

February 2022

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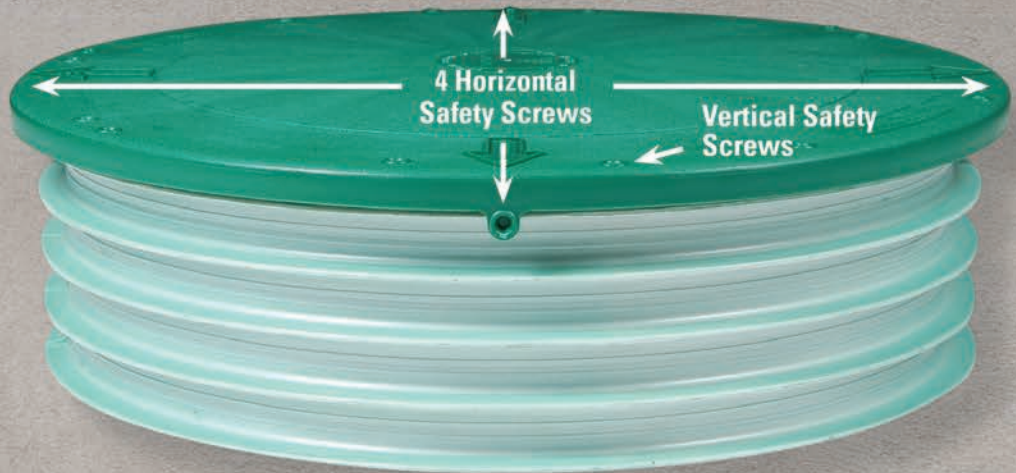

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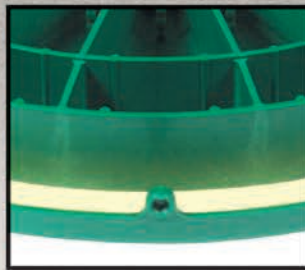
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INSTALLER PROFILE: Nothing but Blue Skies

By Ken Wysocky

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Hardworking installer Orlando Godinez is following in his father's footsteps with Godinez Septics. He is shown on a work site with his father, Pedro, and a Cat excavator in the background. (Photo by Ethan Rocke)

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Jim Kneiszel

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Getting Back to Normal: Attend an Industry Event

The WWETT Show and other industry tradeshow will shake the rust from our skill sets and prepare us for coming advances in onsite technology

February is considered more of a dormant period for many installers in the northern U.S. and the colder regions of Canada. Frost in the ground, short days and few customers calling on the phone might cause you to slow down — even in this hot construction period. And if there were ever a slow period in parts of the U.S. that experience better weather, this month would be it.

That's why this is tradeshow season for contractors used to working outdoors. The winter typically is when state, regional and national trade groups hold annual meetings, plan continuing education classes for technicians and set new association boards to work on the major issues of the day. It's also when the big daddy event in the wastewater industry, the Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport (WWETT) Show, is held.

After a year of COVID-19 kept many in the industry from gathering, the WWETT Show promises to come alive and provide much-needed networking, education and equipment sales opportunities. As this issue reaches your mailbox, you probably still have time to hop in the car or book a flight to Indianapolis to take part in WWETT. Mark your calendars for Feb. 20-24 at the Indiana Convention Center, the familiar show location for many years. And if you want to learn more about the WWETT Show, go to www.wwettshow.com. Also, many of you may be reading this for the first time from the WWETT Show floor. If so, welcome to Indy!

KEEPING PACE WITH CHANGES

There are many reasons to attend the WWETT Show or your state or provincial wastewater group's winter conferences, and now more than ever. That's because most of us have essentially missed two years of

opportunities to learn from each other and benefit from experts in the field. It puts some installers two years behind in gaining education credits and seeing demonstrations of the latest onsite technologies.

Let's face it, technology is moving at a blistering pace. Health departments and governing bodies move quickly to protect our clean-water resources and manufacturers respond to market demands for better, more cost-effective treatment systems. What better way to learn about these technologies than through hands-on demonstrations by the folks who are creating the products?

And at the same time, we have all learned during the pandemic about the myriad of challenges to hiring and retaining a new generation of wastewater professionals. If you are fortunate, you are bringing on new crew members to meet heightened customer demand in 2022. And you are paying more dollars for that workforce. Their training has to match your investment or you're not getting true value for these important human assets.

So while you're booking a room for yourself, consider how valued members of your team could benefit from attending the WWETT Show or another wastewater industry event. You could supercharge these young workers' careers by immersing them in the WWETT Show experience. Between the learning opportunities, seeing the vast array of new equipment on the exhibit floor, and meeting other successful installer technicians, they will understand the great potential to be found in the world of onsite. When properly nurtured and encouraged, these workers could become the leaders to take your company to the next level.

IN THE CLASSROOM

With that in mind, I'm excited about the education sessions planned for the WWETT Show. Here's a brief rundown on a few of the seminars installers will find beneficial:

Drones: Endless Opportunities, with Jim Aanderud from the TUIT Group

Just like drone photography has been seeping into some of our System Profile features to give an overhead perspective on tank and drainfield designs, this aerial technology has a lot of potential to help the onsite industry. Among the uses, Aanderud will talk about pipeline inspections,

Let's face it, technology is moving at a blistering pace ... What better way to learn about these (new) technologies than through hands-on demonstrations by the folks who are creating the products?

easements and remote area mapping, infrastructure inspection, documenting work sites and emergency situations. The seminar will cover different types of drones, laws governing drone usage and exploring markets where drones may be useful.

25 Products and Tools That Will Get You Out of a Jam, with Michael Stephens, wastewater product manager for Valley Farms Supply

Stephens knows how challenging septic system repairs can be: “Ever stand over a problem scratching your head and saying, ‘How am I gonna fix that?’ I’ve struggled with those jobs in tight spots, with less than ideal conditions, and with piping and equipment that is no longer in a position to be maintained or repaired easily,” he says. So his seminar will identify difficult repair scenarios, how to choose the right tool for the job and show how to network with others in the industry to overcome onsite repair obstacles.

Successfully Designing for Graywater Reuse Systems, with Cory Lyon, business unit manager for Orenco Systems

As groundwater supplies dwindle in drought-stricken regions, recycling wastewater will become more important. State governments today are more willing to consider graywater systems as part of overall onsite wastewater treatment projects. Lyon will explain how graywater can be treated to acceptable levels for recycling for non-potable uses such as toilet flushing, cooling towers, water features and landscaping irrigation. A goal of his talk is to help installers understand the advantages and disadvantages of separating graywater from a primary waste stream.

NOWRA One-Day Installer Class, with Kevin Sherman, SeptiTech, and Dennis Hallahan, Allstate Septic Systems

Mark your calendars for Feb. 23 if anyone on your team needs to cover a lot of educational territory in the wastewater industry. This certification course will cover best practice standards for installers, including an introduction to onsite systems, safety practices, soil and site concepts, construction materials and techniques, effluent distribution, tanks, dosing systems and controls and advanced treatment systems. The program will “establish a benchmark for competency of installers and enhances the overall status of the onsite wastewater treatment profession,” according to a course description.

