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## IT TAKES A VILLAGE

A FAMILY BUSINESS FORMED FROM  
DISASTER USES A DATABASE OF SUB-  
CONTRACTORS ALONGSIDE ITS OWN  
TEAM TO TACKLE WHATEVER MOTHER  
NATURE THROWS ITS WAY

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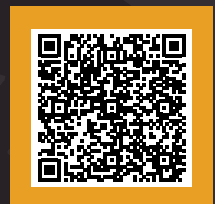
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## IT TAKES A VILLAGE

A business formed from disaster uses a database of subcontractors alongside its own team to tackle whatever Mother Nature throws its way.

*By James Careless*

## ON THE COVER

Strength in numbers, prepping for the unexpected and learning from experience are vital pieces of CrowderGulf's business blueprint and what makes the company a go-to resource for disaster recovery for communities and municipalities. (Photo by Keyhole Photo)



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DISASTER CLEANUP & RECOVERY



Published monthly by COLE Publishing, Inc.  
P.O. Box 220, Three Lakes, WI 54562

Call toll-free 800-257-7222  
Mon.- Fri., 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. CST

Website: [www.dcrcontractor.com](http://www.dcrcontractor.com)  
Email: [info@dcrcontractor.com](mailto:info@dcrcontractor.com)

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**CONTROLLED CIRCULATION:** 22,000 per month  
This figure includes both U.S. and international distribution.

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**Tim Dobbins**  
EDITOR

# Think Fast

Put some thought into thinking. Problem-solving skills are an undeniable asset for personnel at every level of a company.

**W**hy do we have to learn this? This is one of the most common questions my wife, a high school math teacher, hears.

I'll come clean. I was a student who asked that question many times even through my college education, and usually when I was frustrated or stuck on a problem or a subject that really tested me. It was a few years later that a lesson in that frustration dawned on me. It wasn't the subject matter — it was learning to tackle something that didn't come easily. To see a problem and solve it one way or another.

I've worked a few jobs now in different fields. I've been an entry-level technician, a manager and everything in between, and I'm a firm believer that critical thinking skills are one of the most valuable assets employees, managers and owners can possess. The ability to rationally determine what to do in a specific situation quickly and confidently isn't something people learn as a specific class in school — it's something developed in every subject and well beyond formal education.

## WHERE IT MATTERS

I can hardly think of a career field where critical thinking and problem-solving are more vital than disaster recovery and cleanup. As an owner or manager, it's vital that you can make important business decisions at a moment's notice when leading a team into a disaster-ridden area, with little to no insight about the circumstances beforehand.

It's just as important for employees and operators. The ability to analyze surroundings on the spot, formulate a safe plan of execution and put those thoughts into motion without hand-holding will make you an invaluable asset for the company.

## OLD DOG, NEW TRICKS

It's never too late to teach or learn these skills. Training sessions that involve logical reasoning, recognizing similarities and differences, and providing practice situations that enable team members to plan and predict outcomes are proven to be effective ways to improve critical thinking. Put your employees in scenarios they are likely to encounter on a cleanup site and require them to come up with solutions. Not only does this build thinking skills, it gives employees confidence when they find themselves in those situations in the field.

Incorporate asking questions that challenge them to think throughout everyday work activities. What will happen if we do this? Why did you come to that conclusion? What other options can you come up with? What should we prioritize in this situation and why?

From the owner of CrowderGulf Disaster Recovery & Debris Management, a company managing a fleet of subcontractors in Alabama, to the team in charge of a wastewater treatment plant in Vermont, you'll read all about successful problem-solvers in this issue of DCR.

Enjoy, and thanks for reading. **D**



## CONTACT US:

*DCR Contractor strives to serve those on the front lines of disaster cleanup and recovery with interesting and helpful stories. We welcome your comments, questions and column suggestions and promise a prompt reply to all reader contacts. Call 800-257-7222 or email DCR editor Tim Dobbins at [editor@dcrcontractor.com](mailto:editor@dcrcontractor.com).*

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## Americans worried about stormwater

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## SAFE OPERATION Tips for industrial vacuum trucks

The team at Guzzler knows operating vacuum trucks without following safety protocols is not a wise move. In this article, they provide some simple steps to protect operators as well as those around the job site.

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# IT TAKES A VILLAGE

A FAMILY BUSINESS FORMED FROM DISASTER USES A DATABASE OF SUBCONTRACTORS ALONGSIDE ITS OWN TEAM TO TACKLE WHATEVER MOTHER NATURE THROWS ITS WAY

By James Careless | Photography by Jeff and Meggan Haller/Keyhole Photo

In late September 2022, Hurricane Ian devastated Southwestern Florida when it came ashore as a Category 4 in Lee County. Seaside communities such as Fort Myers, Sanibel, Fort Myers Beach, Bonita Springs plus the village of Estero and Lee County's unincorporated areas were smashed by the storm — resulting in millions of cubic yards of debris being piled by their roadsides, waiting to be cleared so that rebuilding could begin.

CrowderGulf, a family-owned disaster recovery/debris removal company headquartered in Mobile County, Alabama, was under contract with Lee County, Florida when this happened. As such, CrowderGulf was assigned full responsibility for debris management. This included removing everything from broken building construction

materials and destroyed vegetation to damaged electronics, appliances and hazardous household waste.

Once collected by truck, these items were taken to debris management sites for temporary storage and sorting into rows. For example, the construction and vegetative debris rows were separated and then processed using a grinder. The construction material went into landfills while the ground-up vegetation was reused as biomass fuel, landfill cover or mulch.

Coming to the rescue is nothing new for CrowderGulf. Since its inception, the company has handled more than 500 disaster recovery/debris removal projects in the United States, and moved over 400 million cubic yards of debris. Today, the company employs an army of





◀◀ With a staff around 40 people, CrowderGulf understands it takes a team to tackle disasters.



## CROWDERGULF

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Ashley Ramsay-Naile

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full-time staff and subcontractors.

“Essentially, CrowderGulf is a full-service disaster response management company,” Ashley Ramsay-Naile says. She is the current president of the company, having succeeded her father John Ramsay after he passed away in 2021. “Our job is to go in after the disaster, working with the municipalities to see exactly what they need to recover from a standpoint of getting the debris off the streets and disposed of.”

### HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

CrowderGulf owes its existence to Hurricane Camille, a Category 5 monster storm that tore through the South Central and Southeast U.S. in August 1969. Brothers John and Woodie Ramsay were living in Grand


Bay, Alabama, when Camille hit, having moved back home after graduating from Auburn University. The hurricane devastated their family’s farm and the surrounding area, which motivated the brothers to pitch in with the recovery effort afterward.

In 1984, John and Woodie Ramsay established Gulf Equipment Corporation to support the growing telecom industry, with John Ramsay remain-

**“THAT’S THE KEY TO OUR SUCCESS: IT’S NOT ABOUT HOW MUCH EQUIPMENT WE OWN, IT’S HOW MUCH EQUIPMENT WE CAN GET ROLLING WITH A SINGLE PHONE CALL.”**

– Ashley Ramsay-Naile



 Ramsay-Naile knows that company success hinges on well-maintained equipment, and with a large fleet of debris trucks and machinery, CrowderGulf has a lot to keep track of.

**IT WAS MOST IMPORTANT TO US THAT WE RECRUIT PEOPLE WITH THE SAME WORK ETHIC AND GOAL TO HELP IN DISASTER-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES. IN DOING SO, WE BUILT A VERY STRONG TEAM OF TALENTED AND COMMITTED INDIVIDUALS, THE BEST OF THE BEST IN THE RECOVERY WORLD.”**

– Ashley Ramsay-Naile

ing involved in debris management as well. The growth of this secondary business led him to found CrowderGulf in 1994.

“It was Hurricane Frederic back in 1979, which went through Mississippi and Alabama, that catapulted Dad into the world of disaster recovery and debris removal,” Ramsay-Naile says. “He loved the idea of going in and helping communities at their worst and really just fell in love with it.”

Ramsay-Naile, a 1989 graduate of the University of South Alabama, started working full time with her father at CrowderGulf during the 2004 hurricane season. After four hurricanes hit Florida, John, Ashley and their top managers took a look at the disaster management/debris removal business as a whole to identify opportunities for growth. They then developed a plan to expand services in the regions most likely to need their help.

“We developed a 10-year goal to expand the company by establishing regional managers on the East Coast, southern Florida and the Gulf states in-

cluding the entire state of Texas,” Ramsay-Naile recalls. “So we strategically started adding to our management team and developed a nationwide subcontractor database identifying equipment, operators and haulers.”

Finding companies that could provide helpful equipment was important, but the team at CrowderGulf also looked beyond machinery. “It was most important to us that we recruit people with the same work ethic and goal to help in disaster-affected communities. In doing so, we built a very strong team of talented and committed individuals, the best of the best in the recovery world.”

#### **A MANAGED APPROACH**

The secret to CrowderGulf’s success is its network of satellite offices with experienced management and team of dedicated subcontractors. “Their people and their equipment only work for us when there’s a disaster,” she says. Their efforts are coordinated through CrowderGulf’s innovative Disaster Administration Office,

which Ramsay-Naile created and has managed since.

According to CrowderGulf's data, the company and its subcontractors have access to about 1,600 pieces of owned and leased earth-moving, trucking and other heavy equipment. Manufacturers range from Peterbilt Trucks to Caterpillar and John Deere. This gives them the machinery and crew output required to cope with massive projects like the Hurricane Ian cleanup.

CrowderGulf's DAO manage and preplan the efforts, resulting in a successful approach to disaster management. As much as possible, the logistics and layout of debris removal and related operations are worked out before a disaster actually strikes so CrowderGulf's people are ready to respond as soon as possible.

"We have signed contracts for exclusivity rights with what we call our 'in-house subcontractors,'" says Reid Loper, CrowderGulf's executive vice president. "Five or six of them only work for us. As well, we have somewhere in the ballpark of \$200 million worth of equipment that we have ac-



cess to. This includes around a hundred of what we call 'self-loading debris trucks,' which are tandem truck and trailer combos that haul about 160 cubic yards of debris per trip. And then we have 'push equipment:' loaders, skid-steer loaders, excavators and things of that nature. That's going to be a couple of hundred pieces of equipment in itself."

Add in grinders plus the many "walking floor" specialized trailers that haul processed materials from the debris management sites to final disposal, and "we have about 500

Though sitting idle here, CrowderGulf's spread of machinery has seen its fair share of disaster work. Pratt (left) and Loper routinely inspect the equipment to make sure it's ready to deploy the moment it's needed.

Piles of rubble like this scene from Lee County, Florida, is a common sight for CrowderGulf workers before their crews and equipment come in to clean up.



» Grapple trucks make quick work when it comes to loading and moving storm debris, which is why they are a heavily relied on tool for CrowderGulf.



pieces of equipment for immediate deployment that are provided to CrowderGulf under exclusive lease agreements,” Loper says.

### RESPONSE HELP

CrowderGulf’s management team works hard to establish and maintain a positive informed relationship with every client and part of that comes from the company’s competitively bid pre-event contracts in place prior to a disaster.

A key to CrowderGulf’s responsiveness also comes from its relationship with subcontractors. “As

a company, you can’t own enough equipment to do some of these larger disasters,” Ramsay-Naile says. “So we have strategically aligned ourselves with subcontractors on a long-term basis. The youngest subcontractor has worked for us for 12 years while others such as Steve St. George have been with us for 20 years now. So that’s the key to our success: It’s not about how much equipment we own, it’s how much equipment we can get rolling with a single phone call.”

Year-round planning is also central to CrowderGulf’s process. “This is not a ‘we’re only in business whenever

» Reid Loper, vice president (left), President Ashley Ramsay-Naile and Field Operations Director Nick Pratt (right), discussing operations while surveying available equipment in their fleet.





a storm is occurring' situation," Loper says. "We have hundreds of standby contracts that sit on the shelf. They provide us and local municipalities with the mechanisms we need to start work immediately after a disaster occurs."

When a disaster threatens to impact the company's clients, its pre-planning process identifies critical issues and equipment that may be

needed. When this happens, CrowderGulf's people do assessments of the damage and — with their clients — evaluate the immediate, short-term and long-term needs, at which point CrowderGulf assigns the appropriate assets.

