexa at Grand Restrooms in Clover, South Carolina.

Imperial Industries 1,300-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater aluminum tank and National Vacuum Equipment pump.

On staff is Jesse Bond, James Bond, Daniel Timmons, Raul Perez and Tonya Tessneer, a shared employee with ABT.

Graber looks for people who have enthusiasm and dedication, who appreciate job security and a family orientation. A candidate may not initially look like the best fit, but if they have those qualities he'll train them. "They're still a work in progress," he says. "We're constantly training and learning from our mistakes. They're growing with me."

"It's a fabulous business to be in and somewhat easy to get into. You can have some long hours but I'm used to that. There's been no bad."

Al Graber

### COFFEE AND PIZZA

Graber loves his customers. "They're not just the people funding our lives; they're our friends," he says. He seeks their opinions and enjoys dropping by job sites with coffee and doughnuts. One of the construction supervisors occasionally makes pizzas for them and they all sit around and have a beer.

"One of the first things our driver is supposed to do is meet the superintendent," Graber says. "Let them put a face to your name. And always keep in mind, what are their needs, what can we do, do they need a different kind of unit, a different air freshener? My guys get great reviews. I think some of our success has been because we're so accommodating."

### PAY IT FORWARD

Graber says he's had a lot of help and mentors along the way — manufacturers, other contractors, *Portable Restroom Operator* magazine — and now wants to do the same for others.

"I absolutely love helping people in the business," he says. "At the WWETT Show, I take classes and network, but the majority of the time I'll be at Lang's talking to people who want to get in the business. I tell them it's a great business, great money, great people — but here are some of the mistakes I made."

Some of his suggestions:

Keep spare parts. "Don't think that just because the trailers are new nothing can go wrong. One deep freeze can put a trailer out of service for a long time."

Success comes from how you handle yourself, your employees and your customers.

Don't have a narrow focus. "One guy just wanted government contracts. Those are great but not that easy to get and a lot of people want them. I just wanted to do luxury trailers, and just service big corporate events and weddings. I also thought I would never do long-term contracts. I didn't see the money in it. That was one of my biggest mistakes; that nobody came out and hit me on the backside of the head and said, 'You fool. You want long-term. It's job security.'"





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Al Graber (center) confers with technicians Raul Perez (left) and Daniel Timmons.

## NO REGRETS

Graber hasn't been to a NASCAR race since 2014 but has no regrets. He says he's overwhelmed at how quickly the business grew and how willing other contractors are to help him. "It's a fabulous business to be in and somewhat easy to get into," he says. "You can have some long hours but I'm used to that. There's been no bad." ■

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## PRODUCT NEWS



## PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

### Vacuum-flush technology offers advantages at busy event sites

By Dodie Wiesner

**JAG Mobile Solutions'** latest modular portable restroom offering incorporates vacuum flushing, hot water and HVAC. This new technology is called the **"Pilot & Drone."** While this might conjure images of autonomous flying machines, it's more like a queen bee overseeing the work of many drone bees.

Bill Gibson, president of JAG Mobile Solutions, explains that "Pilot" units are single to three-stall restrooms equipped with onboard vacuum technology for waste-disposal, freshwater and HVAC capabilities. The "Drone" restrooms do not have the vacuum equipment on board, but can be daisy-chained to the "Pilots" to share these technologies.

"Pilot" units are equipped with freshwater flush toilets and a sink providing hot water, as well as onboard integrated vacuum pumps that flush directly into sewer lines when available. Otherwise, wastewater can flow to a holding tank to be trucked away later.

"Drone" units are identical to "Pilots," but without on-board vacuum systems. "Drones," as well as any available toilet, shower or combo unit with the same hookups, connect to "Pilots" via 3-inch vacuum cams. Up to 12 additional "Drone" stalls can be connected to each "Pilot."

According to Gibson, vacuum-assist flush systems require less water than gravity-flush systems. Also, during inclement weather, the included HVAC systems prevent pipe-freezing. The technology provides advantages "when events and venues are focused on patron comfort including interior climate control [and] hot water for improved site hygiene," Gibson says.

The "Pilot & Drone" is modular so an adjustable number of "Pilots" and daisy chained "Drones" can be placed at a central location, or multiple "Pilots" – with or without "Drones" – can be distributed out across a job site or venue.

According to Gibson, vacuum technology allows PROs to clean and maintain units more efficiently, especially during busy events where vacuum truck access could be challenging. He says they also could potentially lower costs associated with pumping by dumping directly into a sewer line. "So the waste disposal, depending on where you are, might be zero," Gibson says.

The "Pilot & Drone" have gone through an internal testing phase. One notable customer has been Formula 1 Racing, where a "Pilot" – along with JAG Mobile Solutions' new patent pending ADA-compliant Dignified Accessible Trailer Solutions "Drone" restroom – were deployed at the Nov. 2023 Las Vegas Grand Prix.

"The responses we've gotten back from our customer was that there were zero defects," Gibson says. "Our customer [wanted vacuum systems], and they needed a simple ADA add-on to an existing system that was climate-controlled."