The Laws and Regulations Surrounding PPE and Coronavirus, with Travis Vance, partner at Fisher & Phillips LLP

A timely seminar as installers return to the WWETT Show after the pandemic, Vance will cover the responsibilities installing companies have to ensure a safe working environment, specifically in light of COVID-19. Topics to be covered include the three Congressional relief laws: the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act, the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Act and the CARES Act. Vance will stress that the pandemic’s influence on the workplace is not over. Further, the seminar will explain how to complete PPE and hazard assessments for onsite workplaces, review safety

training requirements and discuss safe work practices and guidance from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Centers for Disease Control.

The Principles of O&M in OWTS, with Kim Seipp, of High Plains Sanitation Service

Seipp will explain the principles of good operations and maintenance in all types of onsite systems. And the seminar is well timed for the emerging O&M market. “As systems become more complex, the need for oversight and maintenance is becoming more crucial,” she says. More and more, advanced onsite systems require regular attention, and installers can step in to provide that added service. Seipp will discuss the lifecycle of a variety of systems, the importance of effective communication with customers, and proper training and certification for service providers.

DON'T FORGET TO HAVE A LITTLE FUN

Some of the most memorable moments from a trade show happen outside of the classroom or the exhibit hall. It’s those chance meetings with other installer professionals that can lead to lifelong industry friendships. It’s gathering together with your team or colleagues over a cold beer or a dinner out at one of the many great bars and restaurants in downtown Indianapolis.

The WWETT Show is helping out with those social networking opportunities. You can attend planned mixers for attendees new to the wastewater industry, and for women working in the industry. There is the Indy Brew Bus Tour that runs after the exhibit hall closes, taking attendees around to sample craft beers at several breweries.

Over many years of attending the WWETT Show, installers have often told me they turned this working event into their favorite vacation of the year. Being able to mix work with pleasure shows how much our installer community enjoys being part of a dynamic wastewater industry. ▣

DROP US A LINE

Have a comment about an article you've seen in *Onsite Installer*? An experience from a job that you'd like to share? *Onsite Installer* would love to hear from you. Email comments and photos to editor@onsiteinstaller.com



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SITE AND SOIL

Determining Loading Rate

Many different soil characteristics contribute to determining the loading rate for an onsite system. The ultimate loading rate for a soil treatment area is based on soil and site conditions at several locations. This online article from Sara Heeger breaks down the different zones to consider.

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Overheard Online

"If you have an employee who's especially busy, try to alleviate their burden or at least ensure that they have a slower, quieter season as soon as possible."

– *Recognizing the Signs of Employee Burnout*

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SOIL LIMITATIONS

Tips for Plastic Limit Tests

Maintaining the natural condition of soil on a septic installation site is key to ensuring the system functions as it should. If considerable construction activity has caused smearing or compaction, then the ability of the soil to transmit liquid will be seriously reduced and failure is more likely. This article breaks down the why, when and how to run a plastic limit test during installation. Following these procedures will help to assure the system is long-term solution.

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PULL THE TRIGGER

When to Purchase vs. Rent

Sometimes renting equipment for a job is a good option; but there comes a time when making an outright purchase might make more sense for your business. How do you know when you'd be better off purchasing a piece of equipment versus renting it? This article lists four considerations to help make that decision.

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NOTHING BUT BLUE SKIES

Orlando Godinez switched careers because he liked the view from an excavator more than the view from his office window

By Ken Wysocky



Sepptic system installers who run across difficult excavation conditions will sympathize with what Orlando Godinez routinely faces as the owner of Godinez Septics in Austin, Texas.

About a third of the time, Godinez and his employees install systems in solid rock, either granite, dolomite or limestone that's indigenous to the Hill Country region around Austin. As a result, it can take up to two weeks to install a system and the process is difficult and labor-intensive, he says.

"I talk to people in other parts of the country who do two to three installations a week," says Godinez, 38. "When we hit rocky conditions, we can do only one in about two weeks, which includes pauses for inspections.

"I've actually been pushing local engineers to spec out shallower tanks to avoid as much drilling as possible, which saves us time and saves customers money on rock-drilling charges," he adds.

To excavate the rock, workers use a chisel attachment on the company's Caterpillar excavators.

"It's like a jackhammer, but on a larger scale," he explains.

Quick-coupling devices allow employees to efficiently change from the chisel attachment to a bucket attachment, needed to scoop up the rock debris.

Sometimes Godinez gets lucky and the rock breaks out smoothly in large chunks. Other times, the going is a lot tougher, with crews able to remove only inches of rock at a time. "Sometimes we have to hit the rock over and over again until it breaks," he notes. "It can be slow, laborious work."

As such, Godinez is happy when the initial digging on a job site reveals no rock. "When we hit soft loam, we're always pleasantly surprised," he says.

CAREER U-TURN

Hard work is nothing new to Godinez. He follows the example set by his father, Pedro Godinez, who's worked in the excavation industry for more than 50 years and now is a Godinez Septic employee.

Godinez grew up in the industry; he recalls his father filling an excavator bucket with water so Godinez could cool off in a "pool" on hot summer days in Texas.

Ironically enough, however, the elder Godinez initially discouraged his son from entering the excavation field.

"He didn't want my brothers and me to follow in his footsteps and work outdoors in the heat," Godinez says. "He felt we should get an education and get white-collar jobs."

So Godinez earned an associate's degree in general studies at Austin Community College, then embarked on a career in insurance and financial consulting.

"But I didn't like being cooped up in an office — stuck indoors in one place all day," he says. "After years of doing that, it kind of wore me out. I also wanted more control over my career."

So against his father's wishes, Godinez established Godinez Septics in 2014.

"It didn't pan out the way my father wanted it,

"He didn't want my brothers and me to follow in his footsteps and work outdoors in the heat. He felt we should get an education and get white-collar jobs. ... **But I didn't like being cooped up in an office — stuck indoors in one place all day.**"

Orlando Godinez



Orlando Godinez, top center, with technician Alex Aguilar-Murillo, left, lead technician John Ibarra, right, and father Pedro Godinez on a job site in Austin, Texas. They are shown with a Cat excavator. (Photos by Ethan Rocks)

but he's happy about it now," he says. "And I don't regret being initially talked out of joining the excavation industry because my other jobs helped me build a good foundation for the administrative side of my business and helped establish a lot of business connections.

"Also, since I'm a relative newcomer to the industry, I look at things with a totally different take."

FROM THE GROUND UP

Godinez started out by doing small system repairs and pumping septic tanks while also working at a part-time job until the new business was firmly established.

"We started out very small and niche-oriented," he says. "We basically started from scratch — an unknown company in a competitive market. It was just me, my brother, Pedro and a used pump truck."



Godinez Septics Inc.

Austin, Texas



- Owner:** Orlando Godinez
- Founded:** 2014
- Employees:** 5
- Service area:** 25-mile radius around Austin
- Specialties:** Septic system installation and repair, septic pumping
- Website:** www.goseptics.com

A LARGE SYSTEM TESTED THEIR SKILLS

It seems like every installer has a memorable project — one that tests their mettle in many ways. For Orlando Godinez, the unforgettable project was the installation of a low-pressure dosing system at a roughly \$5 million, more than 8,000-square-foot home.

