

DISASTER CLEANUP & RECOVERY

DCR

JANUARY 2024



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C O N T R A C T O R



A COMMITMENT TO **SERVE**

FROM MILITARY BASES TO THE EYE OF TROPICAL STORMS,
ASHLEY PAINTER ALWAYS SEES OPPORTUNITY IN ADVERSITY

» PAGE 8



PRODUCT FOCUS

Debris Cleanup

» PAGE 18

The background of the advertisement features a row of white United Rentals trailers parked in a field of dry, golden-brown grass. A large, semi-transparent circular graphic is centered over the trailers, containing the main text. The top of the image has a blue background with white curved lines radiating from the top edge.

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A Commitment to Serve

From military bases to the eye of tropical storms, Ashley Painter always sees opportunity in adversity

By Tim Dobbins

ON THE COVER

Equipped to assist with small or large-scale recovery projects, United Contract Solutions draws success from leadership experience in formidable situations. The veteran-owned company forms partnerships with local small businesses so together they can provide support and relief swiftly following disaster. (Photography by Jeff Haller)



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Tom Gosselin

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Tim Dobbins
EDITOR

Uncovering Recovery

Disaster Cleanup & Recovery Contractor provides a platform to bring all first-response contractors to the forefront

Welcome to the leadoff issue of *DCR — Disaster Cleanup & Recovery Contractor*, the newest publication from COLE Publishing, a company with an established history of magazines dedicated to the environmental services.

Prior to taking on the role of editor of the publication, I spent my time with the company as a writer tackling any story or topic that was thrown my way. One of the first big stories I was assigned, a COLE editor told me, “When interviewing and writing for these publications, always ask yourself how the story can best help the reader. Always think about how we can serve.”

As the editor of *DCR*, I am committed to serving frontline disaster responders and continuing the “people first” legacy that COLE has established throughout all its publications. This magazine’s focus will always be on the men and women who see the daunting task of disaster recovery as an opportunity.

DCR serves all first-response contractors who provide equipment and emergency services following storm, flood, fire and any other disasters. It will bring readers stories of success from veterans and novices in the industry, firsthand accounts of recovery efforts, business and safety articles and a steady flow of product coverage.

TRUSTED SOURCE

The feature of this kickoff issue is an Alabama-based recovery company that provides insight on the complexity of the industry, how to generate business and what it takes to be a successful, valued source in the industry. I was fortunate enough to interview and profile Ashley Painter, the woman leading United Contract Solutions, and bring her story to you in the next few pages.

During our discussions, I noticed an underlying theme behind the information she shared, namely to

use, learn from and rely on those you can trust. The people we trust are you, the post-disaster responders operating debris and grapple trucks, running excavation equipment, restoring electricity and transportation, and providing housing, restroom facilities and food to recovery workers. We aim to serve through the voices of those with real-world experience, uncovering the facts and figures of disaster recovery.

BETTER TOGETHER

We are seeking contractors who serve any facet of disaster recovery who would like to share their story as a feature in *DCR*. Do you, or someone you know, have an interesting story to tell? We’d love to hear about the challenges and successes you’ve had, any unique stories, the equipment you rely on and everything in between.

If you want to talk about disaster recovery, offer some insight or share valuable lessons you’ve learned along the way, please get in touch any time. We’d be grateful to learn from you.

DCR is here to be a trusted source for all who provide emergency services to use, learn from and rely on. It’s all about you, serving on the front lines of disaster cleanup and recovery. From everyone at COLE Publishing, we hope the things you read and see in this publication help you grow business, find success and even more pride in your work.

Thanks for checking out the magazine, and enjoy! **D**



Please reach out to me at
editor@dcrcontractor.com

@DCRcontractor.com

Visit the site daily for new, exclusive content. Read our blogs, find resources and get the most out of *DCR* magazine.

W *We circled through neighborhoods and saw large numbers of houses in flames. We drove on medians, sidewalks and ditches to get around the traffic. Eventually we arranged a police escort.”*

– From *Heroic Operators Kept Water Flowing During Colorado’s Devastating Marshall Fire*

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» **SCAN ME**



NET SURFING

Sharing The Best Disaster Related Content

We’re always on the lookout for relevant and interesting disaster recovery content. In our e-newsletters, we regularly share and highlight news stories and social media posts that we are reading and watching. This article highlights crews in Seminole County, Florida working to restore infrastructure long after multiple hurricanes bombarded the area.

GETTING SET Preparing for Offseason Tornadoes

October through February is not peak tornado season, but that doesn’t mean events during that time period don’t happen. In this online exclusive, learn the factors that contribute to the development of off-season tornadoes and consider if your business is prepared to help in the aftermath.

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TAKE CHARGE Make the Most of Mobile Command Centers

Command centers near disaster sites enable swift communication for coordination among crews, but specific features are needed to make them useful in the field. This article emphasizes the role of mobile communication centers in response efforts, and what to look for in your next portable hub.

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A COMMITMENT TO **SERVE**



FROM MILITARY BASES TO THE EYE OF TROPICAL STORMS,
ASHLEY PAINTER ALWAYS SEES OPPORTUNITY IN ADVERSITY

By Tim Dobbins | Photos by Jeff Haller and United Contract Solutions

« Ashley Painter, founder and owner, United Contract Solutions, Foley, Alabama

Quick thinking in the heat of the moment is nothing new to Ashley Painter.

The 24-year member of the U.S. Army Reserves spent much of her military time in medical departments and hospital units and serving as a company commander. A career in leadership and authoritative roles made the jump into disaster recovery fairly smooth. “Being able to quickly respond to something with little resources, using a team-based approach, thinking on my feet, has always been second nature to me,” she says.

W [THE BUSINESS CONTRACT] WAS SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE WE WERE THERE FIRST, BUT ALSO BECAUSE WE HAD THE EQUIPMENT TO GET THINGS DONE.”

