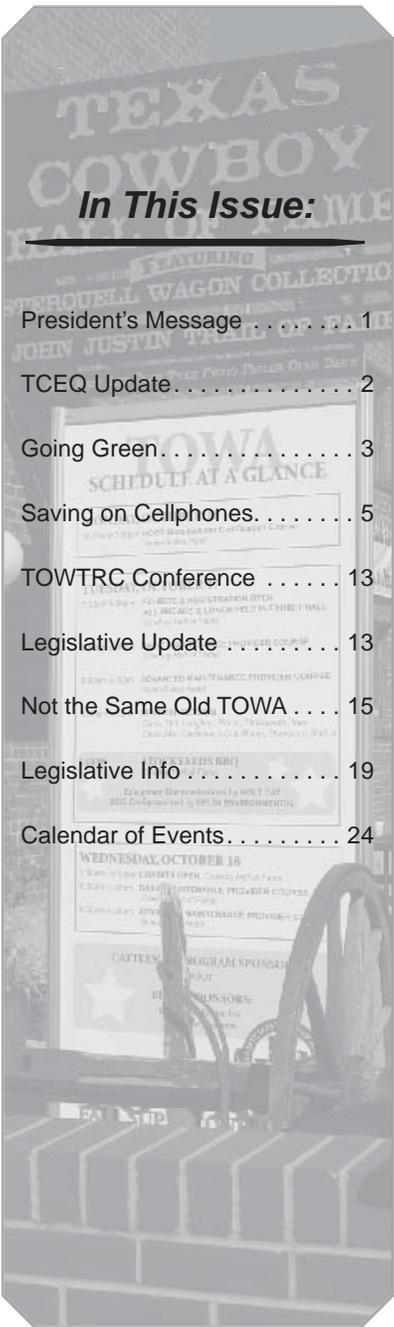


TOWWA Insider



The Official Texas On-Site Wastewater Association Publication
Number 1 - 2nd Issue 2009



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President's Message

Ray Stubblefield

Wow, how time flies by when you're having a great summer. Here it is almost winter. Where did fall go? Anyway, hope your economy is still good and business is booming.

I want to apologize to all the magazine advertisers for not being on time with the TOWWA Insider. I blame myself for not pushing the issue. I do have some excuses but none are legitimate. We can always use some good articles if you would like to share them. But they need to be generic with no name brands to be fair to all.

There should be an article in this issue that pertains to the TOWTRC Spring Show being moved to Mesquite, March 9, 2010.

Economy – Professionalism – Two words that can be hard in today's times. Competitors are cutting prices, and with that they are cutting services and workmanship. So, what do we do as professionals to compete and stay in business without doing the same? Talk! Communicate with your customers about why your services are quality and your workmanship is

of the best possible. If you are not one of quality and professionalism, become one. Our prices in Texas are still some of the lowest in the nation and it is up to us to bring our standards and our compensation for quality professional work up.

So, do quality, professional work in everything you do, and charge for your time!

God Bless,

Ray Stubblefield
 San Angelo, TX



There seems to be some confusion regarding the fees for new OSSF licenses/registrations versus the renewal fees, especially with the Maintenance Providers/Maintenance Technicians (MP/MT). Please inform those individuals that are applying for a new MP/MT registration or other OSSF licenses/registrations that the cost is \$111.00.

Only those individuals renewing existing OSSF licenses/registrations (Installer I & II, Site Evaluator, Apprentice, Designated Reps, MP/MT) between now and the end of the year (12/31/2009) are being charged a \$37.00 fee and issued a license/registration with a one year validity period.

The one year license/registration renewal was a result of the rule revision that changed licenses/registrations that had a two year validity period to three years. It was discovered that because of this that there would be no renewals of those licenses/registrations in 2010. Therefore there would be an enormous amount of renewals hitting in 2011. This combined with all other licenses/registrations renewing in 2011, would create a workload situation that could jeopardize staff's ability to process renewals in a timely manner. To try and balance workloads and allow staff to process the renewal in a timely manner the determination was made to have the OSSF and Landscape Irrigator licenses/registrations renew for the one year period.

Again any new OSSF licenses/registrations being applied for will be issued for a three year period and require a fee of \$111.00.