The installation by Godinez Septics was complicated because along with the huge house, the 10-acre property featured a detached game room, a guesthouse, a tennis court and a swimming pool. “The homeowner used every available bit of property,” Godinez says.

The system consisted of a 1,750-gallon concrete waste tank and a 1,000-gallon concrete pump tank. Waste gravity-feeds into the waste tank via three lines — one from each structure. The tanks had to be set 11 feet deep to allow waste to flow from the structures, especially the game room, which is farthest away from the tanks at 120 feet, he explains.

That, in turn, required use of load-bearing traffic lids on the tanks to handle the weight of about 4 feet of topsoil. “The one saving grace was that the soil was soft, not solid rock, which we frequently encounter,” he notes. “But the depth of the excavation for the tanks almost maxed out the reach of our Caterpillar 304 mini-excavator.”

The leachfield consisted of both gravel beds and plastic leaching chambers from Infiltrator Water Technologies. “Engineers here design systems using gravel more than leaching chambers for low-pressure dosing systems, but lately we see more of them spec'ing chambers,” Godinez says.

In all, the system featured 180 feet of 4-inch-diameter, Schedule 80 PVC pipe to tie the buildings into the waste tank, then 200 feet of 2-inch-diameter Schedule 80 PVC for the supply lines to the leachfield. The thicker, stronger Schedule 80 pipe was needed because two of the sewer lines passed very close to a tennis court and less than 5 feet away from the concrete slab foundation of the guest house, he says.

Furthermore, the sewer line from the main house to the waste tank had to cross under a pool waterline — another reason for the deeper-than-usual tank depth.

“We had to put cement-stabilized sand under and above the sewer line and separate the two lines by 24 inches,” Godinez explains.

It took about a year to completely install the system because Godinez crews often had to pause for weeks at a time to accommodate other construction work occurring at the same time.

Toward the end of the project, one last challenge emerged. When Godinez employees arrived at the construction site after a few days' absence, they discovered a low-hanging arch had been built to connect the house with a nearby utility shed — right over the only access point to the septic system installation area.

The timing was bad because a truck scheduled to deliver the waste and pump tanks that day couldn't fit under the arch.

“That was the icing on the cake,” Godinez says with a laugh. “But luckily there was no concrete poured yet under the arch, so we had to hurry up and remove enough soil from below the arch to give the tank-delivery truck clearance.

“That was one of many reasons why I will never forget this particular job,” he adds. “There were many lessons learned.”

But bolstered by some of his father's business contacts and a digital marketing program including a website and social media — Facebook and Instagram — the business slowly grew.

“We didn't impose a trip charge to do estimates for customers, which I believed helped us get business because more established companies charged minimum fees just to show up,” he explains. “So that put us in front of other companies when customers shopped around.”

“We're pretty picky about who we bring on board because it's our reputation that's on the line. Employees don't necessarily need a lot of experience — we can teach them what they need to know. But they have to be willing to work hard.”

Orlando Godinez

Godinez also used contacts he'd established in the insurance industry to get work from real estate agents needing septic system inspections and repairs prior to sales.

DIGGING IN

Godinez's father joined the company in 2017, which allowed Godinez to fulfill his goal of installing septic systems. “It always was my goal to branch out into more than just pumping and small repairs,” he says.

“It was my brother's idea to start out with pumping because there was a strong need for it,” he explains. “Plus it was a good way to get our name out there in front of as many people as possible.

“It was a little bit of a different approach, but it was a good way to gain entry into the installation market, once we had the equipment and the expertise,” he continues. “Installations are my favorite thing to do.”

Furthermore, Godinez's brother — who no longer works for the company — had experience pumping septic tanks. In addition, doing pumping first required a less significant investment than buying excavation and other equipment, he points out.

INVEST FOR PRODUCTIVITY

The company has increased its sales revenue by about 40% each year since it was established, Godinez says.

“We've been blessed to have a lot of repeat business and word-of-mouth referrals, which enabled us to reduce advertising costs,” he explains. “We always invite people to share their experiences by writing reviews on social media platforms. The three biggest growth factors are word-of-mouth referrals, online reviews and our focus on customer service — following through on what we say we're going to do.”





◀ Orlando Godinez, right, works with technician Alex Aguilar-Murillo, left, and lead technician John Ibarra, background, to install chambers from Infiltrator Water Technologies.

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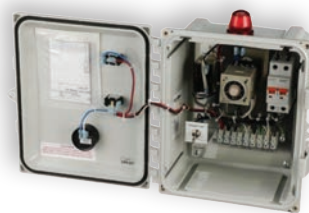
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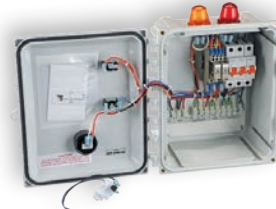
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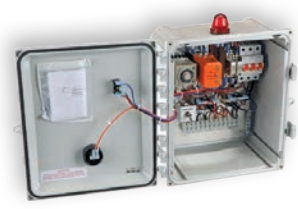
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Investments in equipment also aided growth. Today the company owns a vacuum truck built out by Best Enterprises on a 2020 Peterbilt 337 equipped with a 2,300-gallon, stainless steel tank and a Masport Hydra vacuum pump (407 cfm).

For excavating, the company relies on Caterpillar equipment, including six tractors, three excavators, a mini-excavator and two skid-steers. All three excavators have a thumb grapple for brush/tree removal.

In addition, the company owns a Ford F-750 dump truck.

A HOT MARKET

Austin is at the center of a regional real estate building boom, which also has driven the company's growth. Godinez says about half of the company's system installations are for new homes and the rest are replacing failing systems at existing homes.

"We installed 13 systems in 2019 and 26 in 2020," he says. He expected to nearly double the number again in 2021. The company typically installs more compact aerobic drip systems to accommodate a trend toward bigger houses on smaller lots.

"People want a house, a guesthouse and a pool, all on a half- or quarter-acre lot," he explains. "So a lot of the time we put in aerobic drip systems in front or side yards — wherever we can squeeze in a leachfield. Sometimes you have to be creative."

Godinez prefers Aqua Aire aerobic treatment units from Ecological Tanks, Infiltrator Water Technologies products and pumps from Ashland Pump.

Godinez expects demand for advanced treatment systems to increase, due to trends toward stricter effluent-treatment guidelines, stemming from Austin's proximity to lakes, rivers and the massive Edwards Aquifer, one of the world's largest artesian aquifers.

"The population boom will bring in even more homes, which I feel will require more use of advanced treatment systems," he says.

"Every time we get in front of someone, whether it be for pumping, maintenance, repairs or inspections, it's an opportunity to show what we can do. It's what keeps the pipeline full for installation work."

Orlando Godinez



▲ Orlando Godinez

HIRING CHALLENGES

While Godinez expects his company will continue to grow, he also realizes difficulties in finding quality employees can hamper business expansion. To contend with that problem, he tries to focus on fewer projects with higher profit margins as opposed to doing more lower-margin projects.