– Ashley Painter

Painter has a government contracting business working with the National Guard, Army Reserves, Air Force and Special Forces on medical exercises and general training. When the COVID pandemic swept the country, it shut down army bases and hospital units, and her contracts went dry. That’s when she got the idea to start United Contract Solutions.

“I needed to think of a way to pivot our company and experience to something that would allow us to be successful, while being pandemic proof and needed in the marketplace,” she says.

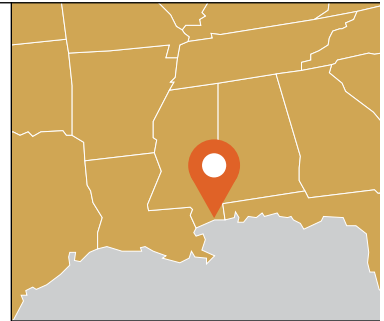
Living on the Gulf Coast, Painter has seen and been a part of her share of hurricanes. “Storms seem to happen every year and you can’t stop it or predict everything about it, but someone is making money providing the recovery,” she says. “Seeing that it happens so regularly, I asked myself what we could do to help communities and what exact services we could provide.”

The idea grew beyond just her company. “I thought about what we could offer and then looked at partners to help with what we couldn’t. There are a lot of small companies that have a hard time competing with larger ones, but offer great services and do a great job.”

PARTNERING UP

Painter reached out to a number of small businesses and told them her idea, and for those interested, she held a kickoff meeting in Mississippi. Together they worked to assemble an overall vision, mission and goals.

“It all started with about 10 companies,” Painter says. “We partnered with my company as the larger umbrella, and the rest provided the niche services like catering, tents, generators, IT, security and everything basi-



UNITED CONTRACT SOLUTIONS

Foley, Alabama

OWNER:
Ashley Painter

FOUNDED:
2020

SERVICES:
Catering, fuel, life support needs, mobile laundry units, mobile restroom trailers, portable restrooms, shower trailers, tents, power generators, logistics and operations

SERVICE AREA:
All U.S. states

WEBSITE:
unitedcontractsolutions.com

« Painter connects and inspects a fuel hose on one of United Contract Solutions fuel trucks at their home base in Foley, Alabama.





As part of the company's routine rig checks, Painter climbs atop a company fuel truck, examining all components to ensure readiness for its next voyage.

W I NEED TO MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS COMFORTABLE AND GOOD PRIOR TO GOING INTO SEASON. ... I WANT THEM TO FEEL LISTENED TO, PART OF THE TEAM, ENGAGED AND LIKE AN ACTIVE PIECE OF WHAT'S GOING ON."

– Ashley Painter

cally needed for a base camp."

Painter is the primary business holder, and the interested companies are subcontractors: "We had our LLC in August and then had our first hurricane in September. So, that very first year we were in the action which really helped kick us off."

JUMPING RIGHT IN

"We showed up with trailers, trucks and fuel providers and positioned ourselves about three hours away from where the eye of the storm was supposed to land. As soon as the eye passed and the weather was OK, Painter and her crew drove straight to where it hit and set up camp.

"Our goal was to get there immediately because so many contracts are based on response time," Painter says. "If we are there, everything is ready to go and we can offer fuel, tents and food right away, we are going to get that business."

The crew went where they saw electric companies set up. Painter talked to whoever was in charge and told them she could supply whatever they needed. And it worked.

"It was successful because we were there first, but also because we

had the equipment to get things done," she says. "We had all-terrain vehicles, so we could drive around down power poles and debris, and we could stay on site because we had RVs to sleep in."

Painter used on-the-spot contracts: "I had supplier contracts set up and ready with DocuSign on a tablet, so we could get it signed and be done. I also had back office setups in an RV with an accountant to do invoicing on site."

That event was in 2020, and they were there for almost six months.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Now with a few years under its belt, United Contract Solutions is set up for success in a business filled with unknowns, something Painter attributes to preparation.

She doesn't wait for the storm to hit before reacting, but instead relies on a proactive approach to paperwork and workers. "I work with my legal team to have all my contracts queued up, so I've got templates for everything," Painter says. "Prepping with templates is a big part of how I do things. I've got set contracts for suppliers, subcontractors, NDA templates, you name it.

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» A Multiquip WhisperWatt generator is mounted on a trailer providing mobile power options for the United Contract Solutions team, while another pair of generators power a tent shelter in the background.



when hurricane season is coming up, Painter reaches out to those she's used in the past to see where they are with existing contracts and commitments.

"I'll say, 'Hey, hurricane season is coming up. Are you able to participate this year or not?' From there, she makes a list of drivers who commit, or if some of her regulars can't, she knows ahead of time to track down others.

Building redundancy with equipment as well as personnel is extremely important. "Life happens," she says. "So, I try to have an A-team, B-team and C-team, and I do my best to know where everyone is at."

A UNITED TEAM

Painter has a formula for assembling her crew and so far, it has worked out pretty well. In her opinion it all starts with hiring. "I tend to gravitate toward ex-military," she says. "One reason is because they tend to be comfortable getting dirty and are comfortable in uncomfortable settings. They are used to adverse conditions."

But no matter what, everyone she hires goes through a screening process and she does her best to get to know the people she hires.

Once she finds people who fit the

» A Western Global TransCube hooked up to a generator provided by Herc Rentals is ready to supply power wherever needed.

"Insurance is another thing. I make sure that any potential partnering companies' insurance requirements, for employees or anything else, are ready to go for the next hurricane season."

Painter also makes sure her fleet of equipment is ready to go by staying up to date on registrations, DOT inspections, tank inspections and maintenance. She also makes certain their two fuel trucks — a 2006 Peterbilt 335 with 2,800-gallon tank and 2006 Freightliner with a 2,800-gallon three-compartment aluminum tank — are full and ready. United also has access to nine 500-gallon and two 1,000-gallon Western Global portable fuel tanks. "We want our bags packed and ready to go."