The company also has regional managers strategically placed throughout the United States to train clients through mock hurricane land-fall exercises to ensure that the right emergency contacts are in place, and to use what they call "blue sky days" to identify debris management sites that can immediately get up and running after a disaster to receive debris. This approach works both for "no-notice" events like tornadoes as well as hurricanes that provide some degree of warning.

The company's knowledgeable management team combined with this strategic approach to subcontractors have allowed CrowderGulf to move into related service areas such as demolition, emergency berm and levee construction, site preparation, road and utility work, and cellular tower

**WE HAVE HUNDREDS OF STANDBY CONTRACTS THAT SIT ON THE SHELF. THEY PROVIDE US AND LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES WITH THE MECHANISMS WE NEED TO START WORK IMMEDIATELY AFTER A DISASTER OCCURS."**

— Reid Loper

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## » THREE UNIQUE DISASTERS

After handling some 500 post-disaster debris cleanups, CrowderGulf's people have seen some pretty unique disasters.

"We responded to the March 31, 2023, tornadoes that went through North Little Rock, Arkansas," says Reid Loper, CrowderGulf vice president. "One of them went through Burns Park, which is actually one of the largest city-owned parks by acreage in the United States." Damage to the 1,700-acre park included trees being pulled out by their roots in a playground and strewn across trails and roads, camping trailers overturned in overnight areas and severe damage to baseball playing fields. Fish were also found dead on the ground, having apparently been sucked out of the nearby river by the tornado, while Mother Nature trashed the Burn's Park merry-go-round and other amusement rides.

Another example of the unusual occurred when CrowderGulf dealt with the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in New Jersey in 2012. "Many people remember the very iconic homes that were displaced sitting out

in the middle of Barnegat Bay after being swept off their foundation and into the bay by the storm," Loper says. "CrowderGulf was the company that actually removed those homes from the bay. We also dredged out the debris, sand and sediment that was displaced by Hurricane Sandy and washed over the barrier island there in Mantoloking, New Jersey."

Reid Loper remains impressed by the damage Hurricane Ian inflicted on Florida's Sanibel Island, including destroying its only bridge to the mainland. It wasn't just debris removal equipment that CrowderGulf found itself barging to Sanibel: "We were barging fuel over; we were barging personnel," he says. "We even barged the city of Sanibel's fire department back over there, along with police and people from the local power company. Fortunately, we had foreseen the possibility of the bridge being washed out, which is why we had booked the barge before the hurricane hit, and had the first barge on site three days afterward as a result."



▶ A lineup of Cat excavators load Diamond Z horizontal grinders taking piles of debris down to a mulch which can be transported and used for landscaping purposes or disposed of.

▶ Disaster recovery business takes place in the office as much as it does in the field. Ramsay-Naile and an employee review contracts and detailed paperwork.

construction. The company also offers marine surveying, coastal restoration, recycling and pre-disaster training for clients in debris management and preparedness planning.

### LEARNING FROM DISASTER

CrowderGulf has learned many lessons through the events it has dealt with to date. But the one lesson that sticks with Reid Loper the most is the fact that every storm is different. “There cannot be a more true state-

ment,” he says. “So you have to be flexible. For instance, with Hurricane Ian, we had to actually float large equipment over to Sanibel Island because their one and only bridge to get to the mainland was completely destroyed. For about three weeks, we were completely barging equipment, fuel and personnel over pretty much on a daily basis to make our operations run.”

Given its success to date, CrowderGulf has learned this lesson and many others well. In fact, “after every disaster, I think we learn something new,” says Ramsay-Naile. “And the one thing about the CrowderGulf team that makes us stand out is we’re always implementing the lessons that we’ve learned. That’s the culture that we have strived for, and the approach to this industry that my father understood and applied, because he always was a big-picture kind of guy.” ▣



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I was 8 years old when a 100 mph wind-storm tore through my grandparents' farm, where my brother and I were staying. We were curious the next day about how bad the storm was: Trees down blocking roads, cows missing and no power or water. It was awe-inspiring how devastating nature can be, and then the work began. First, finding the cattle, then mending fences, removing trees and finally hauling water from the artesian spring down the road. It was the "can-do" attitude that has stuck with me all my life.

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# The Best Kind of Audit

Taking a proactive approach with in-house safety inspections is positive for everyone

**By Giles Lambertson**

**E**d Koch was the amiable mayor of New York City for 12 years. During his tenure, he was known for greeting his constituents on the street and asking them, “How’m I doing?”

Municipal utilities should develop a similar habit and openly solicit feedback from employees about whether safety programs are actually keeping them safe.

One mechanism for doing this is a safety audit. In an audit, a qualified person systematically examines an organization’s declared safety rules and regulations as well as its day-to-day practices

and determines if the two are in sync.

For example, if employees are required to wear hard hats in certain areas of a plant or work site but the examiner discovers the hats generally are not worn, the discrepancy between theory and practice is red-flagged. Red flags signal changes need to be made.

## **START INSIDE**

Ethical leadership will always prioritize employee safety.

“I like to tell people that a safety management plan should be part of your over-



**WARLOCK**  
HYDROVAC SERIES



all management system. If management is committed to doing the right thing, employees are going to do things the right way. It becomes a common culture," says Kyle Irwin, founder of Irwin's Safety. The Calgary, Canada, firm teaches best safety practices in Western Canada and occasionally in the U.S.

While "doing the right thing" works the same on either side of the border, Irwin says the consequences of ignoring workplace safety often are more severe in the states. "We're more regulated in Canada. We have more government agencies looking into it. The day-to-day standards are higher. However, the risk of litigation is much higher in the U.S. If you are a company in the U.S. and make some bad decision in respect to safety, you're more likely to be litigated by the people affected by that decision."

Neither of these two scenarios — more rigorous day-to-day regulation or greater legal risk — are typically welcomed

by utility managers. The happy alternative is to self-regulate at a responsible level and thereby create a culture of safety as a first line of defense against unsafe behavior and work conditions. Internal audits are the way to develop that culture.

Usually conducted by a safety manager, ongoing internal audits sometimes are informal, undertaken on the spur of the moment while passing through a workplace or visiting a job site. Or they are formal, with an inspection occurring on a day purposely set aside for it with a checklist as the inspection tool.

The list can be as long and detailed as your company wishes. Small companies that are just developing a health and safety program sometimes get by with a one-page checklist with a comments section at the bottom. The completed listing is filed for follow-up and future reference.

