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# Inside

## Join the Family



**THIS SPRING WE SENT** out the first issue of IVT to celebrate the people who build, sell, service and operate the best trucks in the world. The second issue of IVT highlights even more of the people who make our extended family so special.

Our Green Cove Springs, Florida, facility is home to more than 300 men and women who aren't only employees, they're owners too. Vac-Con is 100 percent employee-owned, which translates into a devotion to our products and customers that extends well beyond a paycheck. Each and every truck we manufacture becomes one of the family, and when you purchase one, you become a member of our family, too.

Thirty years ago it would have been impossible to predict how much this family would grow. Today our combination units, hydroexcavators and industrial vacuum trucks operate worldwide — supported by devoted dealers and service providers. We wanted to share some of these success stories, so welcome to Vac-Con IVT.

And don't worry if you haven't joined the Vac-Con family yet — there's always room at the table.

**Darrell LeSage**  
President  
Vac-Con, Inc.

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IVT is a specialty publication produced by COLE Publishing, Inc. on behalf of Vac-Con, Inc. and is distributed to nearly 7,000 private, industrial and municipal vacuum truck owners throughout North America. This publication is dedicated to showcasing Vac-Con's outstanding products and industry leading customer service through its extensive network of authorized dealers. For more information on Vac-Con or feedback on this publication, our products, employees or dealers, please contact us at (904) 493-4969, or online at vac-con.com.

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# ADDING A PERSONAL TOUCH

Old-school service philosophy connects Covington to its customers

BY PAUL NICOLAUS | PHOTOS BY RYAN HODGSON-RIGSBEE

**G**ene and Jackie Covington's fledgling company was only a couple years old when Chris Kinchen first started dating their daughter back in 1984. Within a few years, he went to work for the family-owned business, and by 1989 the relationships had evolved into friendship, marriage and a lasting business partnership.

"It's all about people," says Kinchen, president of Covington Sales & Service. "Her dad and I just became best friends, and that's the way it's been. Ever since, he and I have been partners."

Those family ties continue to shape the business as the Denham Springs, Louisiana, dealer — one of Vac-Con's first authorized dealers — has welcomed a third generation. Following his recent college graduation, Kinchen's son, Curry, joined Covington Sales & Service in a customer support role.

Chris Kinchen is now living the philosophy instilled in him by his father and grandfather over the years. "I'm old school," he says. "I was brought up being told that it's about customer service, and people, and doing what you say."



## FAST ACTION

Those relationships are built upon trust, honesty and integrity. "It's when those people know they can call you and you'll be there no matter what it is, day or night," Kinchen says. "When the customer calls and they have a problem, our intent is to be there as fast as we can — a quick response."

Case in point? When Hurricane Katrina hit, the company stepped up to help efficiently provide a whole new fleet of vacuum trucks during a time of need.

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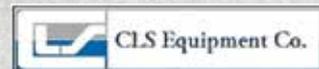
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Covington Sales & Service President Chris Kinchen (left) and Vice President Gene Covington, with their wives and company co-owners Kim Kinchen and Jackie Covington, put a priority on customer service with direct, day-to-day contact.

**“I’M OLD SCHOOL. I WAS BROUGHT UP BEING TOLD THAT IT’S ABOUT CUSTOMER SERVICE, AND PEOPLE, AND DOING WHAT YOU SAY.”**

Chris Kinchen



“We were able to supply the city of New Orleans with 13 new trucks within 90 days of the date of the storm,” Kinchen says. “They lost their whole fleet that went underwater, and we made a verbal agreement to supply them with four trucks a month — four within 30 days, four within 60 days, and then five within 90 days.

“We knew what had to be done, and we knew that doing it in a timely manner was going to be better for everyone,” he adds. “It put them back into place where they could go start sucking out catch basins and storm drains.”

### FACE TIME

With a total of 19 employees, Covington Sales & Service is always looking to add a personal touch to its interactions with customers, which plays out in ways both big and small. One example, Kinchen says, is that there’s always a human being answering the phone rather than relying on automated phone services.

Regular in-person interaction is a main priority as well. “Our direct, day-to-day contact has always been one of our company’s goals,” Kinchen says. The sales team doesn’t come into an office and make phone calls. They travel to customer locations. “We drive to their offices, we sit down and we talk to them.

“Our goal has always been to make sure we’re showing and demonstrating the product every day,” he adds. “That face-to-face contact is the most critical part of our business.”

And that type of interaction often leads to relationships that go well beyond business. “Most all of our customers over the last 30 years have become our personal friends,” he says. “That’s the uniqueness.” 🚚



Covington’s 19 employees are dedicated to keeping Vac-Con customers up and running, whether it’s regular maintenance or an after-hours call for emergency service.



# MEETING UNIQUE CHALLENGES

Fareco connects customers across Peru with the right equipment for the job

BY KYLE ROGERS



**I**n the shadow of Machu Picchu, built at the height of the Inca Empire in the 15th and 16th centuries, some of the most technologically advanced trucks in the world are hard at work.

A few years ago, the city of Cusco, Peru, bought its first Vac-Con combination truck from Fareco S.A. — a valuable tool for cleaning a modern sewer system that serves a population of more than 400,000. But not all of Cusco is modern.

