

A Step-by-Step Guide to Servicing Portable Restrooms



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The best compliment an owner-operator can receive is to have a reputation for excellent service. It's how you win customers and why your customers remain loyal. Word gets around!

With good planning and plans in place to deal with the unexpected, you have the framework of an efficient portable sanitation business that delivers excellent service, holds down costs and maximizes income.

LOADING

To load a unit from your yard, prepare the unit by removing or securing the toilet paper and closing the door. When loading a unit from a site, the first thing to do is make sure no one is inside! Pump the waste before moving. Then, drop the tailgate so the truck is ready.

Slide a dolly under the skid from the rear of the unit. Put your foot on the axle of the dolly, and grab the rear corners of the unit as high up as you can, one hand for each corner. Pull the unit backward towards you. You are pulling towards the top and keeping the bottom from moving with your foot. This will prop the unit on the dolly wheels where it can maneuver easily. The trick is to keep the unit balanced over the axle.

Next, dolly the unit to the loading zone of your truck (usually the rear).

Push the unit right up to the lip of the tailgate so the frontmost part of the skid is on top of your rack. (Some unit models have a molded catch in the skid so the unit can rest in place at this point.) Hold the unit steady, and push it the rest of the way up the truck. Avoid injury by pushing with your legs, not your back.



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Some operators use a hand truck called a Super Mongo Mover with four, six or eight tires and a tall handle for greater maneuverability and easier loading and unloading of portable restrooms.

TRANSPORTING

Professionals often turn the units so the doors are facing the back of the truck to prevent scratching and keep bugs from sticking to the front of the unit. With the unit in place, use ratchet straps to secure it — one in the middle and one at the bottom, just over the skid. Some restroom trailers are designed to strap over the skid with the front of the unit secured under a steel rail. Follow the truck or trailer manufacturer's recommendations on securing your load.

UNLOADING

To unload, slide the unit to the edge of your truck. While you are on the ground, slide the unit halfway off, tilt back gently and let gravity do its job. Guide the unit so the rear of the skid touches down first, then gently let the rest of the skid hit the ground.

Move the unit to the desired location. Make sure the ground is level, or level the unit by chocking up one side with two-by-fours.

PUMPING AND CLEANING: STEP-BY-STEP

The following series of steps is a practical approach for pumping and cleaning. Other operators may do it differently. Find what works best for you. Once you're used to your routine, the entire process should take only a few minutes per unit.



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1. Sign and date the service record sticker inside the unit

If your company chooses to have service records inside the unit, it is best to “date it” prior to the sticker being wet from washing the unit

2. Remove trash and debris from the unit

Instead of making a trip to the garbage can or truck for every unit, pile any trash outside and collect it all as noted in Step 12 below. Some operators use their wand to move the debris. The wand is the extension that clamps onto the suction end of your pump-out hose.

3. Vacuum the tank

Put the wand all the way to the bottom and tilt it to one side. This helps prevent debris from getting into the wand and clogging the hose. Once the waste level is lower, you will be able to more easily see potential clog hazards.

4. Remove objects from the tank

Use the wand or a grabber to remove debris.

5. Scrub the urinal

Spray or scrub the urinal with a product designed to eliminate urine and calcium build-up.

6. Clean the tank and opening lid

Clean the lip inside the tank right under the seat. If you have a recirculating flush toilet, make sure to empty the contents of the hose by giving it a few flushes after being pumped. Then, pump it again.

7. Clean the floor

Unit floors take a beating, so give them a solid scrubbing. Don't forget the bottom half of the door — many people push

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open the door with their foot.

8. Add water and chemicals

Five gallons is the standard amount of water for weekly rentals. For high usage, consider adding 7 gallons. The chemicals work only if the waste is submerged, so the more water, the better.

9. Wipe down and dry the unit

The most important area to dry is the seat and top of the tank. Your customers do not want to sit on a wet toilet seat!

10. Install new toilet paper

A standard roll is 1,000 sheets. Larger rolls (2,500 sheets) mean changing less often.

11. Install a urinal block

Using a urinal block doesn't mean you don't have to clean the urinal. Due to the cost of blocks, some operators choose a less expensive alternative by cleaning (Step 5) and simply using liquid deodorizer.

12. Clean up the area around the unit

This includes the debris you have removed from the unit. Place it in the garbage or in a bucket on your truck to dispose of later.

13. Always be courteous!

Make sure the unit is placed in a good location for both you and the customer.



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PSAI CERTIFICATION

You can reach a higher level of professionalism, add credibility to your company and offer top-quality customer service by becoming a Certified Portable Sanitation Professional (CPSP). To become a CPSP, join Portable Sanitation Association International (PSAI) and take their certification program, which includes a Basic Service Technician training course. For more information, visit <http://psai.org/about-certification>.