More rigorous internal inspections are longer and more nuanced. An informal short-form inspection might ask, "Is there

**"I REALLY THINK THE NO. 1 REQUIREMENT FOR BEING AN EFFECTIVE SAFETY MANAGER IS TO KNOW YOUR WORKPLACE AND TO UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENT ROLES IN THE COMPANY AND THE HAZARDS OF EACH ROLE."**

— KYLE IRWIN



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## PRO TIP

### TALK TO THEM

Regularly conduct open and respectful discussions with employees, fostering an environment that encourages active participation and feedback, to effectively communicate and address safety issues.

a standby employee positioned outside the confined space to provide emergency assistance?” Whereas a more thorough inspection checklist might ask an additional question: “Is the standby employee trained and equipped to render assistance in case of an emergency?”

These internal audits sometimes catch dangerous situations and correct them. However, the hope is that they will discover few serious defects in safety, but find areas where reasonably safe behavior can be made safer. The frequency of the internal audits and the fact they are being conducted without coercion from outside entities makes them nonthreatening to a company and its employees. Therefore, they are less likely to cover up something unsafe.

### EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

Irwin notes that the attitude of the person doing an audit goes a long way to determining how effective it will be. “I really think the No. 1 requirement for being an effective safety manager is to know your workplace and to understand the different roles in the company and the hazards of each role.”

**“THE ATTITUDE OF THE SAFETY MANAGER SHOULD NOT BE, ‘I AM HERE AND I’M GOING TO CHANGE THINGS.’ IT SHOULD BE, ‘I AM HERE AND WE’RE GOING TO LEARN THINGS TOGETHER.’ IT’S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING A SAFETY COP AND A SAFETY ADVISER.”**

– KYLE IRWIN



He gives the example of an engineer leaving his office two or three times a year to walk around a work site. “You wouldn’t go up to him during his walkaround and talk to him about the need to wear a hard hat.” Such a “gotcha” move would be officious. Rather, a safety manager should prioritize time to deal with bigger workplace hazards.

Irwin recommends that safety leaders engage with employees rather than con-

front them. To effectively communicate the need for safety, a safety manager must first have a relationship. Failure to connect with people means the chance of influencing them is slim, he says.

“The attitude of the safety manager should not be, ‘I am here and I’m going to change things.’ It should be, ‘I am here and we’re going to learn things together.’ It’s the difference between being a safety cop and a safety adviser. If you’re a cop, you ask, ‘Where is your hat?’ An adviser asks, ‘Is there a reason you’re not wearing your hat?’ The attitude should be that the adviser is learning from the employees.”

Seasoned employees might be expected to be most responsive to safety counsel, having been around long enough to witness the consequences of unsafe behavior. Unfortunately, longtime employees can be the least coachable. “A lot of people in the older generation, when you say, ‘Hey, we need to do this and this,’ they become defensive. They feel like you’re suggesting they weren’t doing something right.”

Once again, Irwin counsels engaging with the old hands so they understand their experience is respected. “You might say, ‘We know what you’re doing is working really well and you’re not injuring yourself. But someone newer on the job might not be as capable and could be hurt. We’d like to try a more systematic approach to doing this.’”

A safety manager needs to be something of a diplomat, in other words. However, diplomacy won’t always work. Irwin laughs about the time he confronted a longtime employee of a company working a railway project. “He was in a machine and I walked up and said, ‘You need to wear that safety belt because some government inspector is going to come along and see you not wearing it and throw you off the work site.’ He looked at me, said, ‘Back off!’ and closed the door.”

You can’t win them all, even when you’re president of a safety management company. The larger lesson, though, is that rules apply to everyone. **D**

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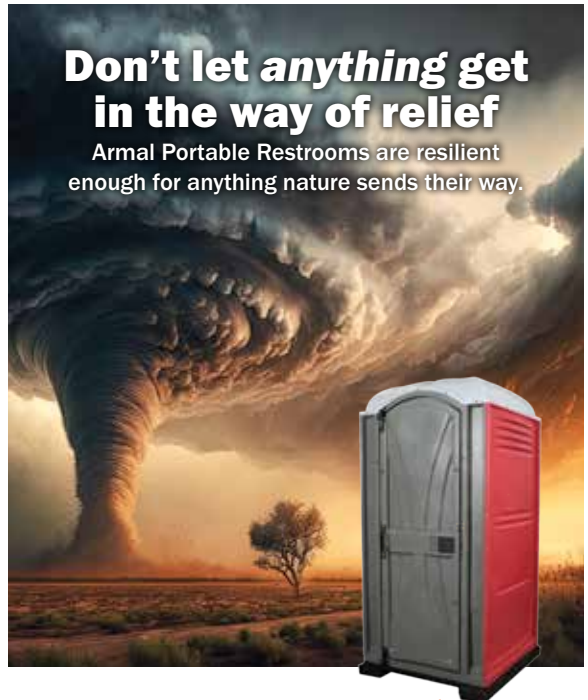
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PRODUCT FOCUS  
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PAGE 10

“I need to make sure everyone is comfortable and good prior to going into a season. ... I want tem to feel listened to, part of the team, engaged and like an active piece of what’s going on.”

Ashley Painter  
United Contract Solutions

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# Holding Back the Tide

Good preparation, teamwork and “Vermont redneck” engineering helped keep floodwaters from overtaking Winooski’s wastewater treatment plant

By Ted Rulseh | Photos Provided by the Winooski Wastewater Treatment Facility

■ The earth berms held strong in many locations of the plant, working well to keep water from flooding specific areas.



**T**he Winooski Wastewater Treatment Facility stayed mostly high and dry after Tropical Storm Irene visited Vermont in August 2011 and dropped more than a foot of rain in some areas.

Still, the plant team had made preparations for flooding and took note of how the storm affected other communities nearby. So they were ready in July 2023 when eight inches of rain fell in one day and sent the Winooski River over its banks.

The four-member plant team, assisted by seven public works crew members, used earth berms, tarping and wooden planking to keep floodwater out of the chlorine contact chamber, the aeration basin and the control building.

Utilities manager John Choate and his colleagues watched as the water slowly rose to within one foot of overtopping the wall of the final clarifier and within an inch of flowing over the makeshift barrier around the aeration tanks. Lessons learned from the storm are now informing plans to deal with future rain events, which Choate says appear to be more common in a time of climate change.