“You have the historical center of Cusco with very small, narrow streets and all the cobblestones, and then you have the periphery where the streets are much wider,” says Andrew Stephenson, a representative of EL Industries International, which works jointly with Fareco to market Vac-Con equipment in Peru.

Cusco’s 11-yard truck serves the outlying areas very well, but when Fareco representatives introduced city engineers to Vac-Con’s 3-yard option, they immediately saw its potential to complement the larger truck in the tight quarters of the central city. That idea turned into an equipment demonstration, and recently Cusco officials were finally able to make the purchase and add their second Vac-Con.

“They’re happy. It is working quite well and allowing them to get to a majority of the historical center streets,” Stephenson says.

It’s an example of Fareco’s dedication to fitting its customers with precisely the right equipment.

“We try to be as objective as possible and determine the exact specs and equipment needs for a customer’s geological and sewer conditions,” Stephenson says.

And in Peru those conditions can be quite varied. For example, on the coast in the capital city of Lima where Fareco is based, sand can be problematic when cleaning sewers. In a city like Cusco, which is situated near the Andes mountain range, you have to consider how its 11,000 feet of elevation affects the ability to achieve vacuum power. Fareco has helped customers across Peru find the right equipment for their needs.

“We have a relationship with all the water companies across the country, plus some of the smaller cities where the municipality runs the water and sewer system,” Stephenson says.

The company was founded in 1986 as a distributor of equipment for the water and wastewater industries, but it wasn’t until 2006 that Fareco added a combination machine to its inventory and became a Vac-Con dealer through a partnership with EL Industries. Since then, Fareco has sold about 40 units across Peru.

After making the sale, Fareco delivers a level of service that ensures customers remain happy with their Vac-Con equipment.

“In some cases, with bigger companies like SEDAPAL, which is the largest water and sewer service company in Lima, we have a contract to service their units,” Stephenson says. “With small companies or municipalities, we give them their warranty period, and then after that we have our service department to handle whatever they need.”

**“WE TRY TO BE AS OBJECTIVE AS POSSIBLE AND DETERMINE THE EXACT SPECS AND EQUIPMENT NEEDS FOR A CUSTOMER’S GEOLOGICAL AND SEWER CONDITIONS.”**

Andrew Stephenson

Fareco has its Lima facility that customers can bring their trucks to, otherwise the company will respond directly to a customer’s location, particularly in emergency situations.

“We also have agreements with service facilities in other provinces outside Lima, so we can send our people there to service something immediately,” Stephenson says.

In some instances, Fareco has serviced trucks free of charge.

“We’ve done that to gain a customer’s confidence,” Stephenson says. “We also do regular service schools for customers free of charge. We’ll provide tips and go over certain preventive maintenance items. And at the same time we’ll show them any new features the equipment has.”

Fareco holds about four service schools every year, and in order to make it convenient for customers throughout an entire country, the company tries to bring them together in groups at a central location.

“We’ll choose a main city where there are some facilities,” Stephenson says. “We try to cover everyone over a period of two or three years, then we start over again.”

Regular contact with customers is the first step in ensuring they’re also happy customers, he says.

“We want to do everything we can to make our customers feel that we’re involved with them and committed to making their equipment last and providing an efficient service.” 

# DRIVING Growth

## RUSSELL REID'S DIVERSE SERVICES ARE SUPPORTED BY THE STRENGTH OF ITS FLEET

by Ken Wysocky

PHOTOS BY JAMES ROBINSON

Over the last 35 years, Russell Reid has grown from a small septic pumping company into one of the biggest waste hauling and disposal companies in the northeastern United States. The growth formula was relatively simple: Provide great customer service. Period.

But at Russell Reid in Edison, New Jersey, great customer service takes many forms — it's much more nuanced than just showing up on time and finishing projects on schedule. It also means providing a diverse array of services to give customers the convenience of one-stop shopping, and investing in the best equipment and technology to maximize productivity and minimize work stoppages caused by breakdowns, says Devin

Dam, the company's outside sales manager.

"It all sort of happened organically," Dam says. "When you pump septic tanks, for instance, you encounter opportunities to use jetting equipment. And when you clean sewer pipes, you realize you need cameras for post-cleaning inspections. You just naturally take on different kinds of work, or customers suggest that you start a new line of service. It's all about customer service."

### THE RIGHT TRUCKS

Russell Reid was established in 1943. Morton Weiner, the founder and owner of Mr. John Company, a portable restroom outfit, acquired the company in 1981, ushering in a new era of growth and diversification. Today, Russell Reid's primary focus is nonhazardous liquid- and solid-waste hauling and disposal. The company also performs infrastructure maintenance, such as cleaning and inspecting sewer systems, pump stations, digesters and lagoons.

Of course, providing all those services requires a lot of equipment. Russell Reid's fleet includes about 70 vacuum trucks, ranging in size from 3,500- to 7,000-gallon capacity; two CCTV inspection trucks; and five Vac-Con combination jet/vac trucks equipped with hydroexcavating packages. All have played an important role in the company's growth. "Investing in the most reliable equipment allows us to do jobs more effectively and without costly breakdowns," Dam says. "Owning better equipment than our competitors has been critical to our growth."