A substantial part of the prep work is lining up drivers and workers. Almost all her team members are 1099 contractors. Because of that,



» Tents, tables and chairs set up and ready for recovery workers to find shade, food and a place to rest.



United mold, Painter does what she can to keep them coming back. A big part of that is simply keeping in touch. "I'm huge on communication," she says. "I will reach out to them and ask how things are going with them, not just work related, but life in general."

It's important to her to keep contract employees wanting to work for United, and she also wants to know they are ready for the work ahead. "I need to make sure everyone is comfortable and good before going into season," Painter says. "If there are personal issues going on with anybody on the team, I want to talk through it and make sure it doesn't impede them on doing the best job they can do. I want them to feel listened to, engaged, and like an active part of what's going on."

WHEN IT'S TIME

With a team lined up and paperwork in order, United Contract Solutions is ready to respond. They stay on top of potential storms using hurricane tracking apps so they can plan locations ahead of time.

"The ability to do more or be more active as a vendor varies state to state," Painter says. "So, knowing

BUSINESS BETWEEN DISASTERS

Disasters aren't exactly as predictable as some other business opportunities. Keeping the lights on between storms can be a challenge, depending on the frequency of recovery contracts signed in a given year.

Ashley Painter, founder and owner of United Contract Solutions, relies on a source of revenue that not only uses the resources she owns for her disaster recovery business, but keeps her sharp in recovery deployment protocol. With over two decades in the U.S. Army Reserves, Painter used her experience to find opportunity in military training.

"There are scenarios set up to train National Guard soldiers on decontamination, search and rescue, and other necessary protocols after an event such as a dirty bomb in a stadium, building or area with a large crowd," Painter says. "Each state has a unit that is specific for responding to those types of disasters."

The state units trained for those situations are actually a result of the events on Sept. 11, 2001. "The need was recognized after they had called all the fire

responders for that and realized they still didn't have enough," she says. "Those units also respond to natural disasters."

When those groups assemble training at a designated site, they need resources. Painter and United Contract Solutions support those training events exactly as if they were the real deal.

"They'll have 1,500 to 2,000 soldiers and they need showers, catering, tents, cots, etc. These training sessions will last two to three weeks long," Painter says. "If they need tents, generators, larger items of supply, we provide those too."

While finding a way to use her available assets to assist the military, something she wants to do anyway, she also brings in income that at certain times of the year would otherwise be unfruitful.

"That's how we keep the bills paid off-season when we don't have a hurricane," Painter says. "I am always looking for contract opportunities that are training-specific, not just responding to an actual disaster."

where the storm is going to hit helps us plan for that state."

Certain states, like Florida, are well-versed in storms and very organized. "They will have trucks lined up waiting to roll in and start. Louisiana is a little different because it is run by parishes, and many times they don't speak or work together as much as they should."

No matter where the storm hits and members know they are going into the action, they set up a means



▲ A base camp with shelter tents, restroom and work trailers set up and ready for recovery workers.

W I JUST TRY TO SET MYSELF APART BY COMMITTING TO GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE, HONESTY AND FAIR PRICING. ... I CAN SLEEP AT NIGHT KNOWING I'M AN HONEST BUSINESS PERSON."

– Ashley Painter

of staying in touch. "We set up a communication center via group text with key players, and then set up a Signal or WhatsApp or something that's not using cellphone technology, because nine times out of 10, cell towers are down," Painter says. "When we are on site, we have walkie talkies."

As for what to send, Painter starts with her fleet and goes from there.

"We'll send out our two fuel trucks right away," she says. "We use what we have, and for anything else I have contacts and partners. For instance, we have some portable restrooms, but I have teams to supply more if needed."

Between United and partners, the available fleet is made up of 10 2022 JAG 28-foot smart restroom trailers, nine Satellite restroom trailers with eight and 10-stall options, and over two dozen Satellite Tufway por-

table toilets. Alongside the portable restrooms, United can supply more than four dozen Satellite hand-washing stations.

Painter also relies on partners for power supply. The company's power supply includes an arsenal of Cummins and Multiquip generators from 38 kW up to 1,000 kW. It can be difficult to balance between owning enough equipment, and too much. "It's really important to pay attention to your overhead."

FINANCIAL BALANCE

Money in the bank is essential for United to operate smoothly. "I'm paying out of pocket for everything initially," Painter says. "I'm buying fuel to fill the trucks, I'm paying my drivers each week. For housing, hotels and anything else we are doing or hiring, it's an upfront payment"

Her fuel truck drivers are paid a flat rate per day plus housing and accommodations. To charge the clients there is a drop fee for the fuel as well as a cost per gallon of fuel. The drop fee essentially pays for the driver.

And even that is a balance: "Sometimes if we don't have enough



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fuel deliveries per day, I'm in the hole that day, and a lot of times that's when we decide we need to pull out of an area."

Being financially smart is often as simple as reaching out to multiple suppliers and negotiating pricing. "For example, I have five companies that supply tents," Painter says. "I'll let all of them know what I need, then ask what their pricing is and how fast they can get it to me."

After spending money upfront, it comes time to bill and collect. Every two weeks clients receive an invoice, but that doesn't mean payments come in as routinely. "More often than not, it's 60 to 90 days before we get paid," Painter says. That's another reason having cash in the bank is vital.

Insurance is often the cause of delayed payments. "A lot of vendors I bill are waiting because insurance is paying for whatever service it is. Because we are second and third down the line it can take a while. Insurance pays the prime contractor, the prime pays the subcontractor and sometimes we are the sub of the sub."

BUSINESS THEIR WAY

A current challenge is companies underbidding jobs. "I think the market has become saturated with people that have gotten into the industry thinking it's an easy way to make a quick buck," she says.