As a result, the company focuses on specialty projects that can be handled with existing staff — clients with expensive lakeside properties situated on challenging lots in terms of size and steep grades.



»» The crew of Godinez Septics installs an onsite system in Austin, Texas.

“Those kinds of projects might take twice as long to complete, but we can charge a premium for them,” he notes. “We’re fortunate to live in an area where clients that want the best service are willing to pay top dollar for quality work.”

As he finds more employees, the company then could shift toward a more volume-oriented business model, he explains.

“We’re pretty picky about who we bring on board because it’s our reputation that’s on the line,” he says. “Employees don’t necessarily need a lot of experience — we can teach them what they need to know. But they have to be willing to work hard.”

“We’ve been very fortunate in finding those kind of people through our friends and family — people like me who wanted a career change,” he continues. “We also use quality part-time workers as needed.”

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

When asked what he sees for his company, say, five years down the road, Godinez says he envisions a highly skilled team of installation technicians taking on the most challenging projects, with pumping and repair work continuing to serve as entrees to those jobs.

“Every time we get in front of someone, whether it be for pumping, maintenance, repairs or inspections, it’s an opportunity to show what we can do,” he says. “It’s what keeps the pipeline full for installation work.”

Whether further growth occurs or not, Godinez knows one thing for sure: Leaving the white-collar world behind was the right move — even if it wasn’t what his father initially wanted.

“I really enjoy being able to work with my family,” he says. “And I love that there never seems to be a dull moment in this business. I’ve never regretted leaving that cozy office job.” ▣

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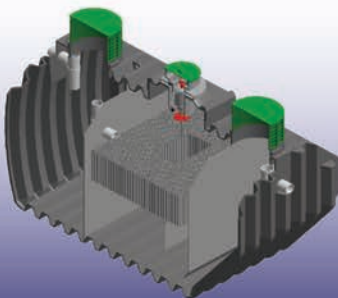
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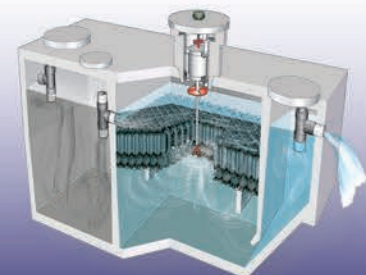
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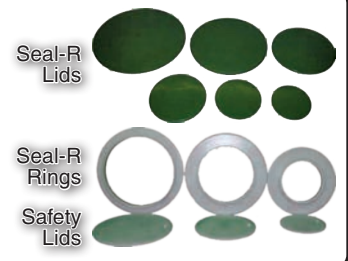
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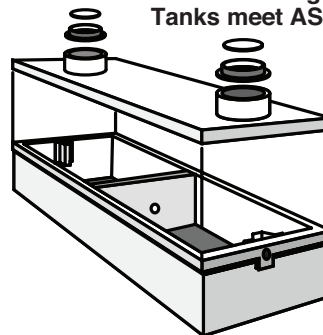
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Party Houses or Vacation Properties May Need Excess Capacity

If your homeowner is going to routinely exceed daily water use guidelines, you might want to consider a surge tank to avoid messy overloads

By Jim Anderson and Dave Gustafson

Some readers have recently asked whether they should be concerned about their systems ability to handle peak water-use events. Examples of large water-use events provided were large parties over a weekend, additional guests staying for a period of a week or more, and vacation rentals of the home.

Each of these examples may or may not require some type of flow equalization depending on system size, configuration and operation. As we are all aware, our systems are designed based on an estimated daily flow. For a three-bedroom residence estimated flow is around 450 gpd. Generally, design numbers give a little cushion to allow for variation in use between residences based on how the occupants use water.

We all should realize water is not used uniformly during the day. Most of the load or peak flows from a typical residence occur during a couple of short periods during the day. Usually in the morning (think breakfast, getting ready for work or school) and in the evening (dinner, dishwashing, showers). This variability in flow if large enough can create problems with hydraulic overloads in gravity-fed systems, pushing solids through the system and creating plugging in the soil treatment area.

The flow equalization or surge tank is designed to hold at least twice the normal daily flow and then dose it over the course of more than a single day. **The advantage ... is that ... excessive flow can be spread out over times when the residence is not occupied.**

In pressure systems or systems with dosing tanks and pumps, the flow is somewhat regulated. That's because flow goes into some type of dosing tank and is pumped periodically through the day. But if the system is set up to dose on demand rather than being regulated by a timer, high flow can still create similar problems.

DAILY PEAKS

In a conventional septic tank, gravity flow to drop box, then to sewage treatment trenches is designed to handle typical daily peaks by sizing the septic tank to provide two days of retention time. For the three-bedroom

house mentioned earlier, a septic tank should be at least 900 gallons. Most codes provide for a minimum-sized septic tank of 1,000 gallons. During the morning and evening peaks up to 100 gallons may be delivered to the system in an hour.

Some of the flow is attenuated and spread out just by running through the plumbing and the septic tank so it all does not hit the sewage trenches immediately. Assuming all the trenches are not full to overflowing, the flow is spread over the trench. Bottom line is these types of hydraulic loads are designed into the system.

One concern with the scenario above: During peak flows there may be a tendency to push additional solids through the tank to the sewage treatment area. This has led to most states now requiring installation of effluent screens at the outlet of the septic tank. This prevents larger solids or materials that should not be in the tank to begin with from moving downstream. While this is not a cure-all it does help maintain infiltration capacity in the soil. The effluent filter will need to be cleaned periodically to keep from totally plugging, causing sewage to back up into the house. If there is an effluent filter, the tank should have a high-water alarm to alert the homeowner that the effluent screen is plugged.

The types of events or activities described by the readers do not fit within the normal use patterns of a residence and require additional design and installation consideration based on the frequency of events and how average daily sewage flow may be increased and building in the ability to handle especially large events.

PARTY TIME

As indicated above, moving from gravity flow to low pressure trenches, at-grade or mound systems will spread the flow out more uniformly in both space (soil treatment area) and time throughout the day. Increasing dose tank capacity and using a timer to spread flow throughout the day will address occasional large parties and periodic increased use from guests. (However, people have told us in certain areas of the country they really know how to party, and water-use events of several thousand gallons a day are not unusual.)

For very large parties and other situations where the house is periodically filled to overflowing, such as happens in a vacation rental property, an additional component should be added and an increase in septic tank capacity and the size of the soil treatment area may be necessary.

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A flow equalization tank can be added. This is sometimes called a surge tank. The purpose of the tank is to provide storage of effluent and it uses timed dosing to deliver effluent to the rest of the system over a period of several days. It is like any other dosing tank where it has a submerged pump and provides a storage volume based on estimated peak daily volumes and some additional storage space to allow time to service the pump in case of a problem.

Typically, the flow equalization or surge tank is designed to hold at least twice the normal daily flow and then dose it over the course of more than a single day. The advantage, of course, is that through use of a timer, excessive flow can be spread out over times when the residence is not occupied or at least during times of less flow. □



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At-Grade Tank Access Should Be the Law of the Land

New Hampshire wastewater pro Larry Maznek says one change in regulations will make onsite system maintenance easier

Compiled by Betty Dageforde



Larry Maznek

owner/operator with my wife Patrice. I'm a septic designer, evaluator, pumper and installer.