The Vac-Con units are spec'd for maximum productivity. Each one features an 11-cubic-yard (2,200-gallon) steel debris tank; a positive displacement blower that generates vacuum power of 4,500 cfm; 1,000-gallon water tanks; hydraulically operated, front-mounted hose reel; a telescoping boom; a hydraulically operated scissor-lift dump system; and a fully opening rear hinged door. Four of the trucks are equipped with a water pump that delivers pressure and flow up to 3,000 psi at 50 gpm through a 600-foot-long, 3/4-inch-diameter hose, while the other truck's pump produces 3,000 psi at 80 gpm via a 1-inch hose.

"The lift-and-tilt feature is invaluable — we can't do the work we do without it," Dam says of the off-loading system, which lifts the debris tank high enough to dump into roll-off containers on job sites and keeps the trucks working instead of leaving to make frequent disposal runs. The tank also tilts 75 degrees, which lets gravity do most of the heavy lifting when it's time to empty the tank. Moreover, an internal, high-pressure wash system powered by the truck's water pump washes out any debris that's left clinging to the tank.

Devin Dam, outside sales manager with Russell Reid in Edison, New Jersey.





## RUSSELL REID

Edison, New Jersey

FOUNDED: 1943

OWNERS: David Dam, and Gary and Mitchell Weiner

EMPLOYEES: 275

SPECIALTIES: Nonhazardous liquid- and solid-waste hauling and disposal and infrastructure maintenance

PRIMARY SERVICE AREA: New Jersey, New York City, eastern Pennsylvania

WEBSITE: [www.russellreid.com](http://www.russellreid.com)



Eddie Riednger and Nelson Solares position the vacuum tube on their Vac-Con to clean a sewer line.

“We’re usually dealing with thick, solid material, so the only way to get it out of the tank is to use gravity,” he explains. “In addition, most of the places we dump are not set up to take materials through a hose — we might be set up to dump onto a concrete pad with a sloped floor or into a landfill or into a roll-off container. We have to be prepared for all those situations, and the high-dump and tilt features give us the flexibility to do that.”

The company spec’d positive displacement blowers instead of three-stage fans for the Vac-Cons because they often must suck thick, heavy solids at long distances from facilities such as pump stations and catch basins or from heavily impacted grease traps, where the grease is solidified to the point that it’s almost like concrete. “Traditional vac trucks can’t remove those kinds of materials,” Dam says. “We need a lot of power because we’re often pulling at significant distances and depths.”

The Vac-Cons are workhorses used for everything from commercial and industrial work (cleaning process tanks in plants and factories, for example) to municipal cleaning. “We need to be able to cover the whole gamut because we serve so many different kinds of customers,” Dam says.

### ON THE JOB

One of the toughest jobs Russell Reid crews tackle is cleaning wastewater treatment plant infrastructure — items such as digesters, aeration tanks and clarifiers. That typically requires the Vac-Cons to move thousands of gallons of liquid waste and hundreds of yards of solid waste. “You definitely need a truck with a lot of power that can move a lot of air and run long and hard — sometimes eight to 10 hours at a pop,” Dam points out. “That’s where these trucks really shine.”

Eddie Riednger and Nelson Solares connect the extension tubes on the vacuum boom while setting up for a cleaning job.



“The Vac-Cons can suck up anything, from water to bowling balls,” he adds. “When we show up with our Vac-Cons, our customers know we won’t have any problems sucking up liquids or solid waste. It’s one of the best selling points we can offer, especially if our competitors are running pump trucks that aren’t set up to handle things like heavy solids at great distances and depths.”

Reliable equipment also plays a role in customer service because it helps ensure that jobs get finished in a timely fashion, which minimizes disruptions for clients. It also helps boost the bottom line, Dam points out. “We call breakdowns a ‘false start,’” he explains. “You’re essentially bleeding out because you’re paying for the labor and fuel, while at the same time you’re paying to fix the truck or machine — and the whole time, you’re unable to bill the customer. All you’re doing is paying out money without getting paid.”

Keeping a lid on expenses also helps out customers, which is why Russell Reid has a team of employees, led by an environmental compliance manager, that’s dedicated to finding strategically located waste disposal sites that minimize driving times and distances for disposal runs. Liquid wastes — such as sewage, industrial process water, sludge and oily wastewater — typically go to treatment centers, while solids get taken to landfills or other facilities. “If we can load it on a truck and it’s nonhazardous in nature, we can find a home for it,” Dam says. “We always use the most inexpensive and closest disposal facility possible.”

### BETTER OPTIONS

The company outfitted the Vac-Cons with hydroexcavating packages to add another convenience for customers. While hydroexcavating is not a huge part of the company’s overall business volume, Dam says it’s growing — and it’s great to have the capability when customers need it. It also provides safer options for employees when cleaning items like lift stations or tanks because the hydroexcavating wand can operate at a lower pressure (1,500 psi at a variable flow rate) than the truck’s water jetter.

“That makes it easier to handle,” Dam says. “And sometimes, if we’re cleaning old pipe, for instance, we don’t want to go in with

**“You definitely need a truck with a lot of power that can move a lot of air and run long and hard — sometimes eight to 10 hours at a pop. That’s where these trucks really shine.”**

DEVIN DAM

the highest possible pressure and flow because it might break the pipe. The same is true for things such as sewage pumps, which have delicate parts. The hydroexcavating gun allows us to back down the pressure and flow to a safer level.”