She thinks that problem may have stemmed from the COVID pandemic: "A lot of people bought stuff during COVID because there was a rush of needing shelters for infusion or vaccines sites and that sort of thing. And now that that's all done, people have these supplies and don't know what to do with them. They underbid jobs to get a contract because they have all these assets on their books that they need to use or because they want to show past performance."

But instead of focusing on the challenges she can't control, Painter keeps her sights aimed at what she can. "I just try to set myself apart by committing to great customer service, honesty and fair pricing," she says. "At the end of the day, I know I'm doing everything the best I can, and I can sleep at night knowing I'm an honest business person." **D**



Disaster recovery work is as much about office preparation as it is in the field cleanup. As leader of the team, Ashley Painter spends much of her time behind the desk preparing templates, prepping contracts and making sure all paperwork is in order.

A fleet of Satellite Tufway portable restrooms along with hand-washing stations positioned outside a recovery site base camp.





By Joan Koehne

Awareness On All Fronts

Train employees to quickly identify potential hazards and know how to react in any situation

“THE DEFINITION OF DISASTER RECOVERY IS THE ACT OF ANALYZING CHAOS AND MAKING HABITABLE ORDER OUT OF IT. TO DO THAT EFFECTIVELY, THE PEOPLE INVOLVED NEED TO BE HIGHLY AWARE OF THEIR SURROUNDINGS AND CONSTANTLY ANTICIPATE PROBLEMS THAT WILL COME UP.”

— LUKE SNYDER



Disaster cleanup and recovery contractors see a lot of crazy things in their line of work. Work sites can be disorganized, chaotic and even hazardous. Luke Snyder, vice president of Servpro in Appleton and Green Bay, Wisconsin, has experienced a wide variety of circumstances in his 10 years of disaster recovery work.

“The dangers change, and the needs of your customers change all the time,” he says. Because nothing breaks the same way twice, disaster contractors need to adjust their thinking and their actions to suit the conditions.

“The definition of disaster recovery is the act of analyzing chaos and making habitable order out of it,” Snyder says. “To do that effectively, the people involved need to be highly aware of their surroundings and constantly anticipate problems that will come up.”

Essentially, they need to practice situational awareness in order to keep themselves and their co-workers safe on the job. Situational awareness involves the ability to take notice of the surroundings in order to make the best decisions possible.

“It is processing the environment around you and quickly identifying things that stick out to you as dangers and opportunities,” Snyder says.

For example, a disaster cleanup team may come across a building with a hole in the subfloor. Before working in the area, the team should identify the risks that the hole presents. For instance, technicians might

fall into the hole or step through another soft spot in the floor. Erecting barriers or covering the hole will help to mitigate this danger. In another example, technicians remove debris from a job site, revealing hidden hazards that need to be addressed.

“Having situational awareness at the top of your mind will help elevate the things that might be a source of danger to you and your team,” Snyder says.

A team may be working in a factory and need to be mindful of forklift traffic, noisy surroundings or loose materials that might cause someone to slip. Tripping hazards are common, so equipment and electrical cords need to be placed out of pathways and walkways. It all comes back to practicing situational awareness.

“If I wasn’t paying attention, what mistake might I make? And then come up with solutions to try to remove that danger entirely,” Snyder says.

REAL TIME TRAINING

Situational awareness can be a difficult skill to teach because the opportunities and dangers are different all the time. Circumstances change depending on the type, location and extent of the disaster and the response the customer requests.

“Disaster recovery is such a chaotic, changing environment as a matter of course, so it’s hard to say something general that applies to disaster recovery. It’s very dependent on what you’re trying to accomplish,” Snyder says.

For situational awareness training, Servpro relies heavily on job shadowing. In training sessions, trainees observe a disaster scene while shadowing the cleanup and recovery crew. The trainees take note of the opportunities and challenges they see and recount what they've observed to trainers. In response, trainers describe what they have seen and heard and cover any details the trainees missed.

"If it's an important enough detail, it could make or break a project or get somebody hurt," Snyder says.

When situational awareness starts to become second nature, the trainees are ready to go out on their own. Once the initial training is completed, Servpro continues to promote situational awareness at all levels of the organization.

"We talk about it all the time and constantly remind managers to have it top of mind. If not, people get relaxed and fall into their old ways. That's when mistakes happen," Snyder says.

SECOND NATURE

By practicing situational awareness, disaster recovery teams can quickly identify hazards, predict possible dangers related to the environment or human error and put the necessary safeguards in place. As a result, they help prevent injuries on the job site.

"In disaster recovery, it's the name of the game to be situationally aware," Snyder says. "It's one of the things that's baked into the cake in our industry. You can't be in the disaster recovery business and be poor at situational awareness. It's just not the job for you if that's something you struggle with."

The benefits of situational awareness extend into daily living and improve to a person's family life, social life and professional life.

"If you're good at being situationally aware, it will help you in every aspect of your life," Snyder says. ▣

PRO TIP

PRACTICE THE 360-DEGREE SCAN

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DEBRIS CLEANUP

By Craig Mandli

EXCAVATING EQUIPMENT



■ HYDRA-FLEX 1-INCH REAPER

The **1-inch Reaper** from **Hydra-Flex** is a rotating cutter nozzle built for 6- to 18-inch pipes. It is made to hit specific angles and shorten the time and amount of passes it takes to cut through blockages. It's designed to simultaneously clear and clean by combining its effective front and back jets. The forceful front stream rotates at a 30-degree cone of coverage to quickly clear blockages, while its eight 20-degree rear jets propel the nozzle forward to meet any challenge. The stainless steel housing and tungsten carbide wear surfaces promote a longer life span and make this nozzle durable enough to withstand harsh environments. It is fully field-repairable, and repair kits are designed to get you back up and running in 10 minutes. **952-808-3640; www.hydrflexinc.com**