Business: Maznek Septic Service, Bedford, New Hampshire

Age: 61

Years in the industry: 10

Services we offer: Pumping of septic systems and grease traps, evaluations and repairs. We stopped doing installations and design. I just don't have time.

Association involvement:

I am the acting president of the New Hampshire Association of Septage Haulers. I'm also on the board of the Granite State Onsite Wastewater Association (formerly Granite State Designers and Installers Association). I've been a member of both associations for 10 years.

Benefits of belonging to the association:

It enables me to stay current with regulations and trends. And you stay connected with people. When we meet in person, it is interactive and you'd get ideas. People tell you things they are doing differently.

Biggest issue facing your association right now:

Lack of membership and participation. Most of the business owners are older. But it's starting to turn around with some younger people coming in, which is a good thing. The younger folks just get so busy with getting their businesses going and keeping their families going; they don't have time to get involved with the organizations.

Our crew includes:

Patrice is the office administrator. Joyce Beddard is our bookkeeper and helps Patrice when we're busy. Greg Scott is our service technician. Our other technician, Danny Driscoll, is in the process of getting his commercial driver's license.

Typical day on the job:

We start at 7 a.m. I fill in where needed. I do evaluations and repairs with Danny. And when needed I get into a pump truck and help Greg with the routes. At the end of the day, I do the scheduling and paperwork. The office is at the house but our trucks are stored at a storage facility so I go there and get the paperwork from Greg's truck and bring him the next day's paperwork so he has it when he gets in in the morning. Greg and I are sharing emergency calls — one week I'm on, the following week he's on.

The job I'll never forget:

A customer said sewage was coming out of the ground over his leach field. It looked like cottage cheese. He had a pump-up system. I dug down to the D-box. It was a butterfly system and it was all full of this creamy cottage cheese. The field was plugged. I dug an observation hole on each side of the stone and pipe field and noticed the pipes had this white goo coming out. But it wasn't really in the stone, it was just plugging up the pipes. I went down to the pump chamber and it was all full of that white goo. The whole septic tank, pump chamber and field were just plugged. It turns out, one of the people in the home was bulimic. We cleaned it all out, pressure washed the pump chamber, opened up the D-box and jetted out both sides of the field. It's been a few years and everything's still running. We saved the field and maybe alerted the owner to this person being ill.

My favorite piece of equipment:

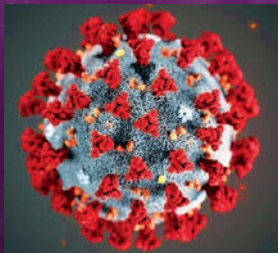
The pump trucks and the Crust Buster are hand in hand on that. I have a 2005 Peterbilt built out by Amthor International with a 4,100-gallon steel tank and National Vacuum Equipment pump. It was the 2015 Classy Truck of

continued >>

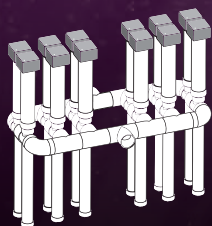


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SNAPSHOT

➤ This is Maznek's 2015 Peterbilt vacuum truck from Pik Rite with a 4,600-gallon steel tank and Masport pump.



the Year. It was a roll-off and when I used to install I'd take the drum off and use it as a dump truck. It really kept me going. My other vacuum truck is a 2015 Peterbilt with a 4,600-gallon steel tank and Masport pump built out by Pik Rite. They both carry Crust Busters. We use those on every tank to stir the sludge off the bottom and then pump it down. It does a better job. You don't have to backflush. People are impressed with it when they see it operating.

Most challenging site I've worked on:

A "co-petitor" and I had started working on a field, but it was in March and we got caught in a thaw. The whole place just turned to mud. I was running his mini-excavator and he was running his 30-ton excavator. The field was dry but getting from the street to the field was so muddy the units were sinking into it. The owners had taken down some trees for us to get in there and we used those to make a path. We couldn't run a dump truck or a skid-steer in there, so we had to run the 30-ton excavator back and forth with the stone and dirt. It took us an extra two days to finish.

Oops, I wish I could take this one back:

A customer had a plug from the tank to the house. I had a metal snake and was pushing it back and forth. I always roll out the snake from the tank to the home, so I know just about how much. I used the snake and it just kept going and going. Finally I got about 10 feet more than what I thought I would need. I pulled it out and asked the client to flush the toilet. I heard the flush, but no water came. I had her flush again and run everything, but I couldn't get any water.

Come to find out, I broke through the PVC cap on the cleanout inside the home and all the water went down into their basement. They had drywall covering the cleanout so it went through the cleanout, through the drywall. But the drywall actually helped us because the water wasn't spraying out, it was just running in that little box they had that enclosed the pipe. They had to redo the drywall. But I got the clog cleared!

The craziest question I've been asked by a customer:

It was January or February when a customer called and wanted us to pump his tank. I had to jackhammer through the frost to get to it. I asked the gentleman if there wasn't a problem, why he had us there that day. He said, "I thought wintertime was the best time to pump because you wouldn't smell it." I enlightened him.

If I could change one industry regulation, it would be:

Covers to grade on all chambers. When we get emergency calls and we don't know where the tank is, "this general area" doesn't cut it when you're breaking frost with a jackhammer. You try with a magnetic detector but it's

only getting you in the ballpark and you're picking up that rebar. And a lot of covers come with plastic handles. You go in the home, look where it leaves. You open up the drain and put a camera out. And if it's backed up, we can't use the camera because as soon as you take the clean-out off all the sewage is coming in the house. It's a lot of trouble and you're just digging up lawns and wasting time while people are in the house waiting to flush the toilet. Most of the designers now design with covers to grade but it should be code. NHASH is trying to get that through with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services.

Best piece of small business advice I've heard:

Do it right or don't do it at all. That was my dad's saying.

If I wasn't working in the wastewater industry, I would:

I was a union carpenter for 32 years, a foreman. I almost became a crane operator so if I wasn't doing this I'd probably be doing that. There's a lot of operating a crane. You've got to think of your weights, distance, reach. It's not just pulling levers and pushing buttons. Now they've got computers on the bigger ones, the sky cranes. Those are the ones I would have liked to have been on, at the top of buildings.

Crystal ball time - This is my outlook for the wastewater industry:

A hot button right now in New Hampshire is PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), a molecule found in floor waxes, some detergents, Teflon and other products, a manmade substance that does not break down. If it gets to a high enough level, it could cause cancer, birth defects and other ailments. The wastewater treatment plants here that land-apply solid waste for fertilizer can't take it if it's full of PFAS. So instead of selling it, you have to truck it farther and bring it to a landfill and pay to get rid of it. I and another fellow from NHASH went to some DES meetings on this. There were also delegates from Massachusetts, Vermont and Maine. They're trying to educate people not to put these products into their septic systems. □

Would you like to see someone in your state or provincial wastewater trade association profiled in Snapshot?

Send your suggestions to Jim Kneiszel at editor@onsiteinstaller.com.



