

# dig DIFFERENT

*Think outside the bucket*

**IN THE TRENCHES**  
**THE TRANSFORMATIONAL**  
**IMPACT OF IoT 38**

## SHOP TALK

**DIGITAL DOCUMENTATION TRANSFORMS UNDERGROUND CONSTRUCTION**

**36**

Beau Feerick  
Field Supervisor  
Hydrovac Solutions

# PROVIDING SOLUTIONS

**Contractor finds innovative growth through strategic personnel and collaboration**

**10**

VACUUM EXCAVATION DIRECTORY

**26**



# Contents

JULY 2024

Think outside the bucket

**digDIFFERENT**

FOCUS: Vacuum Excavation



## COVER STORY

### 10 **PROFILE: VACUUM EXCAVATION** **Providing Solutions**

Louisiana-based service company finds a unique way to add services and become a one-stop shop for clients, while also making a community impact.

By Cory Dellenbach

#### ON THE COVER:

Beau Feerick, a field supervisor and hydrovac operator for Hydrovac Solutions (a division of Pipeline Solutions), sets up a job site as he prepares to use the company's new 2024 Peterbilt Tornado F4 hydrovac unit in Beaumont, Texas. The company takes on jobs throughout the Gulf Coast and to the East Coast of the U.S. (Photography by Jon Shapley)

## FEATURES

### 20 **PRODUCT FOCUS:** **Vacuum Excavation**

By Craig Mandli

### 26 **COMPANY DIRECTORY:** **Vacuum Excavation**

### 24 **SUCCESS STORIES:** **Vacuum Excavation**

By Craig Mandli

## COLUMNS

### 8 **BELOW THE SURFACE:** **Embracing Challenges**

Tackling the toughest jobs in HDD, tunneling and vacuum excavation.

By Cory Dellenbach, Editor

### 38 **IN THE TRENCHES:** **Forging the Future**

The transformational impact of IoT on vacuum excavation in construction.

By Chad Decker

### 16 **SMART BUSINESS:** **Unraveling Complexity**

Simpler approaches to serving customers will improve their experience, encouraging them to call again and again.

By Kate Zabriskie

## IN EVERY ISSUE

### 40 **The Latest: Products**

This Issue's Feature: On-board system weighs while you dig

By Craig Mandli

### 41 **The Latest: News**

### 42 **Happenings**

### 36 **SHOP TALK:** **Unearthing Value**

Leveraging digital mapping and job site data for compliance and profitability.

By Cory Maker and Patrick Lyonsi

**NEXT ISSUE: August 2024**

FOCUS: SPECIAL SECTION: Contractor Capabilities; Horizontal Directional Drilling and Boring

- Champion Cleaning Specialists Inc. (CCSI), Cincinnati, Ohio
- HDD and Boring Company Directory

# PROVIDING SOLUTIONS

**LOUISIANA-BASED SERVICE COMPANY FINDS A UNIQUE WAY  
TO ADD SERVICES AND BECOME A ONE-STOP SHOP FOR CLIENTS,  
WHILE ALSO MAKING A COMMUNITY IMPACT**

STORY: CORY DELLENBACH PHOTOS: JON SHAPLEY



Beau Feerick, a field supervisor and hydrovac operator for Hydrovac Solutions (a division of Pipeline Solutions), with the company's new 2024 Peterbilt Tornado F4 hydrovac unit. Feerick, a Marine veteran, helped design the wrap on the new truck.

Feerick dons his personal protective equipment before starting the day's work. The company spotlights its safety program which it adopted from ExxonMobil.



There are many ways to grow a company from acquisitions to additions of services and everything in between. Kenny Lacoste, however, found a different way to grow his little company. That method was by bringing on people that he knew were proven in the industry and allowing them to bring in customers to help the company grow.

What began as a humble venture with Pipeline Solutions has blossomed into a multifaceted company, comprising five divisions and spanning a service area that stretches from the Gulf Coast to the Eastern Seaboard. One of those divisions spurred was Hydrovac Solutions, which came to fruition at the end of 2021.

With headquarters in Slidell, Louisiana, and satellite locations strategically scattered across Louisiana and Texas, Hydrovac Solutions stands as a testament to ingenuity, perseverance and a commitment to community.

#### EXPANSION BEGINS

Lacoste's journey began with Pipeline Solutions, laying the groundwork for what would evolve into a comprehensive suite of services catering to the diverse needs of clients across industries from environmental remediation to pipeline maintenance.