## WATCHING THE RIVER

The Winooski River has its source in the Green Mountains and flows through a series of communities and four hydroelectric dams on the way to Lake Champlain. The Winooski treatment plant is one of the last along a low-lying area just a few miles upstream from the lake.

“The river is raging farther upstream where the elevation is steep, and then it gets wider and deeper down here,” Choate observes. “If the lake level is high, that impedes how fast the river water can get into the lake. When you get a high lake level and a heavy rain, it’s almost a perfect storm. That’s what happened in July.”

The rain began falling on the night of July 9 and continued all the next day. On the morning of July 10, Choate and colleagues visited websites to monitor water levels at the upstream dams. “We saw that the water was rising rapidly in the catchment areas, and then the dam operators were releasing water to keep from flooding their adjacent communities,” he says. “They were sending water down the river faster than we anticipated.”

### PROTECTING THE PROCESS

On July 10, Choate and operators Brian Line, Tim Grover and Brian Giroux arrived earlier than the usual 7 a.m. starting time. “The water continued slowly, slowly rising and never stopping,” says Choate. “Some of us took breaks and went home during that time. We kept in touch with each other and waited, hoping it would finally stop and recede. When it didn’t, we had to throw everybody at it.”

The first line of defense was to cover the ground-level chlorine contact chamber with tarps and erect a 2-foot-high earth berm around it (about 100 linear feet) to create a flood barrier and hold the tarps in place. The earth came from a stockpile on the plant site and from an asphalt plant in town. Truckloads were dumped in the parking lot and then moved with loaders from the public works fleet.

The crews then surrounded the aeration basin with similar berms, about 300 linear feet in all. “We had pretty good access to the tanks,” says Choate. “We did some hand shoveling, but for the most part we used loaders to place those berms.” As added protection for the aeration tanks the team used tarps and wood planking that had been measured and precut ahead of Tropical Storm Irene. They fastened the planks to the railing system around the basin.

“They were cut to the right lengths and numbered, so we were able to deploy

them pretty rapidly,” Choate says. “Then we strung up tarps and put dirt on to hold them in place. If we hadn’t done all that, the plant would have been lost. We would have been out of compliance and flooded, and with all the silt in the basins we would have been out of service for a week.”

In the end, the water rose up to three feet high on the tarp and planking system: “We were within one inch of water going into that tank.” Around midnight as the water kept rising, the crews surrounded the control building with a berm, also about 300 linear feet.

Choate was hesitant about building the berms because removing them after the flood would be labor-intensive, but under the circumstances there was no alternative. “I didn’t want to make work for us at the end of the event,” he says. “We waited as long as we could to berm the different tanks. We’d work on one tank, watch the level rise around it, and then determine whether we wanted to do the next one.”

The water stopped rising at about 2 a.m. on July 11. By then significant amounts of the earth berms had been washed away, but the tarping on the tanks held up.


### READYING FOR NEXT TIME

The July flood brought to light the need for more flood preparations. Already the plant team members have raised all controls around the tanks up to 4 feet above the

**“WE SAW THAT THE WATER WAS RISING RAPIDLY IN THE CATCHMENT AREAS, AND THEN THE DAM OPERATORS WERE SENDING WATER DOWN THE RIVER FASTER THAN WE ANTICIPATED.”**

— JOHN CHOATE



 With earth berms in place and all efforts made, the crew could only sit back and hope they had done enough to protect the plant.





Choate and his team's efforts made the difference. Seen here is water receding the day after peak levels.

**“THIS WAS A 50- TO 60-YEAR STORM, AND NOW IT SEEMS TO OCCUR EVERY 10 YEARS. IT’S THE NEW NORMAL.”**

— JOHN CHOATE

Choate is considering the purchase of prefabricated flood barriers (Dam Easy) that can be placed in the control building doorways during flood events and then removed: “It’s an off-the-shelf product that can be rapidly deployed and then taken down when conditions return to normal.”

He’s also investigating more effective flood barriers around the tanks. One solution consists of aluminum planks that would be stacked into vertical supports affixed to the railings and locked in place (Flood Control International). They would be deployed during floods and then removed.

The cost of that is a concern — about \$90,000 not including installation for the chlorine contact tank alone, about 100 feet of planking and related components. “I’m balancing that versus the Vermont red-neck approach, which would be to buy diamond-plate steel, bolt that to the railing system, and then seal the bottom with high-tensile-strength caulk,” Choate says.

That solution would be permanent and would double as flood prevention and as a safety barrier around the tanks in line with OSHA requirements. Choate plans to

apply to Vermont Emergency Management for a flood mitigation grant: “If we can get the funding, we’ll do the aeration basin as well, because that would be the next thing to flood.”

Also, since the July storm the plant team has worked with a contractor to replace underground 480-volt high-amperage wiring on which the insulation was compromised during the flood. In an \$8,000 project they pulled new wire through the conduits and then sealed the conduits with blown-in foam.

The team also placed removable plastic inserts (Rainstopper) to seal manholes that had to be covered by tarps during the flood. The plant’s emergency generator is positioned above the 100-year flood elevation. “The water never reached that, but it was lapping at the foundation of it,” Choate says.

All these preparations will make the Winooski Wastewater Treatment Facility less vulnerable against future storms and floods. Says Choate, “This was a 50- to 60-year storm, and now it seems to occur every 10 years. It’s the new normal.”



**SPOTLIGHT**  
by Cory Dellenbach

## A SMALLER SOLUTION TO HEAVY MOVING

Storm cleanups usually create situations where electrical transformers and other heavy components need to be replaced or moved, and some of those could be in hard-to-reach areas that big trucks can't get to.

Movex Innovation has a solution with its Cross-Country Utility All-Terrain Carrier. This transporter is built for efficiency, safety and environmental sustainability, offering a compact, electric and remote-controlled solution for linemen.

With an all-electric design, it produces zero emissions, making it an eco-friendly choice for electric utilities. This not only aligns with the global push towards greener technologies, but also ensures a cleaner and safer working environment for linemen. The incorporation of electric power also contributes to a quieter operation, minimizing noise pollution in both urban and rural settings.