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SYSTEM PROFILE



Bringing Summer Camp Systems Back to Clean and Efficient Service

Indiana installers band together to provide charity system upgrades valued at \$250,000

By David Steinkraus

Every year, the Indiana Onsite Wastewater Professionals Association completes a charity project. They pick a person or organization that would have a hard time affording onsite work, and they do the job for free.

In 2020, IOWPA members worked for Camp Millhouse, an 84-year-old organization that provides summer camps for adults and children with special needs.

“Each one of our septic has a little something wrong with it,” says Diana Breden, executive director of the camp.

None of them were failing or causing a hazard when IOWPA came in, she adds. To maintain accreditation with the American Camp Association, she says, every spring all the camp’s tanks are pumped and inspected. But there are a lot of them.

There were 10 wastewater systems on the property before the IOWPA project. Three cabins were served by one system, and every other building had its own system. And the systems are old.

▲ A series of splitter boxes receives water from the pump tank about 300 feet away and distributes it to the two Presby beds at Camp Millhouse. Sam McAfee and Micah Gilley work on the distribution boxes while Brett Davis, right, St. Joseph County Health Department, checks work. (Photos courtesy of the Indiana Onsite Wastewater Professionals Association)



◀◀ The drainfield site was on wooded ground on the Camp Millhouse property. About two weeks before installation, Jon Houseknecht and his son Cody came in and cleared small trees and brush.

✔ Tanks for wastewater from the main building at Camp Millhouse were set next to the pool. Elevations allowed the first part of the system to run by gravity.



System Profile

Location: South Bend, Indiana

Facility served: Summer camp

Designer: Meade Septic Design, Inc., Goshen, Indiana

Installer: Sunset Septic, La Porte, Indiana

Type of system: Septic tanks with Presby drainfield

Site conditions: Sandy loam

Hydraulic capacity: 2,400 gpd

“There were some small metal tanks. That’s how old they were,” says Jon Houseknecht of Sunset Septic in La Porte, Indiana. His company spearheaded the installation.

That type of tank dates to the 1940s and ’50s, Houseknecht says. Breden says the pool was installed in 1950, and the camp has occupied its present site, about 9 miles from South Bend, Indiana, since 1940.

“Years ago I remember a customer who had a metal tank in the ground, and he was driving his lawnmower across, and he says it felt like it was squishy,” Houseknecht says. He probed for the tank, and his probe went right through the top. “These metal tanks are so old, and they’ve gotten so thin over years of use, and corroded, so it’s a safety issue.” Three metal tanks were pulled out and collapsed.

The new system isn’t treating all wastewater at the camp, but it does handle the three main buildings: the lodge where campers gather and where the camp kitchen is located, the pool house, and the medical center where nurses are on duty 24/7 when campers are in residence. The project stopped short of a full new system for the camp because of the time that would have been required, Houseknecht says. But the new system connects to buildings producing most of the camp’s wastewater. And, Breden says, the new system has more capacity than the systems it replaced.

Camp Millhouse is open year-round, but hosts

campers during only spring, summer and fall. About 14 campers come for spring and fall weekends. During summer, there are up to 60 campers per week for six one-week sessions. In winter only the office is open, and that’s when the camp staff plan for the coming year.

System flows

From the lodge building, wastewater emerges in two 4-inch Schedule 40 PVC pipes. One serves the kitchen, and the other the rest of the lodge. Kitchen wastewater enters a 1,500-gallon concrete tank that serves as a grease trap and then joins other wastewater in a 2,000-gallon septic tank. A second 2,000-gallon tank is connected in series. These provide anaerobic treatment and flow equalization, and also receive wastewater from a nearby cabin.

From there water flows about 150 feet to another 2,000-gallon septic tank and then through a Polylok filter into a 2,000-gallon pump tank with duplex Zoeller model 153 pumps discharging into a common force main.

This second set of tanks also receives wastewater from the pool house and the health care center on the north side of the pool.

Because of the slight elevation of the main building, the first part of the system works by gravity.

From the pump tank, the 2-inch force main runs about 330 feet to a set of splitter boxes between two Presby Advanced Enviro-Septic Beds (Infiltrator Water Technologies). Each bed is about 42 feet by 38.5 feet for

“What IOWPA did for us is just beyond amazing. It ended up not costing us anything but some pizzas and sandwiches. We fed them every day they were here.”

Diana Breden

SYSTEM PROFILE



◀ Two Presby beds, each with 560 linear feet of Presby pipe, dispose of effluent from the Camp Millhouse system. Sam McAfee is raking sand while others work on the Presby pipe.

1,617 square feet of disposal area, and each bed holds 560 linear feet of Presby pipe. Dosing is 200 gallons per dose with up to 12 doses per day for the maximum 2,400 gpd capacity, and is controlled by a panel at the pump tank.

Beneath the beds are 6 inches of sand. On top is 12 inches of cover crowned to shed rain.

To do the job, Houseknecht and his team brought along their 2007 John Deere 135D excavator and 2018 John Deere 317G skid-steer. Another volunteer worker brought a Bobcat 770 skid-steer and someone else brought a smaller Bobcat excavator.



Advance planning

It was a challenge figuring out where the tanks should go because there were several sources of wastewater scattered around the camp, says Stuart Meade of Meade Septic Design in Goshen, Indiana. He designed the system for the camp. What helped was gathering the main installers on the property and discussing problems and how to avoid them, he says.

Planning for the project started well before the installation. The neighboring landowner, Reith-Riley Construction, of South Bend, gave permission for trucks to cross its land, and the farmer renting the land agreed not to plant part of his corn crop so trucks would be able to haul in supplies.

“These metal tanks are so old, and they’ve gotten so thin over years of use, and corroded, so it’s a safety issue.”

Jon Housknecht

▲ On the first day of the Camp Millhouse project, this was the group who came out to volunteer or, in the case of public officials, provide guidance. From left are Kevin Hinkle, Meade Septic Design; Brett Davis, environmental health assistant director, St. Joseph County; Manass Hochstetler, Advanced Home Inspections of Elkhart County; Cody Houseknecht, Sunset Septic & Excavating; Stuart Meade, Meade Septic Design; Jon Houseknecht, Sunset Septic & Excavating; Don Schnoebelen, Schnoebelen Soil Consulting; L.A. Brown, L.A. Brown Co.; Tim Monaghan, Soil Solutions; Micha Gilly, L.A. Brown Co.; Dave Ortel, Indiana State Department of Health; Matt Johnson, Infiltrator Water Technologies; Doug Williamson, Indiana State Department of Health; and Greg Inman, Infiltrator Water Technologies.

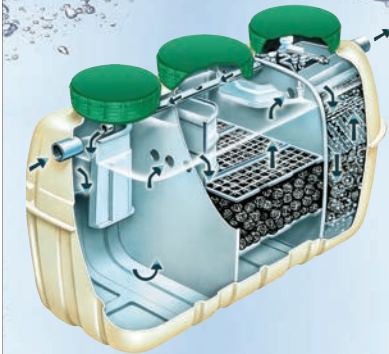
Reith-Riley also donated about 400 yards of sand for the Presby bed.