■ JOHN DEERE 85 P-TIER

The **85 P-Tier** excavator from **John Deere** boasts an 18% engine horsepower increase over the 85 G-Tier model, and the addition of a turbo for high-altitude performance. Hydraulic performance improvements include increased pump torque and improved dig forces. The larger, redesigned cab is equipped with an 8-inch monitor with Bluetooth and a 270-degree camera system integrated into the main monitor. Improved service access and optional features, such as angle blade with float and continuous flow auxiliary hydraulics, round out the updates that improve the performance and versatility. **800-503-3373; www.johndeere.com**



■ KOMATSU PC130LC-11

Komatsu's upgraded **PC130LC-11** includes a longer undercarriage design that increases lifting capacity by up to 20%. This durable, reliable and productive 97.2 hp small conventional tail-swing excavator is easily transportable and offers a combination of lightweight power and agility in a small package. It uses up to 12% less fuel than the previous model. Fuel consumption can also be reduced with the auto idle shutdown feature that can be set to automatically stop the engine after a preset amount of idle time. The diesel oxidation catalyst helps reduce particulate matter by using passive regeneration over 98% of the time. It offers fast cycle times, seamless multifunction motions, exacting bucket movements and exceptional lifting capabilities. High hydraulic pressures help optimize high arm and bucket digging forces. For long-term durability, steel castings in the boom foot, boom nose and arm tip help spread working loads away from high-stress areas. **847-437-5800; www.komatsu.com**

■ YANMAR COMPACT EQUIPMENT VIO80-7

The 18,122-pound **ViO80-7** mini-excavator from **Yanmar Compact Equipment** offers 18% more power over its predecessor with its new 67 hp Yanmar Tier 4 Final diesel engine. It provides operators with increased attachment performance with 20% more PTO flow rate. It achieves a maximum dig depth of 14 feet 3 inches, and includes signature zero tail-swing allowing the excavator to rotate next to a structure with less risk of hitting it. Improved engine output and hydraulics allow for more productivity and greater attachment performance. Those same improvements also allow for a 15% increase in work speed, 13% lower fuel consumption rate and 25% increase in travel speed on slope. A 2-Pump Load Sensing (2PLS) hydraulic system increases pump flow rate under high loads to direct power where it's needed to improve performance. **800-205-9913; www.yanmarce.com**



■ VOLVO CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT EWR130E

The **Volvo Construction Equipment EWR130E** mid-sized wheeled excavator provides a short front and rear swing radius without compromising on lifting performance or digging force, according to Volvo. The rear swing is 5 feet 1 inch and a front swing of 5 feet 11 inches. Coupled with new four-wheel steering and in-line outrigger options, the machine is easy to control and stable, Volvo reports. Its uses include urban jobs where frequent roading is required, and confined job sites or roads where traffic safety is paramount. The inline outriggers help position and stabilize the machine in tight spaces. A divided blade option provides additional leveling on uneven ground or around curbs. The standard two-piece boom enables lifting up to 9,480 pounds at a 19.7-foot reach. **828-650-2000; www.volvo.com/constructionequipment**



LOADER AND SKID-STEER EQUIPMENT

■ CASE CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT 580SV CONSTRUCTION KING

The **580SV Construction King** backhoe loader from **CASE Construction Equipment** brings a tool carrier-style front end back to the company's backhoe line, ideal for businesses who use the loader end of their backhoe as a primary material handler — loading and unloading pallets, moving pipe and other bundled material around the yard. Adding a 4-in-1 bucket, a 6-in-1 bucket, or any of the countless attachments available for CASE backhoes turns this into a robust multipurpose job site solution — and a hydraulic quick coupler makes it easy. Both center pivot and side-shift models are available. **866-542-2736; www.casece.com**



■ TAKEUCHI TL6R

The **TL6R** compact track loader from **Takeuchi** has a radial lift loader design that provides greater mid-height reach, bucket breakout and lift arm forces. With a height of 6 feet 5.8 inches and a width of just over 5 feet, it excels on job sites with height and width restrictions. This track loader comes with a newly designed cabin with an overhead 5.7-inch color multi-informational display and backlit rocker switches that control a variety of machine functions. It comes standard with a quiet track design with flotation pads that reduces vibration and noise level while improving ride quality. Its all-steel construction increases the machine's strength and rigidity while protecting vital engine and hydraulic components. Double- and triple-flange track rollers maintain at least two points of contact at all times, making it less susceptible to de-tracking. **706-693-3600; www.takeuchi-us**



PRESSURE WASHER AND SPRAYER

■ SATELLITE PATHFINDER SANITIZING SYSTEM



The **Pathfinder Sanitizing System** from **Satellite** is a self-contained system that boasts a low-pressure, chemical injection delivery mechanism, ensuring an optimized chemical-to-water ratio that mounts on any service vehicle. The system seamlessly disperses cleaning agents like the Pathfinder Solution or hospital-grade disinfectants such as Enviro Bac 2, which neutralizes mold and odor-causing bacteria, guaranteeing even distribution within restrooms. The benefit is that spray gets sanitizer solution into the crevices and hard-to-reach spots that a brush and soap cannot reach, and leaves surfaces shiny. Its versatility is exemplified by its usefulness in servicing portable restrooms, handwash sinks, and holding tanks, along with restroom and specialty trailers.

800-883-1123; www.satelliteindustries.com



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■ PORTABLE GENERATOR MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION UNVEILS KIDS SAFETY PROGRAM

The Portable Generator Manufacturers' Association released a portable generator safety curriculum, "Generate Safety," designed for school-aged children. Content is divided into two distinct age groups: K-6 and 7-12 grades. The lessons promote safe usage of portable generators in emergencies and avoidance of exposure to dangerous carbon monoxide fumes. PGMA is the industry association for portable generators and is dedicated to educating consumers on the safe use of portable generators, as demonstrated by its Take It Outside campaign.