New applications received with the \$37.00 fee will result in a deficiency letter being sent to the applicant requiring that the additional

\$74 be submitted before the application will be processed and the license/registration issued.

As you are aware any new applicants for MP licenses (those holding an Installer II, Class 'C' wastewater or higher or 3 years experience as a MP/MT) cannot be issued an MP license until they have completed both the basic course and advanced course.

In the next several weeks we will begin converting those existing individual MP registrations that qualify from a MP registration to a MP license and the existing MP registrations that do not qualify to an MT registration. The MPs which are converted to MTs will be sent new certificates/pocket cards (these will have new license numbers). Their expiration dates will remain the same as their previous MP registration. Those that qualify for the conversion to an MP license will be sent a new certificate that says MP license instead of the current MP registration.

Note: The individuals that have their MP registrations converted to a license will not have to complete any CEUs for renewal for this validity period, but will need to complete 24 CEUs after their next renewal (during the next validity period).

Thanks for getting the word out to the appropriate folks. If you have any questions, let me know.

Regards

Terry Thompson, Supervisor
Operator Licensing Section
Permitting & Registration Support Division



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Going Green

By Tim Snyder

Every where you turn some one is talking about going green to save the planet. So you have to ask why did they pass a bill to let home owners take care of septic systems. We see problems every day in back yards and even when we are telling people that they have a problem you hear well, I'm a little short this month, maybe I can fix it next month. And you can't just fix it and hope to get paid next month. This is going to have a big impact on counties that turn their heads and look the other way . I have asked what the home owners' responsibility is to report on their system. The answer is no responsibility, because there is no requirement. I know there is a big controversy between home owners and service companies but some one needs to check systems to make sure they are not causing a problem. A bad service company is as bad as no one checking the system at all. I have talked against onsite monitoring systems because there is only one accepted by NSF and I think that once they are in place neither we nor the home owner can keep them from charging for their service. They need competition and we need a choice of more then one company. I see too many septic systems out there to think we are not headed for trouble. The way to stop trouble is enforcement on home owners and service companies.

TOWA is proud to announce the formation of two new local chapters.

NCTTOWA (North Central Texas TOWA) was formed in Ennis, TX in September. [Email ncttowa@aol.com](mailto:ncttowa@aol.com) or call Lisa Day (972) 875-9605

NETTOWA (Northeast Texas TOWA) was formed in Marshall/Longview in June. [Email-bhlozek@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bhlozek@sbcglobal.net) or call David Wolfe (903)926-3777

If you need help starting a local chapter contact Tim Taylor at (254) 715-1775

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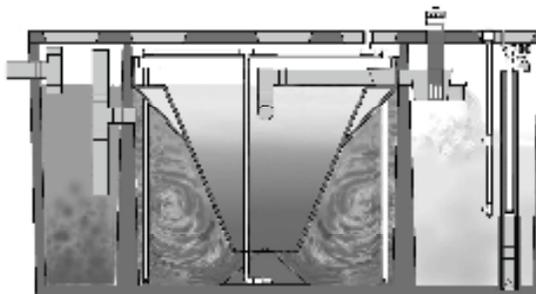
NSF's new Standard 245 was just adopted by the Joint Committee and Harris County is requiring it in areas surrounding Lake Houston. Hoot has ALREADY tested to the new standard.

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Saving on Cellphone Contracts

Here are two data points that don't jibe: The average cell phone user pays \$63 each month for their service, yet nearly half of cell users spend less than 200 minutes a month yakking on those phones.

A lot of folks must be overpaying.

For years, the cell phone industry has seduced Americans into long-term contracts that have saddled them with high fees and broken their shopping spirits. As a result, many consumers don't spend a lot of energy comparing services, prices, and bundles. That's a mistake.

Even in this tough economy, consumers are clinging to their phones with both hands, even as they cut backs in other areas. A survey conducted by Virgin Mobile recently found that nine out of 10 Americans are dining out less frequently and 41 percent are buying fewer groceries, but only 32 percent are reducing cell phone spending. Yes, we should consider the source of that study -- a cell phone firm -- but the numbers ring true. Do you know anyone who has given up their cell phone?