Early in 2020, Houseknecht and his son, Cody, cleared the drainfield site of small trees and shrubs. In the fall, about two weeks before installation, a volunteer brought in his skid-steer with a brush mower and cut down all the summer foliage that would interfere with work, Houseknecht says.

Campers move around on golf cart paths. To preserve those, IOWPA collected donations to have a crew directionally bore under the paths for the force main from the pump tank to the Presby beds, he says.

Installation itself became a field day for IOWPA. Members volunteered to help with the installation. “We asked for help because we knew we couldn’t do it ourselves,” Houseknecht says. Others could come to learn about the Presby system. More than 20 people volunteered their time and services for

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the project in addition to 18 contractors. Several suppliers donated material or services. IOWPA collected donations, too, totaling about \$5,000, Houseknecht says.

For about 25 years, until 2017, the camp leased its land from another nonprofit, Breden says. Because of the lease, and friction between the organizations, there was no incentive to make capital improvements, she says.

This was the perfect IOWPA project, Meade says, because it did something very good for some people who need the help.

"I'm a summer camp guy," Meade says. "I went to summer camp as a kid. I had an internship in college as a nature director. I just love summer camp."

Installed as a commercial system, this job would have cost about \$250,000, Houseknecht says. It would have taken the camp a long time to come up with the money for onsite repairs, Breden says. Families pay only \$600 per camper, and the rest of the \$1,300 fee is subsidized through donations. In addition, the camp is trying to raise \$1.2 million to rebuild the 81-year-old lodge, the only place with air conditioning, with a kitchen, and where people can gather in bad weather, she says.

"What IOWPA did for us is just beyond amazing," Breden says. "It ended up not costing us anything but some pizzas and sandwiches. We fed them every day they were here." □

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New Degree Program Suggested as Way to Solve Onsite Regulator Shortage in North Carolina

By David Steinkraus

Onsite companies contend with a labor shortage, but so do some health departments. And some of them have a plan to fix the problem.

A group of health departments in North Carolina are pushing for a two-year degree program to train environmental health specialists, reported *The Pilot* of Southern Pines, North Carolina. To become a specialist, state law currently requires a four-year degree, an internship and passing state and local exams.

The two-year program would be developed in partnership with universities and would focus on courses about onsite wastewater and water. People completing the program would be able to work in limited ways for local health departments and could take more courses in order to fill more advanced jobs.

Robert Wittmann, director of the Moore County Health Department, told the county board of commissioners that health directors from around the state intend to petition North Carolina's General Assembly to approve the two-year alternative.

The shortage of environmental health specialists has continued for decades, he said, and that shortage affects the building industry, the economy and public health.

Alabama

The U.S. Justice Department recently opened an environmental investigation because of the lack of onsite service in Lowndes County. Specifically, the department said it would investigate the wastewater disposal and infectious disease programs of the Alabama Department of Public Health and the Lowndes County Health Department, according to a press release. The investigation will examine whether the programs operate in a way that discriminates against Black residents of the county and causes a greater risk of waterborne diseases such as hookworm.

"Sanitation is a basic human need, and no one in the United States should be exposed to risk of illness and other serious harm because of inadequate access to safe and effective sewage management," Kristen Clarke, assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, said in the press release.

A 2018 article by *Southerly* magazine reported that Lowndes County, and other economically stressed areas, have experienced surges in tropical diseases such as hookworm and *Toxocara*.

Virginia

The Clarke County Board of Supervisors is considering changes to its onsite ordinance that would ban community systems among other modifications. Alison Teetor, the county's natural resources planner, told supervisors that "mass drainfields" used for condominiums, subdivisions

and shopping centers are too difficult to install because of soil limitations. The recommendation is to ban them, reported *The Winchester Star*.

She said the most significant recommendation for the rule revision would be requiring the Lord Fairfax Health Department to inspect all soils and siting for onsite systems. Inspections would also be required for any maintenance that includes replacement of building sewers, distribution boxes, conveyance lines and header pipes. The health district is agreeable to those changes, she said.

Also, the minimum depth for alternative systems would be reduced to 3 inches from 10. Teetor said some systems do not work well at the greater depth.

Oregon

Homeowners and small businesses may again apply for part of a \$2 million state loan program to repair or replace failing onsite systems. Funding for the program ran out in June 2020, but the Legislature authorized more money earlier this year, said news reports.

The low-interest loans will cover all costs for permitting, design and installation, and may also cover continuing maintenance costs. Interest rates vary based on the income of the borrower, and loans are also available to people without perfect credit.

New York

The Lake George Park Commission is working on a rule that would create a septic tank inspection program affecting at least 3,400 properties in the basin of Lake George.

The commission is still months away from finalizing anything, reported the *Adirondack Explorer*, but commissioners are thinking that inspections could be required every five years, and there would be an annual fee of about \$50.

It is not certain who will manage inspections, which properties will be affected by new rules or how local governments and the commission would handle an expected boom in requests to repair or replace failing systems.

There are more than 6,000 septic systems within Lake George Park, which consists of the lake and its drainage basins. The 3,400 systems targeted by the commission are within 500 feet of the lake or 100 feet of a stream feeding the lake. As a state agency, the commission has broad authority to address problems in the lake basin, and in recent years some parts of the lake have been plagued by algae blooms.

Several municipalities around the lake have already passed rules requiring inspections of onsite systems.

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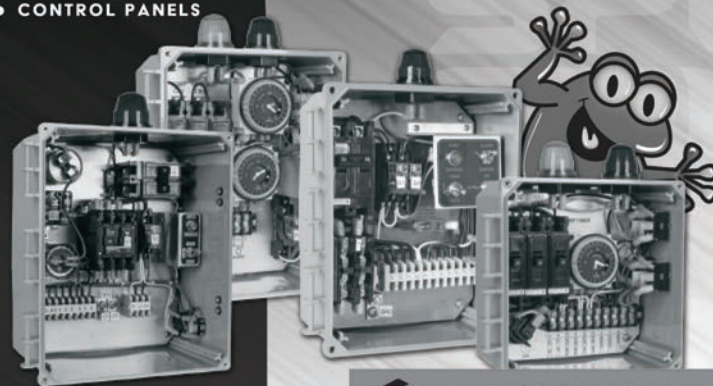
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Europe

A survey of people in three nations found less resistance to the idea of recycled water use than researchers expected.

In the Netherlands, 75% of respondents favored reusing water for drinking. In Spain 73% favored the idea, and in the United Kingdom 67% were in favor.

Using recycled water to grow food was more favored with 85% of people in Spain and 74% of those in the United Kingdom approving. In the Netherlands 75% approved, reported KWR Water Research Institute.