■ MAKITA U.S.A. WELCOMES SEAN OKADA AS NEW PRESIDENT AND CEO

Makita has appointed Sean Okada as the company's president and CEO. He comes to the United States after seven years as president of Makita Australia. He also held leadership positions at Makita United Kingdom and Makita Gulf in Dubai. As the new president, Okada will drive the company's strategic initiatives, foster innovation and expand market presence while upholding Makita's commitment to sustainability and social responsibility.

■ CASE AND TEAM RUBICON EXPAND HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR TRAINING

CASE Construction Equipment asked its dealers to help support a new initiative with Team Rubicon: train more volunteers to operate heavy equipment for its veteran-led humanitarian organization that serves global communities before, during and after disasters and crises. In early 2023, the pilot program commenced with two CASE dealers: RPM Machinery, out of their Franklin, Indiana, location; and Lawrence Equipment, at their Roanoke, Virginia, store. On a monthly basis, these dealers provide machines for Team Rubicon volunteers to train on, an indoor classroom and outdoor operating space. CASE and its parent company's foundation, CNH Industrial Foundation, have been longtime supporters of Team Rubicon. CASE deploys machinery through its dealer network to numerous disaster response and community service projects across North America, while the foundation has supported efforts with monetary support. ▣



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POWERED BY

Fueling a Successful Business

Thunder Creek fuel and oil trailers keep Gulf Services' equipment and recovery efforts up and running



By Giles Lambertson | Photos provided by Thunder Creek Equipment

“THE LEVEL OF DESTRUCTION WAS TERRIBLE, THE POWER GRID WAS OUT. THE TRAILER HELPED US KEEP OUR HEAVY EQUIPMENT, VEHICLES AND GENERATORS RUNNING.”

— LYMAN RAMSAY



For years, family-owned Gulf Services and its affiliated divisions have been helping hurricane-ravaged states in the southeast recover from storms. Only since 2020 has the company been able to do so while efficiently fueling its deployed fleet of heavy equipment. What changed? The company began using Thunder Creek fuel and service trailers.

The problem in these situations is logistics. Once high winds and high waters recede, the landscape often is unrecognizable. The ground is littered with shredded trees and disassembled buildings. Passable streets are clogged by returning residents and emergency response teams.

In such a disrupted environment, Gulf Services and other contractors team up with local officials to establish debris management sites to handle the ruined and uprooted material. Tub grinders and other reduction equipment are set up, with tending dozers, wheel loaders and excavators. Haul trucks run continuously to the sites and return to debris collection areas where excavators with grapples reload them.

All of these machines gulp fuel in a dawn-to-dusk effort to restore a semblance of normalcy to a devastated community. “One of our grinders can consume 30-35 gallons of diesel fuel in an hour, depending on the material,” says Lyman Ramsay, president and CEO of Gulf Services. Add to it the fuel consumption of equipment

feeding the grinder and that’s a lot of diesel going up in smoke.

Furthermore, there may be more than one grinding site. For certain, truck-loading areas are scattered around the area. How to get fuel to all these moving parts of a disaster operation was a recurring logistical dilemma. A solution came in the form of the fuel and service trailers.

TIME FOR CHANGE

“I had been looking at these trailers for years,” says Ramsay. In August 2020, Hurricane Laura skimmed past Florida and struck Louisiana and Texas as a Category 4 blow. In its aftermath, Gulf Services mobilized from its Theodore, Alabama, headquarters. Among the pieces of equipment rolling to the distressed area was something new: a Thunder Creek 690 multitank fuel and oil trailer.

“Fueling was a tremendous challenge after Laura,” Ramsay recalls. “The level of destruction was terrible, the power grid was out. The trailer helped us keep our heavy equipment, vehicles and generators running.” The company’s experience with the Thunder Creek unit in Louisiana led Ramsay to purchase four more of the trailers.

The trailers have been a part of the team’s response to numerous storms since. Two trailers were recently sent to Fort Myers, Florida where they kept Gulf Services equipment fueled up for over a year after Hurricane Ian pummeled the region.

IMMEDIATE IMPACT

Prior to trailering the fuel, the company delivered diesel on disaster work sites in a dedicated fuel truck. The problem with that was the downtime crews experienced while waiting on the truck's arrival from another fueling point. The large trucks also sometimes struggled to reach equipment in tight, congested areas where haul-trucks were being loaded.

Ramsay can't say precisely how many work-hours typically were wasted before Thunder Creek trailers were introduced to the operation. "It's difficult to compare that, but with the trailers, we know crews can go clear through the workday without having to stop and wait for the truck."



The double-axle fuel trucks also were less efficient than the trailers for another reason: a commercial driver's license is required to operate them. Whereas any Gulf Services crew member can climb in a work truck attached to a trailer and haul it wherever it's needed.

"We're not limited by who can deliver the fuel," Ramsay says of the trailers, "so it gives us a lot more flexibility." The trailers are not tricky to pull from place to place, by the way, though there are hundreds of gallons of fuel sloshing around in individual compartments. "They are so well-balanced, it's just like pulling anything else."

Why Thunder Creek? Other manufacturers offer trailered fuel carriers, after all.

"I did look at other trailers, but Thunder Creek units are extremely well-built. And I was most familiar with them from a local dealer," says Ramsay. He was asked if the company had ever made suggestions to the manufacturer for improving the trailers. No, he says. "They stay ahead of us on those things, on the functioning of the trailers and their quality."

WILLING TO ADAPT

Thunder Creek trailers can do more than deliver and pump fuel into machinery at up to 40 gpm, though that is a mainstay service. Depending upon how they are

configured, one of the trailers also can lube equipment, air up a tire or clean out a radiator with compressed air, as well as support preventive maintenance services.

It's called workplace evolution. That a long-established company like Gulf Services was able to evolve — to abandon a long-standing practice (fuel trucks) in favor of something new (fuel trailers) — says something about its management mindset. "We are always looking for ways to be more efficient," Ramsay says.