Another recent study, conducted by the New Millennium Research Council, shows how little people think about saving on cell phone bills. It found that half of all cell phone users have no idea when their cell phone contracts end. Blind commitment might work in relationships, but it's terrible in business contracts.

Consumers seem to think they have few options for saving money on mobile service. That's hogwash.

In fact, the landscape for cell phone users has improved greatly in recent years. Most providers are better behaved now, after complaints and lawsuits over unsavory practices forced them to clean up their acts. Complaints about unauthorized and unexpected contract extensions are down, for example. And customer satisfaction has soared from 29 percent to 42 percent in one year, according to Consumers Reports.

Even better, early termination fees are no longer an enormous obstacle to switching providers. All the major carriers now prorate termination fees -- the longer you've been in the

(continued on page 7)



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contract, the lower the fee -- which means you have no reason to avoid shopping around. For the purposes of this story, we'll divide users up into two groups: light users and power users.

LIGHT USERS

There's something else the major carriers are doing that should get your attention: They're offering prepaid cell phone service. This is the dramatic savings car found.

Pay-As-You go phones v once the domain of those v bad credit, or infrequent us who didn't mind older mode and off-brands. Apparent Americans think that's sti true. The Cellular Telephone Industry Association says only 17 percent of U.S. users have prepaid plans. In Europe, prepaid plans make up more than half in the market in some countries, with good reason.

Callers who invest in a long-term contract with a carrier encounter an impossible dilemma: They are either paying for minutes they don't use or are socked with outrageous 40-cent-per minute overage charges. Either way, bulk minute plans are a game of cell phone roulette.

Prepaid callers, meanwhile, only pay for the minutes they use. When they run out, they buy more. Simple plans for 300 monthly minutes can be had for around \$30. The New Millennium Research Council estimates that perhaps 25 million Americans could save money by switching to prepaid.

Anyone who uses fewer than 200 minutes

per month should consider this option. And heavier users -- those who talk up to 400 minutes per month -- should at least look into it.

Sadly, the same folks who brought you "confusion marketing" with those crazy nights and weekend discount plans are now doing their evil magic in the realm of prepaid phones. They are offering \$1-per-day limited plans, \$2-per-day unlimited plans, prepaid calls with connection fees and more -- all the things you've come to expect from the cellular industry. Carefully examine all the tack-on fees when considering prepaid phones. The good news is that if you d a prepaid firm is charging more than you expected, you easily cancel and switch riders.

ower phone users who d upward of 1,000 minutes month on a phone or who dvanced features like e-mail l better off with a contract. But for others, the savings l. For a fantastic side-by-side comparison of typical 200-, 400-minute and 1,000-minute plans follow this link on About.com.

POWER USERS

People who use the Web, e-mail, broadband Internet access for laptops and other fancy cell phone services don't have a prepaid option to fall back on. But that doesn't mean savings aren't available. The key, as with all transactions, is knowing your bargaining position. That means always knowing your contract end date and exactly

(continued on page 9)

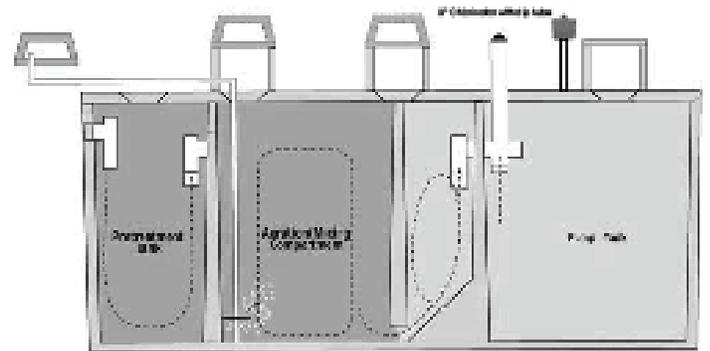


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Saving on Cellphone Contracts

Continued from Page 7

what your early termination fee might be, since it's probably shrinking as time goes by. If you're paying \$120 per month for phone service, a \$100 early termination fee shouldn't scare you away from shopping around.

Sprint started a price war for power users last year, offering its \$99 Everything Unlimited Plan. No matter how often you use your phone or what you use it for, that plan should act as a reference point. If you're paying more than \$100 per month, you should investigate other options.