Opinions came from a poll of more than 2,500 people in those three countries by Cranfield University in the United Kingdom. □

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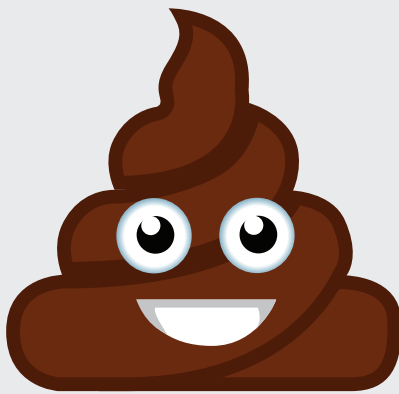
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INDUSTRY NEWS

Franklin Electric names new business unit directors

Franklin Electric announced personnel moves and additions within its water systems sales team. Travis Bradley has been promoted to business unit director of industrial and engineered systems. Filling Bradley's previous position, Andrew Schwarze has joined the organization as business unit director of groundwater distributors. Both will be responsible for directing Franklin Electric's product development, sales and support efforts throughout the United States and Canada.



Andrew Schwarze



Travis Bradley



From left to right: Peter Cunningham, chief operating officer; David Williams, director of engineering; Randall Waldron, vice president of sales and marketing; Robyn Brookhart, president and CEO; Dennis Burke, chief financial officer; Don Cunningham, manufacturing manager; and Charlie Cook, chairman of the board.

Liberty Pumps holds ground-breaking at new center

Liberty Pumps hosted a ground-breaking celebration at the site of its materials center in Bergen, New York. State and local partners as well as Liberty employees attended the event. The 107,000-square-foot expansion will provide additional warehousing and added manufacturing space. It is anticipated to support 30 additional jobs at the family- and employee-owned manufacturer. This will be the third expansion for the company since 2000. Upon completion, Liberty will have approximately 350,000 square feet of facilities at its corporate campus in New York.

SJE acquires Ohio Electric Control

SJE has purchased Ohio Electric Control. Located near SJE's existing facility in Ashland, Ohio, OEC brings to the partnership expertise in control solutions and strong customer relationships, according to SJE.

Through the purchase, SJE will offer additional technical resources and manufacturing capabilities that will augment OEC's current capacity and provide access to a broader product offering, the company said in a press release. □



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PRODUCT NEWS

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Alarm system touts easy installation, no buried wires

By Craig Mandli

Flooding and sewage backup caused by septic system pump failure can cost a homeowner thousands of dollars in repair and cleanup costs. If the issue is caught early, those costs can typically be avoided. The Xpert Alert RF alarm system from SJE Rhombus is designed to help do that.

The RF system includes an Xpert Alert alarm, a receiver module which attaches to the indoor alarm, and a panel module installed into the outdoor control panel. The receiver and panel modules wirelessly connect the outdoor control panel with an indoor alarm. When the control panel has an alarm condition, it activates the panel module through its auxiliary alarm contacts and sends a radio signal to the receiver module to activate the indoor alarm, alerting the homeowner of the alarm condition.

"As an add-on to an existing installation, the need to run wires into the home is eliminated, saving labor and time," says Roger Saba, SJE Rhombus product manager. "There is no need to dig another trench to bury a cable into the home."

The wireless design makes this an easy-to-install system ideal for residential applications, including lift pump chambers, holding tanks, sewage, agricultural and other water applications, according to Saba. The compact design of the panel module fits conveniently into most control panel enclosures and includes a wiring harness. For control panel enclosures with limited space, it is also available in a NEMA 4X watertight configuration.

"We are giving the homeowner, HOA or municipality the ability to have an early warning to a problem," Saba says. "Once the fault condition is activated, the Xpert Alert can notify the authorized person or company via email or SMS."

The alarm includes two sensor inputs; one is utilized for the RF receiver module; one is available for monitoring a liquid level condition. LoRa radio technology allows for up to a 200-foot communication range. "We are confident it will be reliable to 200 feet through an external wall above grade," Saba says. "For onsite applications we give the pumpers early warnings, as they too will receive notifications so they can plan their routes based on customer needs and location, solving the problem by adding an alarm to an existing system." 888-342-5753; www.sjerhombus.com □



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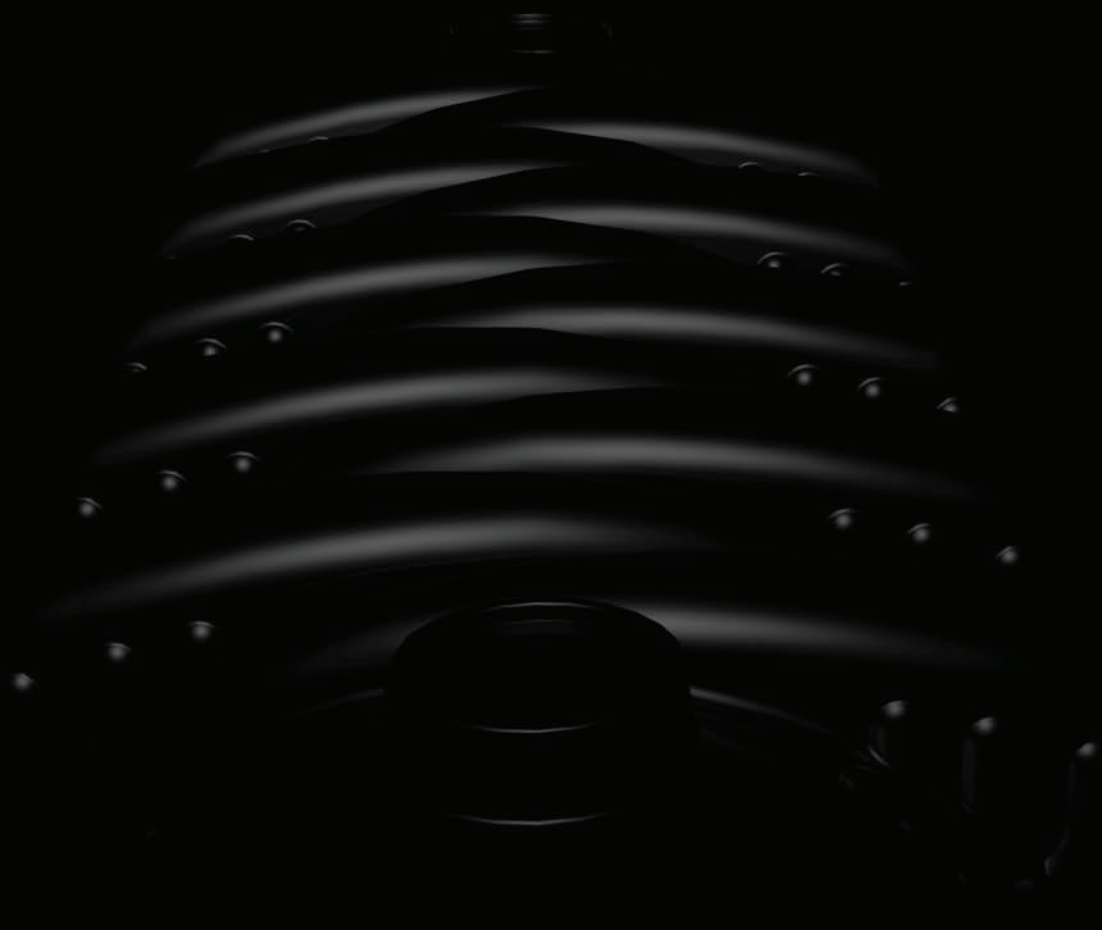
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