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By Craig Mandli

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### J&J PORTABLE RESTROOM PRODUCTS ECHO MAX AND ADA

The Echo ADA unit from J&J Portable Restroom Products is a full-sized ADA-compliant portable restroom, while the Echo Max unit is the smaller handicap-accessible unit that can also be used for events, offering guests a spacious restroom area. They include a 45- or



70-gallon sumped tank, four heavy-duty stainless steel hinges, two strain relief door springs, an integrated floor drainage system for easy cleaning and a high-flow ventilation system. They also provide convenient side and rear forklift access openings molded into the floor and reinforced domed roofs with tie-down channels for safe and secure transport. Both provide structural strength with overlapping corner construction for longer life and include UV color protection technology.

800-345-3303; [www.jjportable.com](http://www.jjportable.com)

### JAG MOBILE SOLUTIONS DIGNIFIED ACCESSIBLE TRAILER SOLUTIONS

Dignified Accessible Trailer Solutions from JAG Mobile Solutions include Stop, Drop And Go! technology and are available in a variety of sizes and configurations, from single- to 10-station trailer applications as well as no-ramp skid designs for restroom, shower and combination applications. Skid units utilize traditional toilet and sink operation or JAG Pilot & Drone vacuum technology. With no hydraulics, macerator toilets, or loose parts and a 10-minute setup time, the design reduces maintenance, maximizes uptime and qualifies for state of California precertification, according to the maker. ADA-compliant models are available in any interior package. NexGen 2 units feature Forever Floor wood-free subfloors, gel-coat exteriors, fiberglass roofs, dusk-to-dawn porch lights and stair illumination.

800-815-2557; [www.jagmobilesolutions.com](http://www.jagmobilesolutions.com)



### LANG SPECIALTY TRAILERS ADA PRO SERIES

The Lang Specialty Trailers ADA Pro Series is built on a hydraulic lowering frame, placing the whole trailer flat to the ground to allow for quick deployment of the ADA ramp attached to a slide rail on the front of the trailer. This functional design gives the operator the ability to set up and take down the trailer in minutes. The ADA+2 is the most popular size, accommodating up to 200 guests and equipped with a 300-gallon waste tank and two optional 105-gallon freshwater tanks. This trailer is suitable for any venue or long-term rental opportunity that requires ADA accessibility, according to the maker. It offers separate men's and women's rooms for non-ADA guests.

724-972-6590; [www.langrestroomtrailers.com](http://www.langrestroomtrailers.com)



### POLYJOHN COMFORT XL

The PolyJohn Comfort XL restroom offers more than 16 square feet of interior floor space. The wheelchair-accessible unit is equipped with a self-closing door and interior grab rails for added safety and convenience. Available in a variety of colors, the restroom is designed for extra comfort for users.

800-292-1305; [www.polyjohn.com](http://www.polyjohn.com)



### SATELLITE FREEDOM

Satellite's Freedom ADA portable restroom is Title 24 compliant. It features a vacuum-formed base, reinforced side panels, molded vents and a strengthened roof. Longer handrails and ample space ensure exceptional maneuvering clearance and convenience for wheelchair users, according to the maker. The front floor





area was widened to increase space while also making the door opening larger, ensuring easy entry and exit for individuals with mobility devices. Impact tests reveal its durability, withstanding forces twice as hard as previous designs without damage. High-impact plastic lift handles provide a wide grip to reduce hand pressure when lifting. Its re-engineered, slightly narrower beveled exterior floor edge aids forklift access, and multiple tie-down options make moving and transportation easy.

800-883-1123; [www.satelliteindustries.com](http://www.satelliteindustries.com)

### T BLUSTAR SPACE160

The Space160 from T blustar is a spacious portable restroom suitable for parks, beaches, recreation sites and handicapped-accessible requirements. It has a flat floor that allows a wheelchair or child's stroller to easily roll into and turn around inside. The interior metal handrails allow maneuverability for users with disabilities. It comes standard with a freshwater flush and hand-wash sink, both with hand pumps. It can be personalized in a selection of bright colors and a company logo. A double wheel and lift jack allow a single operator to move it from site to site.

404-719-0715; [www.tblustar.com](http://www.tblustar.com)



## Graffiti Removal

### SURCO PORTABLE SANITATION PRODUCTS TAG OFF GRAFFITI REMOVER

Tag Off Graffiti Remover from Surco Portable Sanitation Products can be used to remove unsightly marks on portable restrooms and other surfaces. The formulation will not harm aluminum, brass, brick, chrome, concrete, most enameled surfaces, glass, marble, porcelain or steel. It is sold in 1-gallon jugs (four per case), 5-gallon pails or 55-gallon drums.

800-556-0111; [www.surco.com](http://www.surco.com)



### WALEX PRODUCTS BANISH GRAFFITI REMOVER

Banish Graffiti Remover from Walex Products is designed to remove paint, pen, markers, grease, tar, crayon and dirt. It also helps prevent lasting damage from future graffiti by leaving a protective coating on treated surfaces, according to the maker. It works on all nonpainted surfaces. To optimize results, the company recommends using Banish Cleaning Pads.

