

Find the Right Jetter

January 27, 2015

Recommend 3

Get to know the options and form a clear picture of how you'll be using your new jetter before you make the purchase

Most licensed plumbers have a cable machine and offer some level of basic drain-cleaning service. It may not be a focus, but it can lead to more service calls. You can generate even more business and help establish new clients by adding a water jetter to your stable of equipment.

When Greg Schulte started Family Man Plumbing in early 2012, his focus was primarily on plumbing repairs, but purchasing one small machine — the Crap Shooter — opened up a lucrative new market and dramatically boosted his business volume.

Schulte says the Crap Shooter, a portable hot-water jetter made by BullFrog Industries, drastically increased the volume of his business in the Denver suburb of Westminster, Colo. Drain cleaning now generates about 10 percent of his gross revenue, and Schulte uses the Crap Shooter for about 90 percent of his drain-cleaning jobs.

Related: [Breaking the Ice](#)

Schulte likes the 25-pound machine because it's compact and easy to set up, which enables him to complete jobs faster. And less time on jobs translates into lower prices for customers and better productivity for his business.

"The Crap Shooter is completely self-contained," he notes. "All I do is hook it up to a faucet and an electrical outlet. I don't need to pull a hose through a building ... I can walk in and have it set up in 10 minutes."

The unit draws 11 amps, so it can operate on a standard 15-amp circuit. It generates 1,500 psi at 1.65 gpm and comes with a 25-foot power cord with a two-prong GFCI plug; 50 feet of high-pressure hose that can handle up to 120-degree water; two heavy-duty jetter nozzles — a flusher and a thruster — that can clean pipelines up to 3 inches in diameter; and two faucet adapters.

Related: [Ever Independent](#)

Mobility matters

Portability is a big factor to consider when looking for a new jetter. A trailer- or truck-mounted jetter may be less convenient for smaller residential and commercial jobs, but it will provide plenty of power to clean large sewer lines. The opposite is true for smaller portable jettors, where size and convenience features can make residential cleaning jobs quicker, cleaner and less invasive.

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Email
- Print**
- Gmail
- Favorites
- Google
- More... (293)
- Settings...

AddThis Privacy

When Chad Andersen decided to take a step up to more powerful drain-cleaning equipment, he sought a machine that could seal the deal in terms of customer satisfaction and improved efficiency. He found what he was looking for in a cart-mounted Brute Series water jetter from Jetters Northwest.

Related: [Tight Spots, Tough Duty](#)

The Brute features a 12-gallon water tank (which Andersen supplements with a 65-gallon cart-mounted tank when needed); a 25 hp Subaru engine that runs on propane fuel; a Udor USA pump that produces 8 1/2 gpm at 3,600 psi; a 200-foot remote reel with a shut-off valve; a Warthog rotating jetter head from StoneAge Inc.; and 300 feet of 3/8-inch-diameter hose.

“The average invoice for a drain-cleaning job is much higher than one for, say, a toilet repair, which is why I decided to focus more on drain cleaning,” he adds. “Our growth has been unbelievable, and I attribute most of it to adding drain-cleaning services.”

Andersen says the Brute — which he uses primarily for cleaning out residential sewer laterals as well as commercial work — basically paid for itself in about five months. “Any machine that you can bring in and make what you paid for it in five months is worth having,” he notes.

Subscribe: Want up-to-date content right in your inbox? [Sign up for our E-Newsletter!](#)

The Brute’s portability and its propane-powered engine allows Andersen to use it indoors on commercial jobs. That gives him an edge over companies that own only larger trailer jettors that require long hose runs that can disrupt business operations.

“Another thing that makes the Brute shine is that its pressure flow is pretty close to that of a small trailer jetter,” he adds. Moreover, for jobs that require working several stories high, the portable Brute doesn’t lose water pressure the way a trailer jetter does on jobs that require a long vertical hose run.

Revenue generator

If you don’t own a jetter, it may be costing you money. That was the case for Frank Grandinetti, owner of Grand Jude Plumbing in Tonawanda, N.Y.

For more than 10 years, Grandinetti paid \$18,000 to \$20,000 a year to subcontract jetting work to a local operator. But too often the jetter was unavailable when he needed it most.