COMMON ISSUES AND PROCEDURES ON HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM

1. Clogged hose

Bottle caps, diapers, golf balls, work gloves — it's amazing what can end up in your hose. If the clog is close enough to the opening, you can pull out the object with pliers. For harder clogs, you can try switching the ends of the hose or pushing the clog with a long rod, such as rebar. In extreme cases, you may have to cut open the hose, so it's a good idea to carry hose repair tools, as well as a backup hose. (We recommend doing this in your shop and using your spare hose to complete your route for the day.)

2. Graffiti

To clean graffiti, chemical manufacturers offer liquid or aerosol graffiti removal products made specifically for the portable sanitation industry, such as Cooper's Own Graffiti Remover, ArtBlaster and BANISH. These products are more effective the longer they can work on the affected area, so tackle graffiti first before you pump the tank and finish your other cleaning tasks. Apply the solution to the graffiti and let it work, then wipe off with a rag, specially designed eraser pad (usually purchased with the solution) or scouring pad for especially tough graffiti. Rinse thoroughly.



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3. **Unit is blocked by equipment, trucks or due to rain**

Locate or call the renter or person in charge of the site, such as the foreman. Be courteous, and explain that you can wait only a few minutes for the equipment to be moved. If this isn't possible, give them the option of waiting until the next scheduled service (we would still bill them for the full month of services, even if we couldn't service it once) or coming back at another time (extra charge).

Sometimes, a unit becomes inaccessible because heavy rains flood the grounds around it. Usually, when this happens, the unit hasn't been used much anyway. Explain to the person in charge why you couldn't pump the unit. Give it a quick wipe down and add some extra "blue" to the tank.

4. **Unit is inaccessible due to locked gate**

If there are posted site hours and you are within that timeframe, contact the customer. If the gate is always locked during your service route schedule (and no one is present), ask for a copy of the key or code number.

5. **Unit has been moved**

Look around to see if you can find the unit, then contact the customer for more information. Some customers move the unit themselves. Sometimes a unit can be stolen! There are times when a company may move the unit to a new site. If this happens, be sure to update the address listed on the paperwork. Also, ask the foreman to notify you if it happens again so you don't waste time driving to the wrong location. Lost time is lost money. Inspect the unit and make sure it is on level ground.

6. **Unit has been damaged**

Take photos, and notify a foreman or person in charge. Keep the unit in place until a responsible person is able to see the damage. Replacement and repair costs are usually covered in your service agreement.

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7. **Extreme usage/tank very full**

While this may happen occasionally at special events, if it becomes a trend (for example, at a construction site), notify the foreman or person in charge. Ask how many people they have per toilet — the industry standard is 1 unit for every 10 people working 40 hours. This is an opportunity for you — your customer may need another unit!

8. **Toilet paper rod missing**

Consider using rod locks. Always stock replacements on your truck.

9. **Truck full of waste**

If your waste tank is full before the end of your route, your only choice is to go to your dump site. Avoid this misstep by checking your waste level before beginning the day, and monitor the level regularly. It's dangerous to over-fill your truck. If your tank becomes full while pumping, the waste in the hose will have nowhere to go. Trying to put it back in the toilet can lead to a nasty spill!

10. **Spilled blue**

Although not a severe environmental hazard, this chemical solution can leave an unsightly blue stain. Break out your spill kit and clean it up ASAP! Spraying it down with water will only spread the chemical and leave a bigger stain. If you don't have a spill kit, use oil dry, and clean with graffiti remover and bleach. Familiarize yourself with the SDS' of the specific chemicals you use. They have useful information regarding potential hazards.

11. **Customers want service at a different time or day**

If it is inconvenient, but you can do it, consider adding a service charge. Find out what the issue is to see if more convenient arrangements can be made.

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12. Customers want another unit

This is a great problem to have! If you can, consider carrying an extra unit to cover this possibility. If you don't have an extra when a customer asks, consider waiving a fee if they can wait until your next scheduled service.

SERVICE SCHEDULING

A good rule of thumb is to begin by putting customers on a scheduled cleaning once a week. For special events that run for more than one day, recommend to the event coordinator that the units need to be cleaned at least once a day (sometimes more). Don't forget to add those service changes to your proposal.

If a long-term customer isn't using the unit much, you may recommend (or they may ask for) service every other week. You might offer a small discount when a customer reduces service.

On the other hand, some sites have such high usage that they will need to be cleaned twice or three times a week. Our pros have even needed to clean a unit as much twice a day, 7 days a week!

When you have to increase the cleaning schedule, charge accordingly. Figure your added expenses in mileage, time, disposal fees and also "opportunity cost." This is the money you may have been making doing something else if you weren't busy with the extra service.



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If extra servicing is necessary, first ask your clients if they would accept additional restrooms instead of doubling the service. You have fewer costs servicing 4 units once a week than 2 units twice a week.

Customers may have special requests, such as servicing their units on a particular day or time. You should always try to meet their needs if they are reasonable — but charge accordingly.

Whatever your schedules are, always remember — service with a smile!

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