"It is all about employee safety and maximizing the equipment," says Ramsay. Thunder Creek trailers are part of the solution. **D**

"WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR WAYS TO BE MORE EFFICIENT. IT IS ALL ABOUT EMPLOYEE SAFETY AND MAXIMIZING THE EQUIPMENT."

— LYMAN RAMSAY



« A Gulf Services technician using a Thunder Creek MTO 690 Multi-Tank Oil series to lube machinery at a debris cleanup site.



By Ken Wysocky

Best Practices for Response Team Managers

The impacts of confident, responsive and genuine leadership extend beyond the workplace

“WE’VE ALSO SEEN A SHIFT IN EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS IN ALL INDUSTRIES. THEY EXPECT A LOT MORE, NOT JUST FROM THEIR LEADERS BUT FROM THEIR ORGANIZATIONS, THAN THEY DID JUST A FEW SHORT YEARS AGO.”

— LISA STERLING

The results of a new study performed by Perceptyx, a company that specializes in employee surveys and people analytics, should serve as a wake-up call for managers: 24% of 1,500 employees polled say they currently work for the worst boss they’ve ever had.

Worse yet, the study found that people working for their “worst boss ever” are three times more likely to be disengaged than those with good managers and almost four times more likely to say they intend to quit within 12 months.

The key behavior that garnered either a worst- or best-boss ranking? Responsiveness, says Lisa Sterling, chief people officer at Perceptyx.

“A key takeaway from the study shows a very high correlation between overall responsiveness and whether employees feel they work for a great leader versus not such a great leader,” she explains. “In fact, leaders who are less engaged and less responsive are 25 times more likely to be identified as a bad boss.

“And on the flip side, those rated very strongly for connectivity and responsiveness are five times more likely to be identified as a good boss,” she adds.

WIDE RAMIFICATIONS

Even worse, those working for their worst boss were two times more likely to have negative health impacts, such as poor

sleep, lost productivity or increased alcohol consumption, and twice as likely to find it more difficult to enjoy other elements in their lives, Sterling says.

“I found it very surprising that the lack of managers’ responsiveness drives such profound implications outside of work,” she says. “I think that many leaders don’t recognize how they show up in terms of being available and insightful or being good mentors or coaches.

“Unfortunately, it’s far more common for leaders to be less engaged and less responsive because we’re having less real-life interactions,” Sterling continues. “And at the same time, we are getting hit by communications in many different ways, which creates an environment where it’s more challenging for leaders to show up the way we want them to show up.

“So managers need to be more thoughtful about those communication channels they use — talk more about how we leverage technology to deliver more personalized communications.”

Sterling believes employees are fatigued by communication technologies such as Zoom and Slack. Especially during the pandemic, managers embraced those technologies for communication, but haven’t stepped back to consider whether they’ve made people’s jobs — or lives — better or even enhanced communications.

A PERSONAL TOUCH

So what can managers do to ensure they get rated as a best boss? They can start by having regular team meetings and being more deliberate about holding one-on-one sessions with direct reports. Those who do so are 43 times more likely to be judged as a best boss, according to the study.

Recognizing employee achievements also ranks high on the list. It's critical to acknowledge when employees do a good job because it helps build good relationships when employees know their work is appreciated, Sterling says.

"Another key piece is sharing information and explaining to employees how their work contributes to the overall success of the organization," she reports.

Positive feedback and coaching also is vital. It's important to tell people what they're good at as well as point out areas where they need coaching. The study also showed a disconnect here: 27% of employees felt their managers could use some kind of training to be better coaches, but only 17% of managers felt they needed it.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

In defense of managers, however, Sterling agrees that this is one of the most challenging times to be a leader in an organization, especially given the growing predominance of digital communications.

"The space created with more of a digital-first approach to working is putting a squeeze on leaders and making it more difficult for them to be present the way they need to be," she notes. "We also see more clients putting employees into leadership roles earlier in their careers, so there's a greater chance they lack leadership maturity.

"That makes it difficult for them to show up as a great leader."

As such, it's time for organizations to "over-invest" in some of the most basic elements of leadership, she says.

"We've also seen a shift in employee expectations in all industries. They expect a

lot more, not just from their leaders but from their organizations, than they did just a few short years ago.

"The pendulum has swung from employer-led organizations to employee-led organizations and it's hard to keep up with that."

The study also showed that 48% of managers say their jobs as leaders have become more difficult in just the last year and 40% say they're under more pressure from both their direct reports and their upper management.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Overall, organizations need to be more deliberate about who they select as leaders; some people just shouldn't be managers, regardless of their experience or how much an organization has invested in them, Sterling notes.

"We also have to continually invest in their knowledge, skills and capabilities," she adds. "Skill sets become outdated very fast these days and expectations shift fast, too, so we have to put the pedal down, so to speak, to invest in leaders because they're closest to the people who are closest to the business and its partners and customers."

What are the risks if organizations stand pat? For one, they'll lose a competitive edge in the war for top talent in a tight labor market. They'll also be more prone to employee turnover.

"People are less apt to stay at organizations where there are unhealthy relationships between employees and leaders," Sterling notes. "People leave leaders, not organizations ... and they're just not as willing anymore to tolerate conditions that don't meet their expectations.

"There's definitely a high correlation between organizations with high levels of engaged employees and how they outperform their competitors. Most organizations are successful because of their people, so we have to make sure that their experiences live up to expectations." **D**

"MOST ORGANIZATIONS ARE SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE OF THEIR PEOPLE, SO WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE THAT THEIR EXPERIENCES LIVE UP TO EXPECTATIONS"

— LISA STERLING





SPOTLIGHT
by Cory Dellenbach

**A CREATIVE WAY TO
DISPOSE OF STORM DEBRIS**

When it comes to clearing debris left by storms contractors typically have few options. They can either haul it away — if they can find a landfill that will accept it — or they can burn it.