Most carriers offer similar plans, but read the fine print. Everything doesn't always mean everything. At some carriers, all-you-can-call packages charge extra for text messages, for example.

There are other devils in the details. Carriers are still charging handset upgrade fees when consumers renew contracts (\$18 to \$36) and activation fees when consumers sign up (\$35). These fees should be included in the price of the phone, but they are rarely made clear by salespeople. Scan your bill for at least two months after signing a new contract to find this fee, then complain about it. Many consumers who do talk their way into refunds.

An intriguing option for power users who are overwhelmed by their 15-page cell phone bills is to sign up with Validas, a new company that promises to analyze your bill for you. Consumers simply upload their bills at FixMyCellBill.com and, for \$5, the firm will churn out a report full of

(continued on page 11)

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Local Enforcement Problems?

Attend a TOWA Chapter Meeting and Report Local Enforcement Problems

10 TOWA Chapters throughout the State hold periodic meetings that give 2 hours of continuing education credits as well as offer a forum to discuss local enforcement issues.

If an issue cannot be handled locally, your Chapter contact will refer the problem to the TOWA Enforcement Chairmen and legal counsel.

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recommendations. Typical recommendations tell consumers to switch the number of minutes they are paying for or change providers. Tom Pepe, who founded Validas, says 80 percent of customers can save money by following his firm's advice. And 5 percent of the time, government taxes such as the Universal Service Charge are misapplied, he said. The site has limitations, however. Only an analysis of many months' bills can provide a true picture of usage, leading to better recommendations -- and Validas charges extra for those.

One option that few consumers understand is temporary "power user" status. When unexpected life events occur -- such as a birth or a death -- cell phone usage can spike. Rather than pay an exorbitant overage charge for a single month of extreme use, many carriers will let customers temporarily switch to higher-minute plans. When the period of heavy use passes, you can switch back. The same holds true for foreign travelers, who are often allowed to add international calling to their plans on a short-term basis. But beware: When you do such a switch, make sure your contract hasn't been extended by the carrier.

Power users should take advantage of warnings that they are about to exceed their allotted minutes. Most carriers will let you sign up for warning texts and all let you monitor usage online.

Finally, consumers should relish the time when they have the opportunity to become a cell phone free agent. Just because your contract ends is no reason to rush out and sign a new one. Take your time to shop around. I have heard some companies are layering on extra fees to consumers who use their service on such a month-to-month basis. Getting such fees removed is easy. Just call. Providers who know you aren't on a contract will be very concerned about losing you as a

customer. But in order to get that fee removed, you have to notice it.

FAMILY PLANS

I consider anyone on a family plan to be a power user, because all those handsets and all those minutes cost a lot. I've interviewed families that paid \$800 in early termination fees to get out of onerous cell phone contracts. Family plans can offer savings when teenagers are involved, but parents should give serious consideration to prepaid phones for kids, which will teach valuable lessons in budgeting their time. Many carriers also offer automated limitations on kids' cell phones, such as AT&T's Smart Limits plan, which shuts down the phone after a certain number of calls or text messages (emergencies are exempt). Such a plan is the best way to avoid a surprise \$10,000 cell phone bill.

Parents should also educate their children about "premium" text message services, which can cost \$1 or \$2 per message. Even unlimited text plans and "Everything" plans don't cover premium text messaging.



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Annual March TOWTRC Conference

The Waco convention center is going to be remodeled and will not be available for the 2010 Annual TOWTRC conference.

The conference committee looked and visited several sites in 5 different cities and decided that the Mesquite Convention Center offered the best combination of facilities and location for the March 2010 show. The exhibit area is about twice the size of Waco's and the hotel/motel locations are actually more convenient than those in Waco.

In addition there are numerous restaurants close to the convention center and parking at the center is abundant. The classrooms are very nice and are adjacent to exhibit hall. The facility is just off the 635 Loop on Rodeo Drive so it is easy to get to.

The speaker line up for the conference is excellent. TOWA will hold a Basic Maintenance Provider Course on March 7th and 8th at the convention center. Exhibitor set up will be on March 8th and the conference will be all day March 9th and half a day on the 10th. Expectations are to fill 95 booths and the exhibit hall will be open until 6:00 p.m. on the 9th to allow attendees extra time to spend with the exhibitors.