The compact design carrier is a game-changer in accessing hard-to-reach areas. With a width of just 30 inches, it can navigate through backyards and confined spaces effortlessly, where larger trucks may struggle to reach which proves to be crucial during storm cleanups.

"Instead of two guys trying to drag or carry that transformer in the backyard and running back for tools in the truck, this is an all-inclusive solution," says Francois Jean, business development director for Movex Innovation. "It makes them

more efficient and it makes their job safer."

The carrier has a load capacity of 1,800 pounds on a flat surface or 1,600 pounds at 40 degrees. It also has an integrated inverter so contractors can use electric tools at remote job sites.

"It's very quiet when it's in operation," Jean says. "That's nice for the lineman and the customers."

The remote-controlled functionality adds another layer of convenience and safety. Linemen can control the carrier from a distance, ensuring precise maneuvers without putting themselves in potentially hazardous situations. This not only enhances operational efficiency but also prioritizes the safety of the personnel involved.

The Movex carrier also serves as a pole-mounted transformer installation device. Its versatility extends to various terrains, making it an all-terrain solution for the diverse landscapes encountered during storm cleanups. Superior ground clearance enables smooth navigation on uneven, soft and slippery surfaces, including snow, mud, mountains, gravel, hay, sand, soft ground and forests.

According to Jean, the carrier fills a critical gap in the current maintenance operations of electrical utilities. It streamlines the process of transporting and installing transformers, reducing downtime and enhancing overall efficiency.

**866-533-0376; [movexinnovation.com](http://movexinnovation.com)**

# WATER & WASTEWATER UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESTORATION

By Craig Mandli

## HAZARDOUS WASTE EQUIPMENT



### ■ SATELLITE CONSUMABLES DIVISION HEXARMOR POINTGUARD ULTRA 9032

**HexArmor PointGuard Ultra 9032** gloves from the **Satellite Consumables Division** have superior needle stick protection to mitigate sharp hazards during disaster recovery cleanup efforts such as broken glass and torn metal. They are vital in safeguarding workers from potential injuries when handling sharp objects. The gloves are engineered to provide the highest puncture resistance, ANSI/ISEA cut level A9 and level 5 needlestick protection, which offers a reliable barrier against unpredictable dangers in disaster cleanup environments. The SuperFabric material and 15-gauge polyester shell provide puncture and abrasion resistance. These gloves have seamless construction for dexterity and breathability, with knit wrists to help prevent dirt and debris from entering the glove. Additionally, they are available in hi-vis to provide enhanced protection in low light conditions, allowing workers to safely navigate through debris-laden areas with confidence. **800-883-1123; [www.satelliteindustries.com](http://www.satelliteindustries.com)**



## HOSE

### ■ KURIYAMA OF AMERICA ALFAGOMMA T704HA SERIES THE BOOMER

Corrugated **Alfagomma T704HA Series THE BOOMER** industrial sewer vacuum hose from **Kuriyama of America** is made with a 1/4-inch-thick red gum rubber tube designed for wet or dry applications where severe abrasion is a factor. The corrugated black conductive styrene-butadiene/natural rubber blend cover provides abrasion resistance. The hose can be grounded. All sizes are rated to full vacuum and a pounds-per-square-inch safety factor of 3-to-1 for most sizes. The hose remains flexible in temperatures from -40 to 212 degrees F. It is available with soft-cuffed ends for easy installation and clamping. **847-755-0360; [www.kuriyama.com](http://www.kuriyama.com)**

## PIPE - CONDITION ASSESSMENT



### ■ CUES QZ3 ADVANCED

The **QZ3 Advanced HD** wireless video inspection pole camera from **CUES** can be operated by one person using any tablet. It is designed to provide safe-viewing in industrial or environmental areas with no-man entry. Perform swift inspections and surveys of pipelines, wet wells, manholes, sewer treatment plants, steam generators, tanks, vessels and other areas that are difficult to reach. It can also be used to locate lateral services or to identify blockages at manholes, access ports or other entry points without entering the line or structure. Added features over the basic model include motorized height and tilt, in addition to laser distance measurements. It is mounted on a lightweight, telescopic carbon fiber pole that can extend up to 24 feet (an optional 34-foot pole is available). The 1080p camera features a 360-1 zoom with built-in image stabilization, automatic focus, distance-to-defect measurement, and self-contained waterproof MAP lighting. **800-327-7791; [www.cuesinc.com](http://www.cuesinc.com)**



## STORAGE TANK

### ■ IMPERIAL INDUSTRIES 12,500-GALLON STORAGE TANK

The 12,500-gallon storage tank unit from **Imperial Industries** includes a 6-inch dump, 4-inch intake, heavy-duty pull skid attachment and level indicator. Available options include custom tow, hitch and axle packages, and intake agitation. It is designed for various applications, including field edge load and unloads, shop or yard storage, and grease separation. **800-558-2945; www.imperialind.com**



## TRUCK AND TRAILER JETTERS

### ■ GAPVAX G7 JETTER

The **G7 Jetter** from **GapVax** is built on a heavy-duty, contractor-grade NATM-certified trailer. Several engine choices, including Cummins diesel, are certified and sized appropriately for the water pump combinations. The unit's hose reel is hydraulically powered with a direct-drive gearbox and variable-speed control. The hose reel offers a 3-foot (curbside) articulation from center of bearing, 180-degree rotation and a capacity of 800 feet of 3/4-inch jetter hose. The polyethylene plastic water tank is available in 300, 500, 600 or 700 gallons. The water pump is center-fed for optimum performance. The controller is interlocked with safety features that will show low fuel levels and low water, and is capable of a complete engine shutdown in an emergency. **888-442-7829; www.gapvax.com**



### ■ JETTERS NORTHWEST EAGLE-200/4010-DWR

The **Eagle-200/4010-DWR** midsize trailer jetter from **Jetters Northwest** produces 10 gpm, 4,000 psi performance with full wireless remote control or jetting on/off, engine on/throttle/off, and reel-windup functionality. It is an upgraded version of the previous 4009 model and comes with an enclosed Kawasaki 31 hp fuel-injected/liquid-cooled engine on an industrial-duty trailer with brakes for safety and a beefy A-frame tongue, allowing it to be towed when full of water. Flat-top fenders allow for additional mounting surface and standard aluminum wheels give a sharp appearance. It features a super-duty triplex UDOR USA pump, 12-volt powered hose reel with adjustable windup speed, 200-gallon water tank, large 60-inch lockable tool storage bin, 400 feet of jetting hose on the main 12-volt power reel, 100 feet of 3/4-inch water-supply hose on a second reel, adjustable pulsation-control and four jetting nozzles. Specialty root/grease nozzles and other options are available. **877-901-1936; www.jettersnorthwest.com**