In-the-field technology for employees also factors into better customer service. For example, sophisticated business management systems and software enable customers to perform functions such as viewing and paying bills online and placing orders via email. “All paperwork — from work orders to disposal manifests — is scanned and stored digitally,” Dam points out. “When a customer requests documents, we can pull them and email them.”

Furthermore, field technicians are equipped with hand-held computer tablets that essentially eliminate the need for paperwork. The tablets can also track jobs, take photos in the field (which can be posted to customers’ accounts in real time) and allow technicians to remain digitally connected even if they’re out of range of the company’s network, Dam says.

“We’re dealing with more sophisticated customers than in the past,” he continues. “Most of our customers are used to using digitally based systems and the internet. Even here in the waste world, we have to keep up with those kinds of technologies and bring our industry online along with everyone else. People assume that waste haulers aren’t going to be very tech savvy, so we go out of our way to be just that.

“Anyone can show up with a vacuum truck to clean something out — that’s not the hard part,” he concludes. “But being a step above our competitors in terms of customer service is what really sets us apart in this industry.”

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City of Portland equipment operator John Riche flushes debris from the body of a Vac-Con jet/vac truck after dumping catch basin waste into a containment and drying bed. Portland is one of Enviro-Clean Equipment's largest municipal customers.



# TOGETHER FROM THE START

Enviro-Clean builds its equipment business around quality products

BY PAUL NICOLAUS | PHOTOS BY ETHAN ROCKE

**M**ost guys are good on the trumpet and not so good on the drums. Brad Lowe could play it all.

"He was the perfect one-man band," says Frank Clanton, president of Enviro-Clean Equipment.

Lowe wasn't even in business yet back in 1995 when he was approached about the possibility of selling the Vac-Con product line, but he recognized the opportunity and founded Enviro-Clean Equipment Inc.

"It was definitely a startup on a shoestring budget," Clanton says, but as a mechanic, salesman and a bit of a rare bird, Lowe was the right guy to make it work.

The company began on Lowe's Christmas tree farm in rural Oregon. As the business grew, it moved to a commercial building in the country and later expanded into the more populated Gresham area, where the company is headquartered today.

Enviro-Clean has sold and serviced municipal equipment and parts to public works departments and contractors in Oregon and Washington, and — with the creation of a sister



company — has expanded its reach into Idaho, Utah, Montana and Wyoming. But the company hasn't ever lost sight of its roots and the relationship that was there from the get-go.

"It started really from nothing," Clanton says. "And it started with Vac-Con."

## VALUE ADDED

If you call the office and ask what the No. 1 product line is today, the answer is clear. "I don't care who answers the phone or who you would find out of our 24 employees," Clanton says. "Every single one of them would say Vac-Con because they know the priority."



**“WE ARE EXPERTS. WHEN IT COMES TO VAC-CON, WE LIVE IT, WE BREATHE IT, AND WE SLEEP IT. IF IT’S VAC-CON, WE SELL IT.”**

Frank Clanton

And that type of focus comes with its share of benefits to customers. “We are experts,” he adds. “When it comes to Vac-Con, we live it, we breathe it, and we sleep it. If it’s Vac-Con, we sell it.” From buying and selling to taking equipment on trade or renting it out, ECE works with all things Vac-Con — new, used and rebuilt.

“We don’t build the trucks and we don’t design the trucks, so all we can do is add value and make what somebody else does better,” Clanton explains. One of the chief ways ECE accomplishes that is by knowing its customers and lining them up with the Vac-Con equipment that best suits their unique needs.

“And our trainings are second to none,” he adds. “We make that product better by teaching you how to use it right — safely and efficiently. And then you always get follow-up after that in the field.”



**Enviro-Clean, led by President Frank Clanton, was built around the Vac-Con product line, and it’s still the backbone of the Oregon-based business.**



### INVENTORY PAYS

“The other thing we do is support the products,” Clanton says, noting that his service manager, Scott Shook, is one of the best troubleshooters in the industry. “I stock a ton of parts; I stock \$800,000 worth of parts.”

That type of inventory philosophy helps keep customers on the job. When a rare engine issue sidelined one of ECE’s customers on a high-profile job four hours away in Oregon, they were ready to help.

The customer drove the equipment in overnight, and ECE staff went to work immediately. Less than 12 hours later, the contractor was driving back to work with a rebuilt engine that ECE had in stock.

Rather than ordering the part and waiting days for it to arrive, ECE found a way to help the customer get back in action — fast. Clanton says the customer was back on the job before midnight, in fact, meeting a crucial deadline that kept him on the job.

“That’s one of the ways that we definitely take care of our customers.” 

# DECADES OF Reliability

NEW YORK CONTRACTOR'S COMBO UNIT IS DOING MORE WORK THAN MOST TRUCKS HALF ITS AGE

by **Kyle Rogers** PHOTOS BY **CHRISTOPHER CAPOZZIELLO**

**G**eneral Motors launched the Saturn brand in 1990. Twenty-six years later, the brand is long gone, but John Angelo's 1990 Vac-Con V390T is still going strong.

The decades-old jet/vac truck is out on the job most days, helping J. Angelo Industries gain a foothold in the hydroexcavation and sewer cleaning industry around the company's home base of Poughkeepsie, New York.

"It's one of the best things I've done so far," Angelo says. "I haven't had to say no to a job yet. We're growing by leaps and bounds because of the Vac-Con."