TOWA will have a link for online registration and info on local hotels/motels as soon as it available.

Mark the dates and be sure to attend what should be our best conference to date.

Legislative Heads-Up

By Tim Taylor

I received this by email on November 20th from the attorney who is representing the family of the child who drowned in a septic in Denton County early this year. As you can see they intend to reintroduce some version of HB 229. This is the insurance bill that TOWA helped defeat during this year's legislative secession. Regardless of how you feel about mandatory insurance TOWA is going to need a strong membership base to fight or support this new effort.

If you know someone who is not a TOWA member please try to sign them up. Membership forms can printed off our web site www.txowa.org

"I'd like to start the process of putting together a good bill on OSSF's for the next

legislative session that will accomplish what is necessary to adequately protect consumers and children. I think if we get something together sooner rather than later we can get a good group of sponsors and be ready to hit the ground running when the next session starts. Is your group interested in starting that process?"

Also, I'd like to get in touch with the very best OSSF consultant I can find related to the death of Ali Galvan. Do you know of anyone I might speak to who does forensic consulting?"

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It seems to take a long time to convince Texas On-Site Professionals that TOWA is NOT the same organization that we were when HB 2510 was passed 4 years ago. I am still hearing many people in our industry complaining about how much money the previous management made and how some ex Board Members were making money teaching the BMP Course. This is OLD NEWS and WATER UNDER the Bridge.

There is not one current Board Member who is receiving any compensation from TOWA. The current Board has been working very hard, and seceding, to move TOWA back to an organization which represents the opinions and wishes of TOWA Members. These dedicated individuals take time off work and pay their own expenses to attend Board Meetings, plan and then put into action policies which will benefit our members.

In the last two years this Board, along with help from some past Board Members, have

saved installers, maintenance providers, site evaluators and designers thousands of dollars. First TOWA was successful in getting TCEQ to grandfather existing maintenance providers from being forced to take the new Advanced Maintenance Providers Course. Now, during this legislative session, TOWA was successful in stopping a Bill which would have required anyone with an OSSF license to have liability insurance. This issue was taken up by TOWA after a mail out poll resulted in TOWA Members voting 5 to 1 against this Bill.

Thanks to all you professionals who have stayed TOWA Members, rejoined TOWA or have joined us. This message is not for you but please pass it along others in our industry who are not members. Why should they reap the rewards of your support when it only cost them 26 cents a day to be a member. Sign one up, and again thanks for your support.



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For connecting riser
flats to top of tank
when casting-in is
not an option.

Effluent Filters

Patent Numbers
6,319,403; D 431,622; other
pats. pending.

800 GPD
ANSI/NSF
Standard 46

4" Sch. 40 &
304-316
EF-4
4" Filter

EF-6
6" Filter

1500 GPD
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Standard 46

4" Sch. 40 &
304-316
244 ft. of
1/16" filtration
area.

Gas/Solids
Deflector

One-Piece Tank Seal

For concrete septic tanks and D-boxes.
Accepts pipes from 1-1/2" to 4".
Mounts with or without concrete flash.

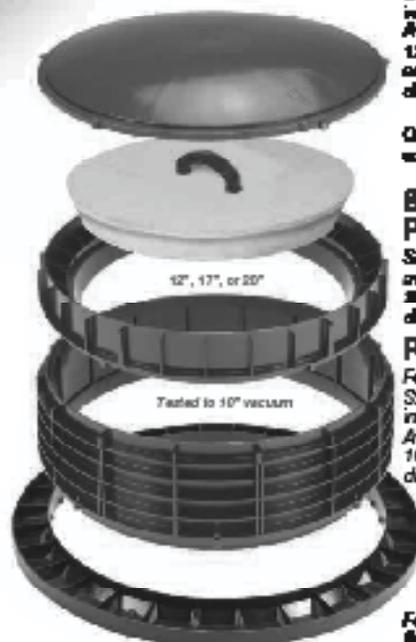


TS-4-RUBBER TANK SEAL
(will hold 10psi)
TS-4P RD TANK SEAL
(will hold 5" vacuum)



Free Freight logo

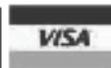
Patent No's
4,951,914,
5,024,123
& 5,711,536