### ■ TROJAN WORLDWIDE TWW3000D DIESEL TRAILER JET

The **TWW3000D Diesel Trailer Jet** from **Trojan Worldwide** comes mounted on a tandem-axle trailer with a steel diamond plate deck and braking system. The power unit consists of a diamond-plate enclosed 60 hp Perkins diesel engine with a PTO-style transmission and an AR water pump pushing 22 gpm at 3,000 psi. The rear of the unit includes a hydraulic hose reel with 500 feet of 3/4-inch hose and includes a speed control for the forward/reverse function. A 525-gallon tank supplies water that is fed from a 100-foot fill hose or the included hydrant fill application. The open trailer layout makes accessing all of the components easier and less time-consuming. **800-392-4902; www.trojanworldwide.com**





## ■ VAC-CON VJ SERIES

The **VJ Series** of jetters from **Vac-Con** is designed to provide operators with an economical, portable and powerful system in two configurations. The VJ375 offers a 375-gallon water capacity on a single-axle trailer. The VJ750 boasts 750-gallon water capacity on a tandem-axle trailer. Standard features include Tier 4 diesel engine, cold-weather recirculation and air purge system, hydraulically driven hose reel and a reel-mounted, weatherproof electronic control panel. Units are available in multiple water pump pressure and flow configurations. Optional features include gas engine, wireless remote and an antifreeze tank system for cold-weather use. **904-284-4200; [www.vac-con.com](http://www.vac-con.com)**



## ■ WASTEWATER TANK

### ■ POLYJOHN HOLDING TANKS

Holding tanks from **PolyJohn** are durable, sanitary receptacles used for collecting waste in portable restrooms. They are a necessity for long-term portable sites where indoor plumbing is not an option. Made from highly durable plastic, the design is functional and discreet. They are also compatible with other PolyJohn restrooms and sinks, and can be easily configured with most any type of plumbing. For outdoor work sites or special events, use the holding tank to complete any portable restroom area. They are available in 250- and 300-gallon capacities for maximum waste storage. **800-292-1305; [www.polyjohn.com](http://www.polyjohn.com)**



## ■ VACUUM CLEANING EQUIPMENT

### ■ RNV HYDROVAC2

The **RNV Hydrovac2** can be placed on an RNV-approved 6-cubic-foot steel construction-grade wheelbarrow to create a portable hydrovac. It can vacuum down vertically to 12 feet to convey effluent sludge, sand and small aggregate. It can be combined with a pressure washer or air spade for another excavation solution. The unit weighs 42 pounds, requires a 120-vac, 15-amp power outlet and will run on a 2,200-watt generator or inverter. **607-786-2139; [www.rnvac.com](http://www.rnvac.com)**

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# CASE STUDY

## ■ LINING SYSTEM USED TO REHAB STORM DRAINAGE PIPES

**PROBLEM:** Two 36-inch dual wall corrugated pipes installed as part of the storm drainage system in a residential complex in northwest Florida were leaking at the joints. After complaints to the homeowners association about sinkholes forming, the decision was made to line the 245- and 235-foot storm pipes. The county advised the association they would be responsible for the repair of the storm lines.

**SOLUTION:** Gulf Coast Underground was brought in to advise the association. A recommendation for CIPP lining had previously been provided to the residents. GCU was able to value engineer the project away from CIPP to **Thermoform PVC Lining** from **Warrior Trenchless Solutions**. Because the storm pipes ran under a roadway and residential drives, the liner was required to be



fully structural. Brute liner with a 0.40 wall was selected for the project.

**RESULT:** Total project costs to the association were reduced significantly, and the liner eliminated the environmental impact generally associated with other lining methods. The change in lining technologies allowed the project timetable to be expedited, which proved to be invaluable due to time lost to heavy rains during the week. The project was completed successfully and on time, eliminating the leaking joints and sinkholes. **716-601-7760; [www.thermoformliner.com](http://www.thermoformliner.com)**

CASE STUDY





By Stormy Shafer

# Expanding on Buy Boards

Some of the largest cooperative procurement programs for DCR contractors

**LET'S BE REAL, YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T GET INTO THIS LINE OF WORK BECAUSE YOU ENJOY RESEARCHING. BUT THE HARD FACT IS, THE BETTER YOU GET AT EXPLORING POSSIBLE CUSTOMERS, POTENTIAL AREAS TO WORK IN, YOUR MARKETS AND COMPETITION, THE MORE SUCCESSFUL YOU'RE LIKELY TO BE.**

In the March issue, we talked about the best way to get your share of lucrative government disaster recovery contracts, using cooperative procurement programs or “buy boards.” In this installment, we’ll provide some actionable information on the more prominent of the national programs and how to find and register with them and their state and local counterparts.

Let’s be real, you probably didn’t get into this line of work because you enjoy researching. But the hard fact is, the better you get at exploring possible customers, potential areas to work in, your markets and competition, the more successful you’re likely to be. You’ve heard it before, but knowledge really is power, and you have the power of knowledge at your fingertips, either on your desktop or your phone. You just have to know where to look, and we suggest starting with the resources listed here.

## FEMA

We’ll begin with the obvious authority for would-be disaster relief contractors: the Federal Emergency Management Agency. No one in this business is unaware of this nationwide authority. But FEMA usually works with contractors through sam.gov, the official clearinghouse for federal government contracting opportunities.

## SAM.GOV

Contract opportunities are available on sam.gov from people who make, receive and manage federal awards. This is where organizations within the federal government publish notices on proposed contract

actions valued at more than \$25,000.

## FEDERAL CONTRACTOR REGISTRY

The Federal Contractor Registry is an opportunity listing site specifically for FEMA disaster cleanup jobs.

## US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Each year, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deploys hundreds of trained personnel and resources across the United States and its territories, in response to emergencies and to aid in disaster response and recovery. Under the National Response Framework and authorities of the Stafford Act, USACE works under the direction of FEMA as a member of the federal team to support state and local governments in responding to major disasters. USACE also has its own authority to directly respond to state and local needs related to flooding or coastal emergencies, under Public Law 84-99.

