



Jason Walter uses a LaserMark self-leveling rotary laser to test the depth of an installation. (Photography by Bruno Ratensperger)

No-surprise pricing

Walter sells a quality job for a fair price. The price he quotes includes everything he can anticipate needing to complete the job to his own and his customers' satisfaction. "My price is a complete price; there are no add-ons for grass seed, or fertilizer, or anything," he says. "People are price-driven. I tell customers, 'If you hire someone who will work for peanuts, you get someone who will monkey around with your job.'"

Walter notes that some area installers will quote an onsite system at a given price, then add on mobilization costs and other charges later. Customers then feel they have been abused. During the proposal stage, Walter explains not only the project, but his pricing methods, so customers can make informed comparisons if they are shopping around.

"I am customer-connected. I answer my own phone, I always return calls promptly, and while I am learning every day, at the same time I am my customers' onsite system resource."

Jason Walter

Basic Yellow Pages ads are his only formal self-promotion. Walter knows satisfied customers become his company spokespersons. "If a customer knows I did a quality job for a fair price and cannot see any change in the appearance of the site when I am done, they will sing my praises," he says.

Careful growth

With just his mom as a support person and office manager, Walter's personnel costs are minimal, but he sees that changing. There are opportunities in system management, but so far he has not installed many advanced treatment units. More are going in steadily around the area, and he could service them whether they are his own installations or not.

"I'll know when I am ready to hire an employee when I have suffi-



With a zero-tail-swing excavator, Jason Walter can get any job done, large or small.

cient work to keep two machines or one service technician busy," he says. He previously had an employee, and from that experience he learned that his next hire must be someone with experience in the onsite industry and a commercial driver's license. Training will be a priority for anyone he hires, as it is for himself. "We can never stop learning; too much is happening in this industry," he says.

Walter's dad remains in the pumping business, and when one of Jason's customers needs a tank pumped, dad gets the call.

Banking on diversity

As he waits for the maintenance market to develop, Walter focuses on installations and repairs, which sometimes involve complete replacements. His area is diverse, and the sites demand creative thinking.

US Route 1, the Maine-to-Florida highway, follows the physiographic line of demarcation between coastal sands and upland soils, and conditions change markedly along

the divide. Walter likes the Mantis GSF system from Eljen Corporation because under Connecticut regulations, it can be installed with a smaller footprint than a conventional system. It is also a passive system that yields a more highly treated effluent.

These systems fit on both sides of the highway because they can effectively address diverse natural conditions, including seasonal high water tables and clayey soils that perc slowly. "In the environment of small lots and restricted access routes, the smaller footprint helps the installer and the property owner," Walter says. "I bought a mini-excavator just for these sites."

For about 90 percent of his repair work Walter is allowed under state regulations to prepare his own designs, and he does so. "When dealing with complex site conditions, I always bring an engineer into the process," he says. "For systems serving a daily flow over 2,000 gpd, an engineer must be involved." Regardless of the site's limitations,

Jason Walter moves a Mantis GSF leaching unit from Eljen Corporation into place.



Walter works hard to find the right solution for all parties concerned.

The right feel

As a rule, Walter seeks out problems other installers have walked away from, but sometimes things just don't make sense. "After reviewing the site's conditions, a proposed design, and the designer's selection of a particular technology or system type, if I'm not convinced the system will have a long, successful life, I'll walk away from the job," he says. "If it doesn't feel right, I won't do it."

For customers who have seen him apply his knowledge and diligence in the field, selecting Walter to do their job just feels right. ■

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