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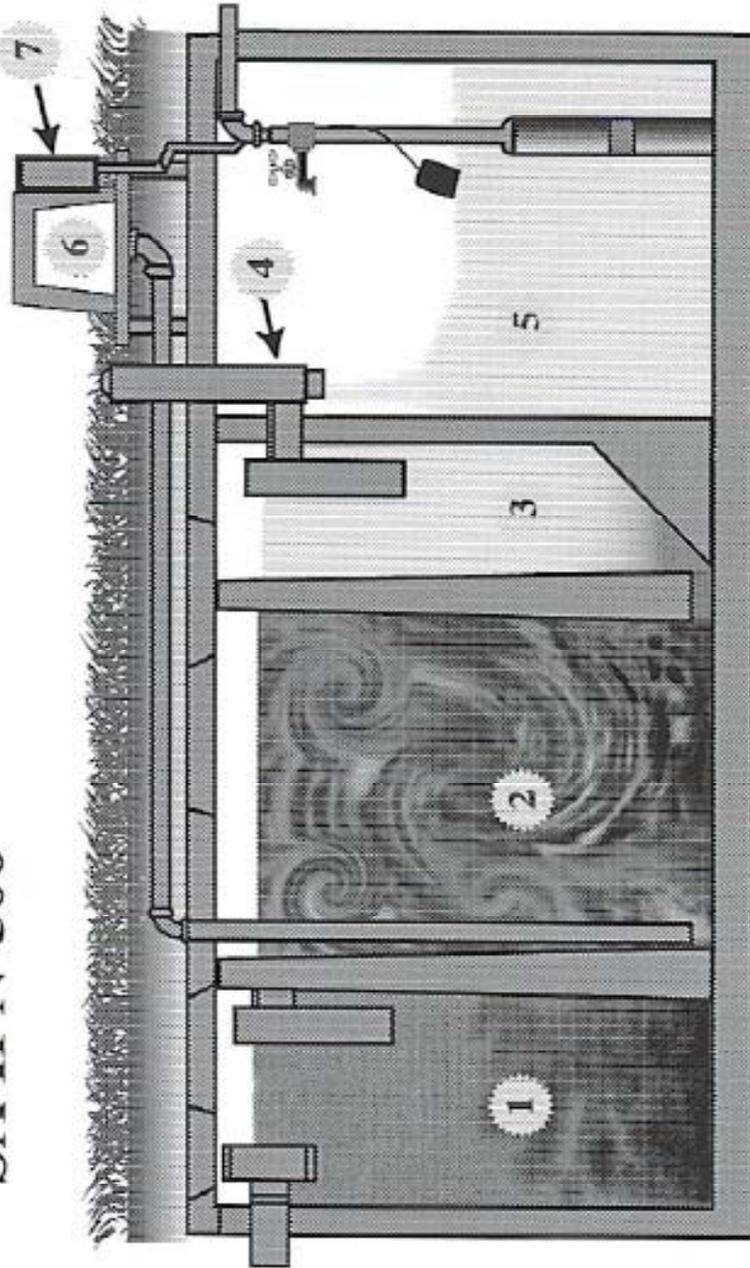


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Aerobic Wastewater Treatment System



SA II N-500



1 Pretreatment Tank

Where influent enters from home.

2 Aeration Chamber

Where oxygen is pumped into the sewage.

3 Clarifier

Where clear odorless effluent rises.

4 Chlorinator

For disinfection (where required)

5 Holding Tank

Stores the chlorinated effluent for discharge through the chosen method of disposal.

6 Linear Air Pump

Extremely quiet & efficient.

7 Complete Control Center

Monitors and controls the system, assuring that it functions at a very low cost.

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Sub-Manufacturer

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Robinson Pre-Cast, Flynn Area

Dulworth Enterprises, Inc, Dallas Area

NC Pipe Construction Services, Houston Area

I - 10 Contracting, Corpus Christi Area

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2010 Mesquite, TX • Mesquite Convention Center. march 7th, 10am - 7pm, March 8 8am - 5 pm.
• Class \$325.00
- Mar. 9-10** *TOWTC Annual Conference, Mesquite, Texas*
2010 Check www.txowa.org for hotels and rates. Info will be posted in December.

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