"The company started with Pipeline Solutions, but it was in 2017 that we expanded our horizons with the addition of the Environmental Division," says Jamie Johnson, a manager with Pipeline Solutions. "This expansion marked a turning point, setting the stage for further growth and diversification."

Lacoste wanted to grow the company to be more of a one-stop-shop for customers. Each division created was carefully curated and fielded by a network of industry veterans.

"When it was time to push into hydroexcavation, we reached out to Walter Vincent, who I had known since 2012 and we offered him a position to start this new division with us," says Johnson. "We've added the divisions by bringing in people we've networked with over the years in the industry."

Vincent jumped aboard in 2022, and later that year Hydrovac Solutions was born. He now leads the hydroexcavation division as operations manager.

**"EXCAVATION CAN BE DANGEROUS ESPECIALLY AROUND PIPELINES. OUR HYDROVAC AND PIPELINE MAINTENANCE DIVISIONS WORK IN TANDEM, ENSURING SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY IN EVERY PROJECT."** Jamie Johnson



Hydrovac Solutions, a division of Pipeline Solutions, often works in tandem with other branches of the company, including the Environmental Solutions division.

“We started with one truck,” says Heather Spradley, for Hydrovac Solutions. “Now we boast a fleet of 12 hydrovac trucks, alongside an air-vac truck.”

Spradley, who started with the company in June 2022 remembers her first week well, recalling that she had a customer who called and they needed three trucks. At that time they still only had one truck.


“I didn’t know what I was going to do,” Spradley says. “We were waiting for trucks to come in. We had them on order, but we didn’t have them yet. We were reaching out to contacts and they were kind of covering us until we could get our trucks.”

This rapid expansion underscores the company’s capacity for adaptation and its unwavering commitment to meet evolving demands.

“We had so many customers that we had built relationships with in the past and continued to grow,” Johnson says. “They always reached out to us when they needed something, so we grew fast.”



**Hydrovac Solutions**  
**(a division of Pipeline Solutions)**  
**Slidell, Louisiana**



**OWNER:** Kenny Lacoste  
**EMPLOYEES:** 184 (across all five divisions)  
**SERVICES OFFERED:** Pipeline construction and maintenance which includes right of way maintenance, full-service environmental (demolition, asbestos, lead abatement, vacuum truck services [waste hauling], tank cleaning), hydrovac/air excavation, electrical and instrumentation  
**SERVICE AREA:** All of the Gulf South region to the East Coast  
**WEBSITE:** [pipelinesolutionsllc.com/hydrovac](http://pipelinesolutionsllc.com/hydrovac)  
**SOCIAL MEDIA:** [linkedin.com/company/hydrovac-solutions-llc](https://www.linkedin.com/company/hydrovac-solutions-llc)



**“WE WANT TO STAND OUT AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE.”**

Jamie Johnson

### OVERCOMING TRUCK CHALLENGES

One of the first challenges the new division faced early on was the COVID pandemic and the availability of truck chassis for its trucks on order from manufacturers.

“We were six months out on some of the ones we ordered,” Johnson says. That dilemma has since eased and the company has transitioned to using Custom Truck One Source for most of its hydrovac trucks.

“We met the folks of Custom Truck at a trade show in Vegas (CONEXPO-CON/AGG) and those guys had the ability to let us try Tornado trucks,” Johnson says. “We got one and loved the truck. Walter felt it was better than some of the other trucks we had been using, and Custom Truck and Tornado were just there for every truck we needed after that.”

Hydrovac Solutions’ vacuum excavators are all Tornado F4 Eco Lites, with the oldest being a 2020 model. The company also has an air-vac unit in its fleet, an MTS Dino (OX Equipment). It’s a side-dump unit that the company uses on sites where water can’t be used and soil can be dumped back on the site.

“When you go out to these facilities in West Texas, water is hard to get,” Johnson says. “If you have to truck water out there, it’s going to cost the customer a lot of money. They’ll get our air excavator out there. It runs a little slower and doesn’t excavate as fast as hydro, but it’s just dirt, so we can just dump it right back on site.”

In fact, one customer has now started to request that air-vac unit all the time.

Some of the leadership team at Hydrovac Solutions includes, from left, Jamie Johnson, a manager with Pipeline Solutions (parent company); Beau Feerick, field supervisor; and Heather Spradley, for Hydrovac Solutions.

“They decided that it’s a better fit for them because it’s so expensive to find dump sites nearby,” Spradley says.

The company overall uses several other pieces of equipment throughout its divisions, including vacuum trucks and tanker vacs to haul large quantities of water and wastewater for the environmental division, as well as closed-in mowers and a long-armed trimmer for the right-of-way division.

