



Macy's Services technician Robbin Hincks prepares to pump a residential tank near Jackson Hole, Wyo. Septic pumping is one of a variety of industrial services provided by the company. (Photos by Catherine Coe)

# The BIG

**WYOMING'S MACY'S SERVICES FINDS THE BEST SMALL-TOWN STRATEGY IS TO DIVERSIFY, DIVERSIFY, AND THEN DIVERSIFY SOME MORE**

By Ken Wysocky

## Profile

**Macy's Services,  
Jackson, Wyo.**

**Owners: Dwight  
and Bobbie Reppa**

**Founded: 1993**

**Employees: 10**

**Service Area: 75-mile radius of Jackson**

**Services: Septic system pumping and rejuvenation, portable sanitation, grease trap service, sewer jetting and inspections, hauling potable water.**

**Affiliations: Portable Sanitation Association International, National Association of Wastewater Transporters**

**Website: [www.macysservices.com](http://www.macysservices.com)**



**S**mall communities in remote locations often need a go-to company – a local business that's willing to keep expanding to fill the needs for essential services. In Jackson, Wyo., one of those companies is Macy's Services, which prospers through this diversification-by-demand formula.

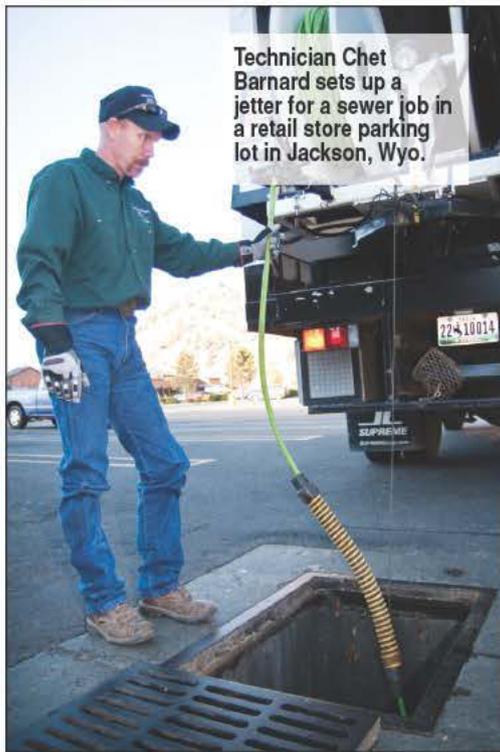
Multi-tasking has been the company's hallmark ever since Jim and Lee Macy started the business as Macy's Inc. in 1983. At that time, the company's services included hauling materials with a dump truck for local contractors and Teton County, dust abatement with a water truck and repairing heavy-duty equipment. And when local officials and other residents started asking who among them could pump septic tanks, the Macys agreed to give that a go, too.

### WE'LL DO IT

So the couple invested in a 1979 Chevrolet vacuum truck with a 1,800-gallon steel tank. In 1999, the Macys sold the company to Bobbie and Dwight Reppa, their daughter and son-in-law. The Reppas quit careers in property management to buy the company, renamed it Macy's Services and carry on the diversification tradition.

"When we see an opening for something we can do, we try to accommodate that need,"

*(continued)*



Technician Chet Barnard sets up a jetter for a sewer job in a retail store parking lot in Jackson, Wyo.

and hauls potable water (a service prompted by the area's rocky soil, which makes drilling wells difficult). Septic system, grease trap and jetting work represent about 60 percent of the business volume, with the balance generated by portable sanitation (which, in turn, breaks down to about 90 percent construction placements and 10 percent special events).

"Diversity is very important to us," Dwight notes. "If we just did portable restrooms or septic or sewer jetting, I don't see how we'd survive. The (business) volume in a small community just wouldn't be there.

"Septic tank pumping, for example, is almost non-existent in winter around here, except in an emergency," he continues. "And portable restroom rentals usually drop off in winter. But we get frozen lines and sewer jetting picks up. Or we haul potable water to resorts where the wells can't satisfy the demand. And cleaning restaurant grease traps has become a year-round business that fills in winter-time revenue gaps."

#### DEMAND FOR RESTROOM TRAILERS

One area the Reppas expanded into was special event restroom service. As they did so, they noticed more and more demand for restroom trailers fueled by outdoor weddings and high-end fundraising events.

"We were using standard restrooms, but more and more customers didn't want to use them, especially the ladies, who are out there in nice dresses and high heels," Bobbie says. "Then a special-event planner started to bring in rest-

room trailers from Colorado, which raised a red flag. We'd just as soon not have other companies operating here in the valley. So we decided it was a service we'd like to provide."