“In my business, I don’t like to keep people waiting, and customers aren’t happy about waiting,” he explains. “When we respond to a clogged drainline in a condominium complex, for example, the people who live there don’t stop using water, so where does it go? In the basement. Every minute counts. One day I got fed up with waiting and started looking for a jetter.”

He says he looked at about 30 different models before settling on a Bulldog 7018D sewer jetter from John Bean Jetters.

The unit generates 18 gpm at 4,000 psi and features two 350-gallon polyethylene water tanks, 600 feet of 1/2-inch-diameter hose, a hydraulically driven and swiveling hose reel, an antifreeze circulation system, remote-control operation, and a 2 1/2-inch water-fill system with air gaps that allow for quick hydrant filling.

Hot versus cold

Like portable versus trailer- or truck-mounted options, hot versus cold water is another important consideration in choosing the right jetter.

Marcus Rodriguez, owner of Umbrella Plumbing & Drain Cleaning in Aurora, Colo., relies on a hot-water jetter to make short work of tough drain-cleaning problems, particularly grease clogs.

“The hot water, which gets heated to a temperature of 180 degrees, liquefies the grease,” he explains. “I’ve used both cold and hot water and there’s a big-time difference. With cold water you can spend a lot of time working in one small area and it can create clogs in the rest of line ... chunks of grease hook up together farther down the line and form another clog.

“But by using hot water, that doesn’t happen because it’s liquefied,” he says. “So by doing jobs twice as fast, we gain time, and time is more valuable than money. Even if we get in just one more job in a week because of that, we’re making \$1,400 to \$1,600 more revenue per week.”

Rodriguez bought the Hot Jet unit (Powerline Industries) in 2009. It features 300 feet of 3/8-inch diameter hose, a 350-gallon water tank, a pump that generates 3,500 psi at 12 gpm and a tandem-axle trailer, which enables him to tow the jetter with a full water tank.

“That saves me about an hour a day because I don’t have to fill the tank at a job site,” he says.

The great thaw

The hot-water option also enables plumbers to solve another common problem in colder climates: frozen pipes.

Frozen pipelines are a big problem during long winters in the five-county area that Snowbridge Inc. services around Breckenridge, Colo. Luckily, company technicians can handle whatever Mother Nature throws at them, thanks to a US Jetting 4025 truck-mounted water jetter enclosed inside an insulated, heated box body.

In a tough-job scenario, the unit – which generates 4,000 psi at 25 gpm – twice thawed about 1,200 feet of a sanitation district’s 4-inch force main that runs between a treatment plant and lift station, says Bill Tatro, co-owner of Snowbridge.

The newer unit is housed in a 14-foot box body, made by Supreme Corp., and mounted on a 2007 Sterling Acterra truck chassis. The truck carries a 600-gallon water tank, and an onboard heater, powered by the truck’s diesel engine, keeps the hoses thawed and ready to work.

Tatro says he’s sold on the 4025 not only because it can handle small and large jobs but because it also provides many productivity benefits. The unit’s twin reels, for instance, allow crews to eliminate time-consuming hose changes for different job applications. One reel carries a 1/2-inch hose for larger, mainline cleanings; the other one carries a 3/8-inch hose for smaller lines, and an adaptor allows technicians to quickly switch to 1/4-inch hose.

“Sometimes we use both size hoses on the same job, like for a big hotel where we do maintenance jetting four times a year,” he explains. “It saves us a lot of time because we don’t have to continually take hoses apart.”

The unit’s versatility also saves on labor, fuel and general vehicle wear-and-tear because Snowbridge can send out one truck to do different kinds of work as opposed to sending out two trucks.

Tatro estimates that the jetter generates 30 to 40 percent of the company's revenue, noting that many times two crews use the truck in one day: one during the day and another at night.

"It's definitely a profit center for us. We're always trying to stay on the cutting edge of the newest technology, so we always have the kind of equipment that can fix whatever problems customers might have. This truck does just that."

Like this story? [Sign up for alerts!](#)

Related Stories



Waterblasting and Waterjet Cleaning and Accessories



Residential and Commercial Sewer and Pipe Maintenance



This Prevention-Prone Drain Cleaner Kicks Emergency Jobs in the Butt



Round 'Em Up: 30 Chemical and Mechanical Root Control Tools



Greg Schulte, owner of Family Man Plumbing in Westminster, Colo., uses a Crap Shooter suitcase jetter from BullFrog Industries to clean a restaurant drainline.