800-338-3155; [www.walex.com](http://www.walex.com)



## Odor Control

### CENTURY CHEMICAL TOI-DE-FRESH

The Toi-De-Fresh line of portable sanitation products from Century Chemical is available in super-concentrated and premixed formulas in both formaldehyde and non-formaldehyde variations. Variety packs of in-stock fragrances are available in addition to standard offerings including grape, piña colada and vanilla. The reformulated 2-ounce baby powder fragrance toss-in packets provide powerful and long-lasting odor control, according to the maker. The items can be paired with Super Mask masking agent and the company's line of all-purpose cleaners and citrus degreasers.

800-348-3505; [www.centurychemical.com](http://www.centurychemical.com)



# Companies For Sale

## FMC Advisors is currently offering the following businesses for sale:

- Midwest portable sanitation and water hauling, \$15mm revenue
- Midwest portable sanitation and septic, \$2.6mm revenue
- Northwest septic pumping and installation, \$1mm revenue
- West portable sanitation and rentals, \$20mm+ **under LOI**
- Plains solid waste hauler and rolloff, \$5mm revenue
- Southeast solid waste and rolloff, \$3.5mm revenue
- South portable sanitation, \$5mm revenue – **under LOI**
- Southwest solid waste – rolloff, \$1.75mm revenue
- Midwest portable sanitation, \$650k revenue
- West coast portable sanitation, \$4mm revenue
- Northeast portable sanitation and rolloff, \$1.5mm revenue
- Southeast portable sanitation, \$2.5mm revenue
- Southeast portable sanitation, \$2.75mm revenue
- Plains portable sanitation, \$800k revenue
- Northeast septic pumping and installation, \$2.2mm revenue
- West coast restroom trailers, \$27.2mm revenue
- Midwest portable sanitation, \$900k revenue
- Many more coming soon

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### JOHNNY'S CHOICE TOSS-INS

Johnny's Choice Toss-Ins are a premeasured portion packet of dry deodorant in a water-soluble pouch for use in portable restrooms. The portion packs make it easy and convenient to provide service without a mess. They can control foul odors in portable restrooms in all seasons, according to the maker. They have a nonstaining royal blue color to hide waste, and a fruity, floral scent. They also help break down toilet paper and waste. They are available in three sizes.

888-729-6478; [www.johnnyschoice.com](http://www.johnnyschoice.com) ■



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## Sidewalk Restroom Service for Throngs of Visitors

A single unit shown here will be joined by hundreds more for a major national event to be held in this mystery city

By Jim Kneiszel

The Service Sanitation restroom in this photo is placed in front of a politically significant location, both for present-day events and historically speaking.

The Republican National Convention will be held here this month, interestingly in a city that elected three Socialist Party mayors in the past century. The venue shown in the background was also supposed to be the site of the Democratic National Convention in 2020, but those plans were waylaid by the COVID-19 pandemic.

And a few blocks away from this landmark, Theodore Roosevelt was shot in the chest by a would-be assassin in 1912, after which the old Rough Rider gave a stirring campaign stump speech before receiving any medical attention.

Can you name this important building and the city where it is located? The first reader to respond with the correct answer wins the latest Where's the Restroom? contest and our hearty congratulations via our PRO social media. Send your guesses to us at [editor@promonthly.com](mailto:editor@promonthly.com).

Below are some clues to get you started:

1. This \$524 million structure, completed in 2018, is covered in 9,000 sourced zinc panels that make up the roof and curved outside wall
2. The building has an odd name taken from a local naming rights company involved in financial services
3. This city is the home to the world's largest music festival and is known by many as the City of Festivals
4. "Ride to live, live to ride" is the credo of this company known for showing its black and orange colors
5. This Great Lakes community has more than a half-million residents, and they like their beer
6. Solomon Juneau, Byron Kilbourn and George H. Walker were among this city's founders in the mid-1800s
7. The Hop transports visitors around this bustling downtown. ■

A restroom placed by Service Sanitation is shown in front of an important sports venue and landmark in a Midwest city.



PHOTO BY BRIGITTE LANDREVILLE

**Send Your Mystery Photos!** Do you have an interesting spot where you've been dropping and servicing restrooms? Send photos to [editor@promonthly.com](mailto:editor@promonthly.com). We will credit you for submitting to *Where's the Restroom?*





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## INDUSTRY NEWS

### J&J Portable Sanitation opens new location

J&J Portable Sanitation Products opened J&J Plastics, in Porterville, California. The new facility will help serve the Western U.S. and be utilized to manufacture the company's products for the portable sanitation industry. J&J offers assembled and unassembled restrooms, standalone sinks, in-unit sinks, 250-gallon holding tanks, restroom and sink containment trays, and agricultural products.

### Century Chemical partners with Rickett Performance Motorsports

Century Chemical has entered into a partnership with Rickett Performance Motorsports and will be its official partner for the 2024 racing season. Century Chemical's brands Travel Jon and Bio-Tab will be featured on the No. 17 dirt late-model car for 15 races during the season. The Century team will be trackside at several events to interact with race fans. ■



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