In 2001, the Reppas purchased a 24-foot trailer from Advanced Containment Systems Inc., featuring oak trim throughout, air conditioning, a stereo system, porcelain toilets and urinals and simulated marble interior walls. The trailer cost about \$54,000, which Bobbie admits gave her and Dwight pause.

"But we didn't have a lot of other debt, and we figured we could pay it off in a reasonable amount of time, which we did," she explains. "It definitely has paid for itself - it was a good investment. People still hold fundraisers even if the economy is bad, and they don't want to skimp on something like that." Bobbie says she consulted with wedding planners and restroom trailer sales representatives to determine a fair price for the rentals.

Today, Macy's owns about 400 restrooms (including 20 handicapped-accessible units), mostly made by Satellite Industries Inc. and PolyJohn Enterprises Corp.; and three other restroom trailers: a 12- and 15-footer made by JAG Mobile Solutions Inc. and an 8-foot unit they put together.

#### SEPTIC SYSTEM UPGRADES

Macy's Services also has expanded into septic system upgrades, prompted by the increasing number of failures of older systems in the region. Regulations require four feet of separation between leachfields and the nearest,

*(continued)*

Bobbie says. "If it's a necessary service, someone needs to do it."

"We expanded on an already great business," Dwight says. "Whatever Jim and Lee did, we took it to another level. They were tired when they sold the business and we were eager to get into it ... and take things a step or two further."

Macy's now cleans septic tanks and grease traps, rejuvenates septic systems, cleans and inspects sewer lines, services portable restrooms

Dwight Reppa responds to a residential septic service call with one of the company's vacuum trucks, this one with a 2,300-gallon aluminum Progress tank.





The Macy's Services crew includes (standing, left to right) Bobbie Reppa, Anita Nilsson, Jerry Despain, Hadley Bray, Shannon Jones, Robbin Hincks, Chet Barnard, Dwight Reppa and David Jiminez. Kneeling, left to right are David Reppa, Mark Seaton and Eduardo Roldan.

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Dwight Reppa

highest groundwater. Over the years, fewer and fewer systems meet that requirement, Dwight says. The answer has often been mound systems.

Dwight also is a big proponent of installing risers because the area's rocky soil makes excavations difficult. “To dig down 12 inches to a lid could take 30 minutes or more,” he says. “We recommend risers, which are especially helpful if

there's a problem in winter. In most cases, people agree. It's a nice add-on service. It saves us time on service calls, and we don't have to mess up someone's yard. And it's cheaper for customers if we don't have to excavate.”

### IN THE GARAGE

To service septic systems, Macy's relies on a 2004 Peterbilt 330 with a 2,300-gallon aluminum tank; a 2001 Freightliner FL70 with a 2,300-gallon Progress (New Progress LLC) aluminum tank, built out by TOICO Industries; and several vehicles built out by Macy's, including a 2002 Freightliner FL70 with a 2,000-gallon steel tank; a 1991 International 4900 with a 2,300-gallon steel tank; a 1989 Kenworth T800 with a 3,400-gallon steel tank; and a 1979 Chevrolet C60 with a 1,800-gallon steel tank. Most of the trucks use Masport pumps.

Macy's also owns a Terralift drainfield rejuvenation machine, made by Terralift International Family of Companies.

To service restrooms, Macy's owns 2007 and 2006 Ford F-550s, both with 700-gallon waste/500-gallon freshwater aluminum Progress tanks and built out by TOICO; a 2003 Ford F-550 with a 600-gallon waste/400-gallon freshwater steel tank; a 2000 Ford F-550 with a 1,000-gallon steel tank; a 1999 Ford F-350, outfitted with a 300-gallon waste/100-gallon freshwater steel slide-in tank from Imperial Industries Inc.; a 2002 Ford F-550 with a 300-gallon waste/200-gallon freshwater steel tank; and a 1995 Hino FA1415 with a 400-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater

steel tank, both built by Macy's. All the trucks use Masport pumps.

The company also owns a 2008 Mitsubishi FK260 jetting truck, outfitted by the Sewer Equipment Company of America with two waterjetters (4,000 psi at 18 gpm and 4,000 psi at 25 gpm); a 1990 International 4700 outfitted with a water-jetter (2,000 psi at 60 gpm), built by Aquatech (Hi-Vac Corp.); two SeeSnake video inspection camera systems, made by RIDGID; three drain-cleaning machines made by General Pipe Cleaners; and a 1977 International F4370 with a 4,400-gallon steel tank and a 1991 Peterbilt with a 4,000-gallon steel tank, both used to haul potable water.

“Most of the equipment we've bought in the last eight years or so has been brand new,” Dwight notes. “With something new, I'm not doing major repairs for five or six years. We have an informal replacement schedule so that in theory, we phase out older equipment to minimize downtime. We have more than 20 vehicles, so if we didn't phase out, we'd need four full-time mechanics to keep up with everything.”