Finding a landfill that will accept brush and other forest debris left over from storms might be a challenge in some areas because it quickly fills those areas up and it can be costly to deal with.

AirBurners Inc., a Palm City, Florida-based manufacturing company, has a solution for contractors. FireBoxes are self-contained, completely assembled aboveground air curtain burners with a refractory-lined burn container for portable and permanent applications.

The FireBox designed for the high-temperature burning of forest slash, agricultural green waste, land-clearing debris, storm debris, and other waste streams in compliance with the requirements of the EPA.

“A contractor would go to a transfer station, there would be FireBoxes on site and from there you’d have equipment loading them with the wood waste and you’re able to burn everything at about 40 times faster than it would in an open burn,” says Bill Priede, business development sales manager for AirBurners. “The heat inside of this thing gets to about 1,800 degrees.”

There are three models of FireBoxes — a S119, S223 and S330. The S119 is the smallest model, with throughput of 3-5 tons per hour on average. The S223 FireBoxes averages 7-9 tons per hour and the S330, averages 11-13 tons per hour.

The FireBoxes have 4-inch thick refractory wall panels filled with proprietary thermal ceramic material, two full-height refractory rear doors and two or three ignition holes depending on the model.

The S119 and S223 units are powered by three-cylinder turbo diesel engines (approximately 49 hp) and have a 58-gallon minimum fuel tank capacity, while the S330 model has a four-cylinder turbo diesel engine (approximately 75 hp) with a 110-gallon minimum fuel tank capacity.

“All it takes is just a regular torch to get that fire going and once that fire gets going nice and hot, you turn on your generator, which turns on the blower and it’ll start blowing air into the FireBox,” Priede says. “It creates a curtain so that smoke isn’t getting out, but in addition it’s bouncing off the secondary wall and creating a secondary burn, which is the most important thing because that’s the part that’s burning at 1,800 degrees.”

The only smoke emitted from the units are at the start before the generators begin circulating the air and when crews add material to the boxes, otherwise the air keeps the smoke contained to the FireBoxes.

FireBoxes are shipped from the factory completely assembled and ready for immediate use, it does not require disassembly for relocation. Lifting pads are provided for crane-lifting, but the unit can also be dragged on site on its skids.

“These don’t have floors, you’re actually burning directly onto the ground,” Priede says. “What’s nice is that the ash that it leaves behind is an excellent soil amendment, so it’s beneficial to the earth. What a contractor will do once the burn is done and they move the FireBox, they’ll spread those ashes around and that area will come back to life.” **772-220-7303; www.airburners.com**

■ CASE CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT E-SERIES WHEELED EXCAVATORS

With the ability to travel up to 25 mph, the new E Series wheeled excavators from CASE Construction Equipment give contractors the ability to self-deploy from job site to job site, while minimizing the time and expense involved with transporting by trailer. Offering the same powerful hydraulic performance and attachment flexibility as their steel-track counterparts, these fully featured rubber-tired excavators also offer significantly lower total cost of ownership than machines with a steel track and undercarriage, allowing utilities contractors to improve their bottom line. **866-542-2736; www.casece.com**



■ ZEAL MOTOR FAT TRUCK OFF-ROAD UTILITY VEHICLES

Zeal Motor launched its latest Fat Truck lineup at the Utility Expo in 2023. The 8X8 models are purpose-built to excel in the most demanding terrains, offering the capability to transport up to 5,000 pounds of payloads or accommodate a crew of up to 16 individuals. The 2.4 pickup is a 2,000 pound amphibious vehicle, featuring a pioneering design with a hydraulic motor per wheel. The 2.8 wagon and pickup represent the evolution of their predecessors, the 2.8C and 2.8P, boasting an 11% power increase and over 40 new and enhanced features. Notable improvements include impact-resistant windshields for heightened safety, an upgraded ergonomic and quieter cab, and the introduction of PTO capabilities. **579-594-2794; www.fattruck.com**




■ GRACE INDUSTRIES GRACE CONNECTED SAFETY WORKER SAFETY SYSTEM

Grace Connected Safety uses the new Grace Cloud Connect monitoring and alerting engine, supporting the Grace Lone Worker System, with features including fall detection and suspension trauma prevention products. Grace Cloud Connect solves the safety monitoring problem for workers in fixed or remote locations who are working alone or at heights. Using cloud connectivity via ethernet, Wi-Fi, iridium satellite and cellular through a Grace Gateway, the worker's safety status is monitored directly without the need for a third-party call center. Grace Cloud Connect uses a web-based portal to assign and schedule the subscriber's own monitoring attendants, and to configure custom email and text notifications of safety-critical events. The system includes value-added I/O features useful for process control SCADA, door and gate entry, gas monitoring, weather warning or any other specialized system control application. **724-962-9231; www.graceloneworker.com**



■ VERMEER VXT600 VACUUM EXCAVATOR

The Vermeer VXT600 vacuum excavator has undergone a redesign to enhance its performance. With a 12-cubic-yard elongated spoil tank design and 1,200-gallon fresh-water tank capacity, the vacuum truck weighs in at just 40,000 pounds. It has a low profile with a height (with boom) of 12.25 feet so that it can maneuver under trees, power lines and bridges. The VXT600 is a powerful digging machine that operates quietly while on the job. It features a vacuum system that is powered by a 6,400 cfm Helical tri-lobe Jurup blower. With a 23-foot boom, an 8-inch diameter dig hose, a vacuum level of 27 in Hg, and a water pump that produces 10 gpm of flow at 3,000 psi, the truck can dig quickly and deeply. Additionally, the boom dig hose can be stowed with the dig tube attached to minimize setup time between digs. Additionally, the VXT600 includes a hand-washing station for operator convenience. **352-728-2222; www.vermeer.com** 





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