The truck is built around a 7.8-liter Ford diesel engine and features an FMC Technologies pump (80 gpm/2,000 psi) with a 7,400 cfm compressor and 9-yard debris body. The truck was owned by a municipality in Pennsylvania before Angelo purchased it through Golden Equipment

Company. Years of neglect had created a few issues. It needed new belts and hoses, and fresh paint. Damage caused by water left in the tank was welded. The PTO was the only major component that required refurbishing. But since those upfront repairs, the truck has been a workhorse.

"The biggest thing about the truck is the reliability," Angelo says. "We brought this truck back, spent money in the right places, and have had no issues. Now it's making us money. I've yet to put the truck up against something it couldn't do, and it's 26 years old."

That reliability is especially important for a young business like J. Angelo Industries. Angelo and his brother, Chris, started the company in January 2015 and are still in the initial growth phase. They have some assistance from their father, Joseph, who ran his own business, Teleco Pipe Cleaning, for more than 25 years with his brother. But they haven't yet brought on additional employees or expanded the fleet because their focus has been entirely on being in the field and getting the day's work done.



# ty

John Angelo, co-owner of J. Angelo Industries, stands with his nearly 30-year-old Vac-Con beneath the Mid-Hudson Bridge in Poughkeepsie, New York.

**J. ANGELO**  
**INDUSTRIES**



**Left:** J. Angelo Industries co-owners John (left) and Chris Angelo with their father Joseph (center) and the vintage Vac-Con that drives their business.

**Below:** The Angelo brothers vacuum out a catch basin near the Mid-Hudson Bridge in Poughkeepsie, New York.



**“We finished a week early just because that three-stage fan helps so much. The power of the vacuum saves a lot of time. I can cover a lot of ground with my machine.”**

JOHN ANGELO

“Downtime costs you money,” Angelo says. “I’ve got to be able to turn the key and go, morning or night.”

Besides the reliability, Angelo is most impressed with the vacuum power produced by the truck’s three-stage compressor. A job at the Culinary Institute of America’s Hyde Park, New York, campus sold Angelo on the performance capabilities of the Vac-Con, he says. He wasn’t able to get the truck any closer than 65 feet from the 30-foot-deep grease trap he was called in to clean.

“It was quite a long pull,” he says. “But the truck performed flawlessly that day. It ran for eight hours and had no issues. I ended up doing 18 yards of grease. The ability for the truck to go so deep is absolutely great.”

That vacuum power also improves efficiency. Angelo recalls another job in Saratoga that had a three-week window for completion. Over a mile of pipe and more than 70 catch basins had to be cleaned.

“We finished a week early just because that three-stage fan helps so much,” he says. “The power of the vacuum saves a lot of time. I can cover a lot of ground with my machine.”

It’s given Angelo the confidence to take on any job, which is especially important as he grows and establishes a customer base. The truck’s performance has even surpassed the expectations of Angelo’s father at times.



Chris (left) and John Angelo clean out a catch basin in Wappingers Falls, New York.

“Because my father has been in the business for so long, he will sometimes try to point us in the right direction,” Angelo says. “There have been a couple times where he said don’t take a job, but we still did it and the truck performed flawlessly.”

He had the opportunity to meet with the owners of Vac-Con recently at the Water & Wastewater Equipment, Treatment & Transport Show in Indianapolis and told them about his old combo unit.

“I probably have one of the oldest trucks they’re aware of right now,” Angelo says. “It made me feel really good when they saw the pictures of my truck, working today still, every day.”

The reliability and productivity is the reason he’s looking at buying another Vac-Con in the next year, if not sooner.

“I’m going to stick with Vac-Con as I build the business,” he says. “There’s no reason not to. It’s just a great machine.”

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# MAKING THE CONNECTION

The Peirce-Eagle Equipment team prides itself on getting equipment in, getting it fixed right, and getting it done quickly.

Peirce-Eagle Equipment quickly responds to the needs of East Coast customers

BY **KYLE ROGERS** | PHOTOS BY **JAMES ROBINSON**

**I**f you're a customer of Peirce-Eagle Equipment, you'll always be able to talk directly to someone who can help you when you have a problem or question. No worries about waiting for a callback.

"We do everything we can to provide personal service for our customers," says Brett Gerard, president of the New Jersey-based pipe cleaning and inspection equipment dealership. "You'll always talk to somebody when you call here."

On the rare occasion when the office phone may go unanswered, the voicemail message will provide a cellphone number for someone on the Peirce-Eagle team. That 24/7 customer support embodies the philosophy of the company — get customers whatever they need, and do it as quickly as possible.

Peirce-Eagle has been providing that level of customer service since 2002 when Gerard started the company. It has facilities in Branchburg, New Jersey, and Goshen, New York, and the service area makes up the entirety of those two states. Twenty employees, from service techs to on-the-road salespeople, sell and maintain an inventory of pipe cleaning and inspection equipment in that territory.



Vac-Cons are a big part of that equipment inventory and have been since the beginning. Prior to establishing the dealership, Gerard was selling Vac-Cons as an independent sales rep in New Jersey and New York for eight years. The relationship Peirce-Eagle has with customers begins with the six salespeople who are on the road daily, traveling throughout the New York and New Jersey territory.

"We have a large territory — all of upstate New York is pretty big — but we get a lot of face time with customers," Gerard says. "We spend a lot of time with them going over their options and the advantages and disadvantages of different features."