### DISPOSAL CHALLENGES

Macy's disposes of septage at a town of Jackson dumping station. The waste is dumped into a trough connected to a main sewer line. The company used to dump grease-trap waste there, too, until the town stopped accepting it about 10 years ago.

“For a while, we hauled it to Pocatello, Idaho, which is about 100 miles away one-way,”



Dwight Reppa prepares to inspect a septic system at a home near Jackson, Wyo.

On the job at a residential septic tank are Dwight Reppa, left, and Robbin Hincks.



Dwight says. "It was an issue at times during winter because the grease would freeze, not to mention the transportation costs. So we looked for a better way."

The Reppas examined several treatment processes while attending the Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo International and ended up buying a 12-yard dewatering box in 2003 made by Flo Trend Systems Inc. The system, set up in a Macy's garage to contain odors, separates liquids from the grease-trap waste. Macy's has permission to direct the liquids into the municipal sewer system, and the "cake," or dewatered grease waste, goes to a landfill, Dwight says.

"The dewatering box has paid for itself over the years," he says. "Back in 2000, we only pumped about a half dozen grease traps a month, but now we devote two full days each week to pumping traps. They range in size from

20 to 100 gallons. We clean larger interceptors of 1,000 or more gallons - up to 4,000 gallons at one place - quarterly or twice a year."

### COMPETITION HEATS UP

While diversity has helped Macy's stay busy during the recession, it hasn't completely protected the company. The construction downturn forced Macy's to lay off an employee last fall for the first time, and the recession also spawned an unexpected threat: more competitors as distant companies search farther afield for business.

"We have more competition than ever before, and they're undercutting us on price," Dwight notes. "In response, we emphasize service ... we hope we can weather it by keeping our standards high."

And maybe adding another service or two. ■

### more info

**Advanced Containment Systems Inc.**  
800/927-2271  
www.acsi-us.com

**Hi-Vac Corp.**  
800/752-2400  
www.aquatechinc.com

**Flo Trend Systems Inc.**  
713/699-0152  
www.flotrend.com  
(See ad page 36)

**General Pipe Cleaners**  
800/245-6200  
www.drainbrain.com

**Imperial Industries Inc.**  
800/558-2945  
www.imperialind.com  
(See ad page 62, 73)

**JAG Mobile Solutions Inc.**  
800/815-2557  
www.jagmobilesolutions.com

**Masport**  
800/228-4510  
www.masportpump.com  
(See ad page 3)

**PolyJohn Enterprises Corp.**  
800/292-1305  
www.polyjohn.com  
(See ad page 107)

**Progress Tank**  
800/558-9750  
www.progresstank.com  
(See ad page 75)

**RIDGID**  
800/474-3443  
www.ridgid.com

**Satellite Industries Inc.**  
800/328-3332  
www.satelliteindustries.com  
(See ad page 2, 31, 57)

**Sewer Equipment Company of America**  
847/729-3547  
www.sewerequipment.com

**Terralift International Family of Companies**  
413/298-4272  
www.terraliftinternational.com

**TOICO Industries**  
888/815-2557  
www.toico.com  
(See ad page 26)

## HE RELISHES TROUBLESHOOTING ROLE

When Dwight Reppa worked as a property manager in Jackson, Wyo., he often relied on the expertise and services offered by a local company called Macy's Inc. Now the tables are turned, as he and wife, Bobbie, own the company founded by her parents, and he's the troubleshooter locals rely on when they're in a fix.

"Whatever people need, they know they can call Macy's and Dwight will figure out a solution," Bobbie says. "Sometimes we might not have the exact equipment a customer needs, but we figure out a way to make it work for them."

A good example occurred when a subdivision homeowner's association found curb stops filled with rocks, which prevents workers from accessing main water-line shutoff valves. A 3-inch vacuum truck hose wouldn't fit into the stop, so Dwight improvised by using a reducer to attach a 2-inch-diameter, 6-foot-long piece of PVC pipe.

That enabled the vacuum truck to pull smaller rocks through the pipe. Workers removed larger rocks individually after they got sucked up against the bottom of the pipe.

In another instance, smoke from a chimney at a local resort escaped into some of the rooms. To find the source of the leaks, Dwight lowered a sewer-inspection camera down the chimney pipe, accessed through holes drilled into chase walls.

"We started up high and dropped the camera down the chimney pipe while someone set off smoke bombs," Dwight explains. "We found where the smoke was escaping. That was a pretty unique application."

Dwight says he's also used an inspection camera to find dead animals in heating ducts without having to tear out an entire duct system.