The NRF defines fifteen Emergency Support Functions, each having a designated Coordinating Agency. As the coordinating and primary agency for Emergency Support Function No. 3 — Public Works and Engineering — USACE is responsible for coordinating and executing several missions in the post-disaster environment. Its core missions are listed below. FEMA commonly also requests additional support and technical assistance beyond these core mission areas from USACE:

- Temporary emergency power
- Debris management

- Temporary housing and critical public facilities
- Temporary roofing
- Infrastructure assessment, technical assistance and water/wastewater response
- Support to urban search & rescue

### UNISON MARKETPLACE

You may be familiar with the former FedBid job posting and bidding website, which is now Unison Marketplace, a fully-managed online marketplace connecting sellers to federal and commercial opportunities.

### DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Of course, the Department of Homeland Security also needs disaster cleanup and recovery services on occasion. Their Acquisition Planning Forecast System is a portal for small business vendors to view contracts anticipated to exceed \$250,000.

### US GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Another major player in federal procurement is the General Services Administration. You can find an overview of the GSA's programs to help state and local government entities to purchase cooperatively. Though this isn't an opportunity listing site itself, it's full of great insider information about the GSA's advice to these lower-level entities on procurement best practices. Making sure you know what these are is akin to writing your services into bid requirements.

### APTAC HURRICANE DISASTER CONTRACTING

The Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers exists to help you in getting government contracts. 96 Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, with more than 300 local offices, form a nationwide network of dedicated procurement professionals working to help local businesses compete successfully in the government marketplace. PTACs are the bridge

between buyer and supplier, bringing to bear their knowledge of both government contracting and the capabilities of contractors to maximize fast, reliable service to our government with better quality and at lower costs. Think of this as an online coach that helps you navigate the procurement process more successfully.

### BUYBOARD

The original buy board started in Texas for statewide online goods and services procurement. It quickly grew to allow government entities from other states to participate, and is now one of the most popular and well-known such websites in the country. The BuyBoard National Purchasing Cooperative was formed by governmental entities to streamline the buying process for public schools, municipalities and other governmental entities. Developed to assist members in complying with their purchasing legal requirements, BuyBoard vendors have been awarded contracts for products and services through a competitive procurement process, thereby giving members the opportunity for bulk discounts, combined with the ease of online, web-based shopping.

Please note that registering does not give your company automatic participation in the BuyBoard. As with other such sites, vendors must be awarded a BuyBoard proposal to participate. Here's what you need for BuyBoard vendor registration:

- Tax ID number
- Annual gross sales
- Years in business
- Special classifications such as minority-owned or woman-owned business

The six-step registration process includes:

- Accepting the BuyBoard terms and conditions
- Providing your company information
- Providing primary address information
- Vendor classification
- Providing primary user information
- Reviewing & Submitting the registration

**THE ORIGINAL BUYBOARD STARTED IN TEXAS FOR STATEWIDE ONLINE GOODS AND SERVICES PROCUREMENT. IT QUICKLY GREW TO ALLOW GOVERNMENT ENTITIES FROM OTHER STATES TO PARTICIPATE, AND IS NOW ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR AND WELL-KNOWN SUCH WEBSITES IN THE COUNTRY.**



**ALL CONTRACTS AVAILABLE TO PARTICIPATING MEMBERS OF HGACBUY ARE AWARDED BY VIRTUE OF A PUBLIC, COMPETITIVE PROCUREMENT PROCESS, COMPLIANT WITH STATE STATUTES.**



## **HGACBUY** (Helping Governments Across the Country Buy)

Another Texas-based, nationwide government procurement service striving to make the governmental procurement process more efficient, the HGACBuy Co-operative brings together units of local government, including nonprofits providing governmental services, to procure their needs cooperatively. All contracts available to participating members of HGACBuy are awarded by virtue of a public, competitive procurement process, compliant with state statutes.

HGACBuy acts as the designated purchasing agent on behalf of participating members, by performing specific services:

- Developing specifications for competitive bids and proposals
- Soliciting vendor participation
- Conducting pre-bid/pre-proposal conferences
- Conducting public bid/proposal openings of responses
- Evaluating responses and making award recommendations
- Executing vendor contracts awarded by the HGAC board of directors
- Maintaining contract information available through HGACBuy's website
- Contract administration

## **THE HGACBUY SOLICITATION PROCESS**

- Specifications are prepared and an Invitation to Attend Pre-Bid/Proposal Conference is sent to known interested parties. The solicitation documents are posted on our website and advertised in certain newspapers, per legal requirements.
- The Pre-Bid/Proposal conference is held online on the specified date and time
- Responses are evaluated in accordance with established criteria and contract award recommendations are made to HGAC's board of directors
- Contracts are offered to the successful bidders/proposers, and go into effect after signed and returned

## **NIGP - THE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC PROCUREMENT**

Lastly, we have the NIGP, which provides an extensive list of U.S. procurement programs. Most helpful, they also offer tips for best practices. These keep you from getting disqualified because you overlooked something, worded something wrong, or otherwise went afoul of what they're looking for in your bid.

If you're most interested in local and state procurement, your best bet is to check these entities' websites for their particular rules and registration forms and processes. **D**



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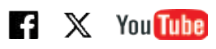
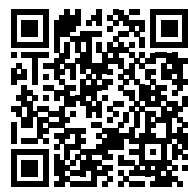
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# SATELLITE SANITRAX

## STARTER PACKAGE



### Toilet Modules

The sleek, clean design of the Toilet Module gives end-users that at-home experience. Two-tone walls keep the restroom clean, and smooth walls make cleaning easy. The Starter Package has 3 modules for a total of 9 restrooms, perfect for small to mid-size events.



### Nomad Catcher

The catcher unit is designed to stop unwanted items from entering the pumps and eventually the sewer system. It can be easily cleaned out and service during operation, eliminating downtime during the event.

### Rover

The lightweight Jets™ Rover is the ideal plug-and-play unit for everything from smaller events to emergency and response operations. This unit has the same heart as any Jets™ system: Our high-performance Vacuumator® pump.



FULL PRODUCT LINE-UP