Even when the sale is complete, Peirce-Eagle's representatives continue to serve as a consistent in-person contact for customers.



A quick turnaround on repairs minimizes downtime, but Peirce-Eagle goes a step further with a rental fleet of Vac-Cons that the company also uses as loaner units anytime a customer will be without their truck for a period of time.

“It’s constant follow-up with them via our salespeople,” Gerard says.

When customers need their Vac-Cons serviced, Peirce-Eagle’s goal is twofold: repairs made both properly and quickly. Eleven parts and service people make up that side of the business.

“We pride ourselves on getting the equipment in, getting it fixed right, and getting it done quickly,” Gerard says. “We do everything we can to expedite repairs. We keep a large stock of parts and just get on it.”

Peirce-Eagle services Vac-Cons at both of its facilities.

“We can usually do most repairs in a week or less. In some cases, we encourage the customer to just wait here for the truck,” Gerard says. “We’ll also go to a customer’s location. We have a fully outfitted service truck equipped with a crane, welder, generator and compressor. Whatever is most convenient for the customer, and whatever we can do to expedite the repair.”

A quick turnaround on repairs minimizes downtime, but Peirce-Eagle goes a step further for its customers with a rental fleet of eight Vac-Cons that the company will also use as loaner units anytime a customer will be without their truck for a period of time.

“When we get a customer who’s in a real jam, especially with a truck that’s still under warranty, we’ll give them a loaner unit for free, which is a tremendous expense,” Gerard says.

Peirce-Eagle also spends a considerable amount of time training its customers, which helps them avoid the need for significant equipment repairs. A daylong service school is held annually, alternating between the New York and New Jersey facilities. Peirce-Eagle brings in Vac-Con factory reps to assist, and they cover information about safety, maintenance and operation. Peirce-Eagle also does one-on-one training at customers’ sites.

“We train all our customers, whether it’s on a rental or a new machine, for a minimum of a day, and we do not charge for training,” Gerard says.

The Peirce-Eagle team’s specialized knowledge base also helps it better assist customers with their problems.

“We’re very focused here; the only thing we sell is pipe cleaning and inspection equipment,” Gerard says. “I think it absolutely helps with our customer service to have that focus.”



**“WE PRIDE OURSELVES ON GETTING THE EQUIPMENT IN, GETTING IT FIXED RIGHT, AND GETTING IT DONE QUICKLY. WE DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO EXPEDITE REPAIRS. WE KEEP A LARGE STOCK OF PARTS AND JUST GET ON IT.”**

Brett Gerard





Rowlett (Texas) Public Works Operations Manager Jake Gilliland stands in front of one of his department's Vac-Con trucks, a 2015 PD4212HE/1300 combo unit with a custom paint job.

## ROWLETT (TEXAS) PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

**SERVICE AREA:** 20 square miles

**CUSTOMERS:** 20,000

**POPULATION DENSITY:** 1,000 per square mile

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** 200 miles of sanitary sewer, 26 lift stations

**ANNUAL BUDGET:** \$17 million operational plus CIP

**EMPLOYEES:** 60

**WEBSITE:** [tx-rowlett.civicplus.com](http://tx-rowlett.civicplus.com)



## ROWLETT PUBLIC WORKS COUNTERS I&I ISSUES WITH CONSTANT CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

by Dan Heim

PHOTOS BY RANJANI GROTH

# STAYING clean

**T**he drought may be over, but that brings a whole new set of challenges for the Rowlett (Texas) Public Works Department, which is responsible for an aging and increasingly attention-hungry collections system.

“We’ve had 15 inches of rain already this year,” reports Jake Gilliland, utility operations manager for Rowlett. “So yeah, I’d say the drought is over. Last May we got rain on every day of the month.”

Rowlett is 16 miles northeast of Dallas on the shores of 36-square-mile Lake Ray Hubbard. At the peak of the drought that lake was almost dry. Since 2013, the level has been rising. This contributes to some inflow and infiltration, but the biggest impact on the city’s collections system comes from stormwater runoff.

“We got 3 inches in one hour just a few weeks ago,” Gilliland says. “That level of event is becoming much more common. We’ve had measurable rainfall every week over the last year.”

Rowlett has some 200 miles of clay pipe in its system. Most of it’s been in the ground for almost half a century and requires constant attention. Clays in the soil exacerbate I&I by causing expansion-related breaks in pipes, lift stations and manholes. A high water table and poor natural drainage only add to the problem.

“When things dry out, I’ve seen cracks in the ground 8 inches wide,” Gilliland says. “Sometimes you can see all the way down to the pipes. That gives you an idea of the type of soil we have to deal with.”

Wastewater treatment is farmed out to the city of Garland, which operates the Duck Creek and Rowlett Creek



advanced wastewater treatment plants. But responsibility for the collections system, right up to the plant inlets, falls on RTPW.

Many of RTPW’s lift stations and manholes are as old and leaky as their pipes. That keeps crews busy, using their

Vac-Con combination jet/vac trucks to remove stormwater debris and other detritus that makes its way into the system. As is the case everywhere, non-flushables and FOG need to be extracted, and there are always surprises caught in the filters and traps, like the Star Wars lightsaber they recently pulled out.

