

Skip Norsic Finds a Diamond in the Rough

Searching for heirloom jewelry in the septic tank is one of the things that made the wastewater industry memorable for the past 50 years for this New York pumper



In Snapshot, we talk to a member of a state, provincial or national trade association in the decentralized wastewater industry. This time we visit a member of the Long Island Liquid Waste Association.

Name and title or job description: Emil “Skip” Norsic Jr., CEO

Business name and location: Emil Norsic & Son Inc., Southampton, New York

Services we offer: Septic tank pumping, cleaning and maintenance; temporary restroom and trailer facilities; waste line cleaning and inspection; residential and commercial trash pick-up; roll-off service.

Age: 72

Years in the industry: 51

Association involvement: I have been a member of the Long Island Liquid Waste Association since 1995 and am currently a member of the board of directors.

Benefits of belonging to the association: The main benefits of membership in LILWA are being able to share ideas and experiences with fellow members. And it gives us a voice with local officials on rules and regulations that affect our industry.

Biggest issue facing your association right now: The population on Long Island has been steadily increasing, especially since the outbreak of COVID-19. People are leaving New York City and moving to the suburbs. I feel we need to carefully consider how to treat the increased wastewater that is being generated.

Our crew includes: Stu Fuhlbrugge is our general manager and oversees all divisions. Brian Gilbride handles local, town and county government rules and regulations. In the septic division we have team leader Trevor Poach and dispatcher Peter Lelakowski. In the portable restroom and roll-off division, our team leader Chris Zorko works with Cheryl Hack who handles dispatch for construction units and Dan Palumbo who does the booking for special event units and restroom trailers. Edgar Garcia is the special events team leader. I must include Peter Blank who I worked with for over 35 years through thick and thin. All our employees have helped us carry on a business that my grandfather founded in 1932.

Typical day on the job: I generally spend my time meeting with Stu, discussing and resolving problems and issues as they come up for each division.

The job I'll never forget: About 25 years ago, when I was still driving a septic truck, we received a call from a customer who operated a beauty salon. Before she had her first client she removed an engagement ring her husband had given her. The ring had diamonds, rubies and sapphires. She placed it on a sink and somehow it had fallen down the drain. Panicking, she called a plumber to disconnect the U-trap. However, the ring was not there. She called our office to ask us to pump out the cesspool to try to locate the ring. I told her the odds were a million to one that we would recover it, but nevertheless, she wanted us to try. I

pumped out the water down to the sludge. Then with hip boots on went down the cesspool with a swimming pool net and garden hose to sift through the sludge. I spent an hour or so doing this but with no luck. When I was climbing back up the ladder I noticed the main sewer line coming into the cesspool was Orangeburg. This material tends to have a sag or “belly” in it. I reached my hand in the line and sure enough I found the ring. When I was back on firm ground covered with you-know-what, the woman gave me hugs and kisses and said I was her hero!

My favorite piece of equipment: The RIDGID SeeSnake video camera and locator are great because they take the guesswork out of where a septic tank is or where a line is broken.

Most challenging site I’ve worked on: When Hurricane Sandy hit in 2012 we worked around the clock for three weeks to help provide liquid waste hauling, temporary restroom facilities and (containers) for clean up.

The craziest question I’ve been asked by a customer: One customer asked our dispatcher if her boiler was connected to the septic system. She was relieved when he said no.

Best piece of small business advice I’ve heard: My grandfather told me to treat every fellow worker and customer with dignity.

If I wasn’t working in the wastewater industry, I would: I would love to be a pro golfer — but that’s not going to happen. I love what I do. Every day has new challenges.

Crystal ball time – This is my outlook for the wastewater industry: The Long Island Liquid Waste Association, along with the Suffolk County Department of Health, have adopted license requirements for septic companies that they must have in order to obtain certification. I feel this is a great step to further protect public health and water quality for future generations.

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