Software used by Hydrovac Solutions includes Homebase to dispatch trucks and Cleargistix on tablets that crews have with them in the field to help with job tickets.

### WORKING TOGETHER

Central to Hydrovac Solutions’ success is its collaborative approach, bridging the gap between divisions to deliver seamless solutions.

## The Key to Safety

Safety lies at the core of Hydrovac Solutions' mentality, a commitment ingrained in its DNA from its inception.

"Kenneth, the owner of Pipeline Solutions, previously worked for a construction company and maintenance company that was a contractor for ExxonMobil and when he started this company he adopted ExxonMobil's safety program," says Jamie Johnson, a manager with Pipeline Solutions.

By drawing inspiration from the oil company's stringent safety protocols, the Hydrovac Solutions has maintained a remarkable record, boasting 10 years without an OSHA recordable injury.

Heather Spradley, attributes this achievement to the company's emphasis on hiring individuals who prioritize safety and take pride in their workmanship.

"The key to safety is finding the right people," Spradley says. "People that are safe, that take pride in their work and don't rush and I think that makes everything that much safer. Taking your time, doing your job and doing the safety training."

Prior to each job, company staff will go through a checklist of what can happen in regards to workplace safety and following the job, they'll meet again to see if there was anything that could have been done differently.



Sporting a hard hat and safety shield, Feerick uses the digging wand to pothole for utilities at a job site in Beaumont, Texas.

"Excavation can be dangerous especially around pipelines," Johnson says. "Our hydrovac and pipeline maintenance divisions work in tandem, ensuring safety and efficiency in every project." This integration not only streamlines operations, but also enhances the company's ability to address complex challenges with agility and precision.

If the company is doing an integrity dig at a pipeline location and an anomaly is detected, Johnson says it's easy to work through because they have their other divisions available to help immediately.

"We've got our pipeline maintenance team that can repair that anomaly," Johnson says. "When they're out there and they discover that it's asbestos coated, then our environmental division goes out."

Many of Pipeline Solutions team members are cross-trained for the various divisions.

"A majority of the guys are cross-trained, and I think that's one advantage for us because if one division is slower, we can use employees on another division," Spradley says. "We've been able to do that from time to time, but we're fortunate because we don't have that much slow time either."

### HELPING OTHERS

Hydrovac Solutions' impact transcends the realm of commerce, extending into the realm of social responsibility. Johnson recounts a poignant moment



Feerick reels the water hose back into the cabinet of the Tornado F4 hydrovac.

following a devastating hurricane northeast of New Orleans, where the company's hydrovac trucks played a crucial role in restoring normalcy.

"These towns were covered in mud," she recalls. "Residents couldn't even get into their homes, so we went in there with three hydrovac trucks and we blew out driveways, cleared culverts and opened up roadways." This act of service underscored the company's ethos of giving back to communities in times of need.

Crews had nowhere to stay during that event as hotels were full from residents who lost homes, so company staff working in the area converted their company headquarters in Slidell into a makeshift place to stay.

"We put a bunch of air mattresses and beds and other things in and our crews stayed at our office," Johnson says.

It was that event when the company knew they needed more trucks.

"During events like that, you cannot find trucks," Spradley says. "They're in such high demand after hurricanes and storms because everyone is calling on them. There are times we could use 20 more trucks and we'd keep them busy."

### PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Looking ahead, Hydrovac Solutions is poised for continued growth and innovation. With a focus on expanding its clientele and solidifying its presence in the market, the company remains steadfast in its mission to be the quintessential solution provider.

"We want to stand out and make a difference," Johnson says. "We have a great team and we've all worked together a long time, and I think our goal for the future is just to continue to grow and build our clientele and just see where the future leads us."

As Hydrovac Solutions charts a course into the future, it does so with a sense of purpose and unwavering dedication. From its humble beginnings in Slidell to its expansive footprint across the Gulf South, the company serves as a beacon of inspiration, embodying the transformative power of perseverance, collaboration, and community stewardship. ▼

#### Featured products from:

**Cleargistix LLC**  
www.cleargistix.com  
504-356-8689

**Custom Truck One Source**  
816-241-4888  
www.customtruck.com

**Homebase**  
415-951-3831  
www.joinhomebase.com

**OX Equipment Inc.**  
888-290-4044  
ox-equipment.com

**Tornado Global Hydrovacs Inc.**  
877-340-8141  
www.tornadotrucks.com