### TOOLS OF THE TRADE

For years, the city relied on a single Vac-Con combo unit to handle its cleaning duties. It's the truck Gilliland trained on when he came on board with the city 14 years ago.

In 2016, the city purchased a second unit from CLS Sewer Equipment Company in Dallas. The truck has a custom paint job with the official RTPW colors (black and green). "It looks kind of tricked out," says Gilliland. "People notice it."

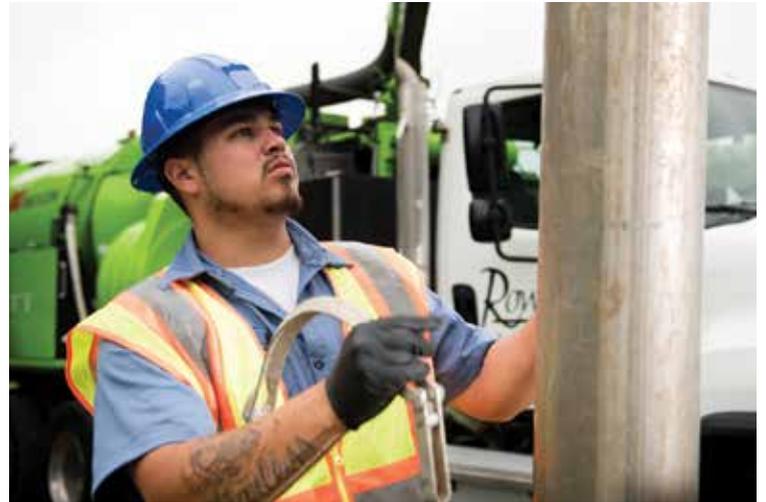
The city's older Vac-Con is a 2002 V390LHA combo unit with a 1,000-gallon water capacity and a 9-cubic-yard debris tank. The newer model is a 2015 PD4212HE/1300 combo unit with 1,300-gallon water tank. Both are used daily by one or more of RTPW's five divisions:

- CIP Engineering
- Stormwater Management
- Streets/Traffic
- Wastewater Utility
- Water Utility

The Vac-Cons get passed around among the divisions as needed, so they're on the job almost continuously. And they're usually run "wide open," which takes its toll on the pumps. The older unit has been pretty much rebuilt from the ground up, Gilliland says. "We wanted to semi-retire it but it can still take the beating, so we have it out there daily, mostly on the easier stormwater cleanups.

"It also sees some use by the Streets division. When they need to put up new signs or lights, they run it on hydro mode basically as a posthole digger. Makes short

Members of the Rowlett (Texas) Public Works Department stand in front of one of their Vac-Con trucks, used daily to clean out 200 miles of clay pipe in the city.



**"We have those Vac-Cons on the job five days a week, usually on routine clean-outs of lift stations, manholes and culverts."**

JAKE GILLILAND

work of cutting through the clay soils we have around here."

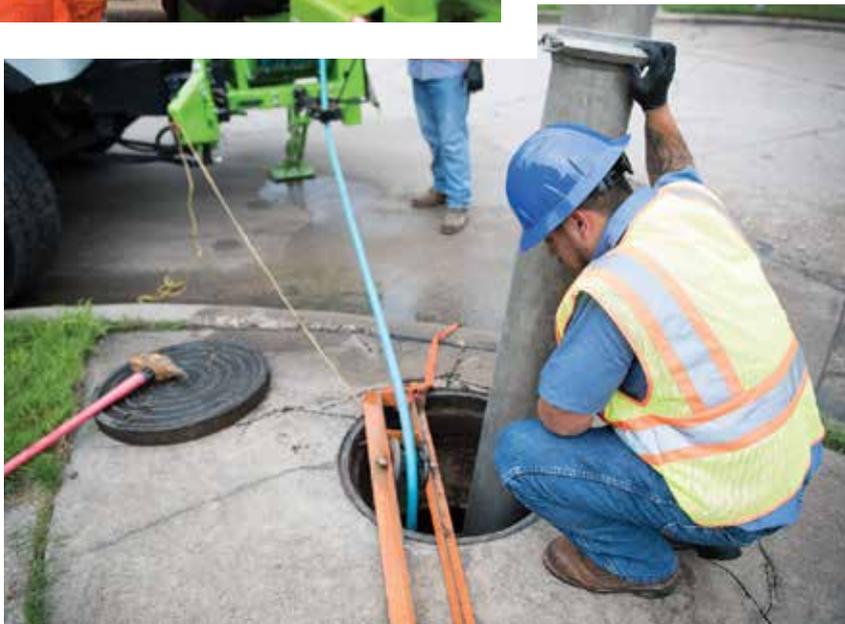
Gilliland would love to add a third Vac-Con to his fleet, but says it just isn't in the budget right now. The Public Works Department is self-funded, but he says if he made the case for another unit, he would have the support of his city council.

The entire crew at RTPW is trained on their Vac-Cons for all operational modes: jetting, cleaning and hydro. "I could point



**Right:** Maintenance specialist Taylor Enochs positions the jetter hose in a sewer pipe while William Ashley operates the controls.

**Below:** Maintenance specialist William Ashley monitors the jetting pressure during a cleaning operation.



**Left:** Taylor Enochs positions the vacuum tube in a manhole to suck debris out of the sewer line.

and are in the process of updating their database to include pipe condition data for job prioritization.

