

CASE STUDY

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Taking Care of Business: Indiana Wholesaler Saves 12 Hours in Labor Installing Above-Floor Plumbing Systems for New Restrooms

When Mid-City Supply set out to install two restrooms to service new office space, Saniflo's above-floor plumbing solution eliminated the need to undertake a complicated concrete drilling project, saving the business 12 hours in labor.

BY TONY BARA

The city of Elkhart is an oasis of people amidst the sparsely populated countryside of north-central Indiana. Known for its railroad museum and nicknamed the "RV Capital of the World," Elkhart embodies the rustic charm of the American Midwest.

An Elkhart mainstay since 1947 has been Mid-City Supply Company, a family-owned wholesaler that deals primarily in plumbing, HVAC and refrigeration supplies. Besides Elkhart, the company has six other locations scattered throughout Indiana and Michigan.

Growth has been a constant for Mid-City Supply throughout its history. The company currently boasts around 100 employees.

When the main branch in Elkhart outgrew office space, something had to be done. "We looked at various places to put new office space, including the front of the building and the warehouse. We finally settled on putting it upstairs near some existing training classrooms," recalls Dan New, Vice President of Operations and the third generation of family management at Mid-City.



Mid-City Supply Vice President of Operations, Dan New, stands in front of his Elkhart location.

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Naturally, the new office space needed new restrooms to save employees the hassle of running up and down the stairs. The decision of which plumbing system to install was rendered relatively quickly, according to New. “We really did not want to drill through the concrete floor to install the plumbing,” he says, “As a result, we turned to a solution that we have been stocking at our supply house for the better part of 10 years — the above-floor plumbing option from Saniflo.”



The Sanibest Pro heavy-duty grinding system (shown in wall), handles the accidental flushing of larger sanitary articles and other items a conventional plumbing system might struggle to handle.

Above-floor plumbing systems eliminate the need to break through a concrete floor to install drainage below. A macerator or a grinder located behind the toilet reduces the waste into a slurry and pumps it through small-diameter tubing straight to the drain line. Above-floor plumbing systems, which can also handle drainage from sinks, tubs and showers, can be used to create restroom and bath facilities in garages, basements, attics, warehouses — anywhere conventional plumbing might prove difficult and therefore costly to install.

Ryan Hendershott, a licensed plumber with Schreiner & Sons and the installing contractor on the Mid-City job, says the restroom application was well-suited to an above-floor installation. “In this case, short of choosing a different location for the restrooms altogether, above-floor plumbing was the least-complicated solution, due to the concrete being there.” The bathrooms were finished in October 2015.

New ended up choosing the Sanibest Pro heavy-duty grinding system for both the men’s and women’s restrooms. The 1-HP grinder can pump up to 25 feet vertically when it is installed below the sewer line; or nearly 150 feet horizontally to the sewer stack. It is specifically engineered to handle the accidental flushing of larger sanitary articles and other items a conventional plumbing system might struggle to handle. “Working in a commercial setting, we wanted to ensure that anything we flushed, intentionally or unintentionally, got taken care of,” explains New.

Straightforward Installation

Beginning in August 2015, the Elkhart installation came on the heels of another above-floor plumbing project in Mid-City’s new Kalamazoo branch last spring. “We were confident in our decision to choose this plumbing solution after our experience in Kalamazoo,” notes New.

To minimize the level of flushing noise in Elkhart, Hendershott installed the grinder unit behind the wall. He also installed the elbows for the pump’s ejection line at a 45-degree angle and used 3/4-

inch pipe. “The smaller the pipe’s diameter, the less noise it will tend to make,” explains Hendershott.

Located on the building’s second floor, the unit pumps the waste slightly upward before gravity takes over and moves it to the drain line. A below-floor installation would have been significantly more labor-intensive and expensive, not to mention messy. According to New, by choosing the above-floor option, Mid-City Supply cut installation time by 12 hours.

Overall, the Elkhart installations went smoothly and without any major complications. It took roughly five hours to complete the job per restroom. “There were no hiccups, especially with the Kalamazoo installation under our belts,” affirms New. “A successful installation really comes down to two things: the type of application and the plumber’s experience. We had a fairly straightforward application and an experienced plumber, so there were no issues.” The bathrooms were finished in October 2015.

New is pleased with the units’ performance since the installation. “Above-floor plumbing is certainly a niche category, but this brand is the best within that category, and the installation turned out great” he comments. “Some plumbers are still hesitant to switch to this style of plumbing, preferring conventional methods that they are more comfortable with. Nevertheless, above-floor plumbing has certainly proven itself to be simple, reliable and cost-effective many times over.”

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SFA SANIFLO U.S.A. — whose parent company originated macerating plumbing technology — offers a complete line of up flush toilets and gray water pumping systems for residential and commercial applications. Saniflo developed its innovative, “above-floor plumbing” technology more than a half-century ago and has led its commercialization worldwide. Today, the company markets macerating technology through 24 subsidiaries in 50 countries and has sold more than seven million units worldwide since 1958. Saniflo markets through independent sales agents throughout North America, and the product line is currently available at distributor and dealer locations throughout the United States and Canada.

- For more information, contact Saniflo at 1-800-571-8191. Or visit the Saniflo website at www.saniflo.com.
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- To download images (hi-res .tif files) to accompany this article, use this link: <http://saniflo.oreilly-depalma.com/2015/cs-mid-city-supply.shtml>

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