“We have a plan in the works to replace all that clay pipe with PVC, but it seems like it keeps getting pushed back by more reactive priorities,” says Gilliland. “We have those Vac-Cons on the job five days a week, usually on routine clean-outs of lift stations, manholes and culverts. That doesn’t leave us much time for pipe replacement.”

An EF4 tornado that swept through the area last December created additional issues. “That generated a lot of overtime. We lost 25 percent of our staff because of the intensive work schedule, but we’re recovering. There are a few vacant positions we still need to fill, but

to any member of our crew and tell him ‘go’ and he’d have that truck up and running in a minute,” Gilliland notes.

“And these guys are creative. On one job we were working on a ball-type check valve, and one of the guys kicked the ball into a wet well. Nobody wanted to go down there to get it, so we retrieved it with a vac hose. We cranked up the suction and were able to lift the ball up to the point where someone could grab it.”

## CHALLENGES

RTPW is on a one-year inspection schedule servicing those clay pipes. They have the whole system cataloged in their GIS,

we have enough crew to get the work done.”

RTPW is leveraging this transition to make some changes. New staff members, most under 30, are more receptive to change. Gilliland is taking this opportunity to put new procedures and protocols in place. Older entrenched standards are being replaced with more efficient ones, and RTPW is rethinking much of what had been SOP for years.

“For example, we’re looking at how we’ve been primarily in a reactive mode for so long,” Gilliland says. “We need to get more proactive to stay ahead of the game.”

And when it comes to being proactive, Rowlett’s Vac-Cons will be out on the front lines, keeping everything clean and clear. 🚧



# GOING THE EXTRA MILE

EJ Equipment owner Ed LeSage (below) and his team aren't afraid to put in a little overtime to keep their Vac-Con customers operating at peak efficiency.

Sometimes you have to drive all night to get the job done for your customer

BY PAUL NICOLAUS | PHOTOS BY ROB HART

**B**usiness doesn't always happen between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Sometimes you have to get up early or drive all night to get the job done.

In one recent case, one of EJ Equipment's customers was getting fined daily until their new jet/vac truck arrived at the job site. As soon as the call came in from Vac-Con indicating the truck was ready to roll, an EJ Equipment team member flew down to the factory in Jacksonville, Florida, and drove the truck straight back to Illinois.

It was toward the end of the day when that call came in, but fast action and long hours are what it took to deliver what the customer needed. And according to EJ Equipment owner Ed LeSage, it's far from a one-time instance of going the extra mile.

"That's become the culture," he says. "That's just how we operate and how we think."



## FOSTERING RELATIONSHIPS

LeSage's first job out of college was with Vac-Con, which allowed him the unique opportunity to travel around the country, meet dealers, see how they operate and learn from the strengths and weaknesses he witnessed along the way.

Years later, while working for a family business, he received a call from Vac-Con asking if he'd be interested in taking on its product line. "I said sure," LeSage recalls, "and here we are."

# MIDWESTERN DISTRIBUTORS



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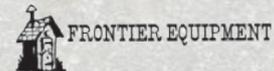
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ABOVE: EJ Equipment is built around its service department, and the team has built a reputation for doing whatever it takes to get the job done for its customers.



**“WE DELIVER THE NEW OR USED PIECE OF EQUIPMENT THAT WE SELL, AND WE DON’T GO AWAY. THROUGH PARTS AND SERVICE, WE STICK AROUND AND WE REALLY FORM A PARTNERSHIP WITH THESE GUYS.”**

Ed LeSage

There are plenty of equipment houses that are strong at selling but struggle through the service and support of those products, he explains, but because his company essentially began with a service department back in 1999, it’s the foundation and focus and what he views as the difference maker.

“When we came on board as a Vac-Con dealer, ultimately for the first couple years all we did was build customer relationships,” he says. “We built those relationships through solving customers’ problems.”

### SATELLITE SUPPORT

In recent years, EJ Equipment has seen its base of mostly municipal and government customers evolve into a mix of municipalities and contractors. While there’s no question that a government agency operates differently than a private contractor, the underlying emphasis on service is ever-present. “We have to be able to support both equally as well,” LeSage says.



With company headquarters in Manteno, Illinois, LeSage notes the importance of satellite locations in Elmhurst, Illinois, and St. Louis, Missouri, for providing high-quality service and support throughout the

state of Illinois and half of Missouri.

With this in mind, EJ Equipment recently broke ground on a new 10,000-square-foot facility outside St. Louis in order to enhance that level of customer support.

“I really think we support the heck out of the product,” LeSage says. “We deliver the new or used piece of equipment that we sell, and we don’t go away. Through parts and service, we stick around and we really form a partnership with these guys.”

### PERSONAL TOUCH

From inception, EJ Equipment has held annual open house training days that bring in manufacturers and customers, and for 15 years and counting the company has also been off to the races with a fun-filled customer appreciation event.

“We have a relationship with the Chicagoland Speedway,” LeSage says. “We provide them with street sweepers. In turn, they provide us with tickets to the NASCAR event.” The result is a group of roughly 350 people interacting at two races a year.

“It’s fun to get to know these customers outside of the workplace,” LeSage adds. “All of a sudden you’re getting to know their spouses, their children, or maybe it’s their mom and dad that they bring to these events. It’s still business, no question, but it definitely strengthens our bond with these customers.”

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