

# Supplying a Strong Solution

Sprayroq Offers Municipalities an Answer to Their Sewer Rehab Needs By Pam Stask



Sprayroq crew (l-r): Tony Palmer, director of research and development; Jerry Gordon, president; Chip Johnson, director of business development; Rick Allred, director of operations; and Chris Fountain, marketing manager (center).

**T**here's no argument about the fact that underground infrastructure in both the United States and around the world needs our attention.

With populations growing and the demand on infrastructure increasing, it's more important than ever for municipalities to address their aging sewer systems for repair before any major problems present themselves. This includes not only taking a look at pipe, but rehabbing the vital, and often overlooked, structures called sanitary sewer manholes.

That's where Sprayroq comes into play. With its products, communities across North America are able to rehab manholes and address other structures that keep a system fully operational.

"As a company, we offer a stand-alone structural solution that is applied without causing major disruption. Not only do we take pride in creating and manufacturing these solutions, but our licensed contractors take pride in installing a quality product, as well as in their own craftsmanship," says Sprayroq president Jerry Gordon.

But to understand the company and its offerings today, it's important to take a look at Sprayroq as a whole, including its past, its innovative products and where it intends to go in the future.

### What's in a Name?

Sprayroq was originally known as Insituform Southeast, a licensee of Insituform. In the late 1980s, the company wanted to find a go-to solution for sewer infrastructure rehabilitation focused on manholes and other structures.

"In 1988, we decided that something needed to be done to address the manholes," says Sprayroq director of business development Chip Johnson. "We were fixing the pipes, but not addressing the manholes, lift stations or other structures."

From there, the company's senior management team searched for a solution to the problem and came across a rehabilitation technology in Michigan. After discovering that this was the right fit for the problem at hand, the company bought the intellectual property and formulations for the technology, which was a spray-applied, quick-curing polyurethane resin. Upon finding and purchasing the technology, the company began to manufacture the product, as well as locate and thoroughly train contractors who could deliver the solution to clients in need from its headquarters in Jacksonville, Fla.

"Not only does the company manufacture the product, but we also train and license our contractors nationally and internationally to apply it," says Gordon. "They deal directly with other contractors, municipalities and industrial accounts to perform the coating applications and deliver this rehab solution."

Around the same time that Insituform Southeast discovered this technology, the company was planning to go public and wanted a new alias that could represent what it did and its goals as a business. After much consideration, the company soon became Enviroq, as a means to address the company's strong presence and product through the environmental movement. Then after further debate, the name Sprayroq emerged from the business minds to accurately mirror the product and its application method.

With the company name decided, Sprayroq then needed to find a name for its core product. To tie in with the company name and what the product actually does, the technology was christened as SprayWall. Although these name changes took place in 1988, it was not until 1990 that SprayWall actually took shape and began to be used — as an answer to the demands and concerns of municipalities desperately trying to keep their infrastructure up and running.

Since Spraywall can be applied through a spray, it can be used on odd-shaped configurations including, but not limited to, flat walls, overheads, side walls; it bonds tightly to seal off infiltration that is coming in through the

## Gaining Recognition

Earlier this year, Sprayroq was recognized for its development of a platform for exporting the company's U.S.-produced products internationally.

In March, Sprayroq received one of the 2008 Governors Trade Excellence Awards for the State of Alabama. The award, which was presented by Gov. Bob Riley, recognized Sprayroq as one of the two leaders of exporting programs for companies new to the exporting market. Jerry Gordon and Chip Johnson accepted the award on Sprayroq's behalf.

In May, Sprayroq was named Exporter of the Year for the Building/Construction/Hardware sector by *Commercial News USA* magazine, the official export media for the United States Department of Commerce. The award was presented in Washington, D.C., by Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama. Gordon and Anthony Manna, CEO of Signet Enterprises, the parent company of Sprayroq, accepted the honor.



Chip Johnson (left) and Jerry Gordon (right) accept the 2008 Governors Trade Excellence Award for the State of Alabama from Gov. Bob Riley (center).

structure. With twice the strength of traditional cured-in-place pipe, the product has the ability to extend the lifespan of a structure by 50 to 75 years.

### Location, Location, Location

In 1996, Sprayroq decided to move its operations to Birmingham, Ala., because of the opportunity for developmental work with Jefferson County, Ala. "There was a \$3.3 billion consent decree in Jefferson County and Bill Long, who was president of Sprayroq at the time, believed that the company should be where all the action was," says Gordon.

After the move, SprayWall was used to repair the all-important infrastructure of Jefferson County. "SprayWall was the method of choice to repair the manholes and infrastructure in Jefferson County," says Johnson. "From 1996 to 2006, more than 14,000 manholes have been rehabbed with zero warranty claims."

From 1990 to 2004, most of the work Sprayroq contractors, also known as Sprayroq Certified Partners (SCPs), completed was based in the southeastern United States — from Texas to Florida and up to the Carolinas. There were also projects scattered across parts of New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Then in 2004, there was a personnel change, bringing in Gordon as president to broaden the Sprayroq customer base. From there, Gordon and his management team worked diligently to branch out, and the work paid off.

Today, the company has contractors scattered around the Mid-Atlantic, Northeast, Midwest, the Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountain regions.

"We've also started working with contractors in Canada, and we're now targeting a contractor in Mexico City," says Gordon.

With North American operations flourishing and its customer and contractor bases growing, Sprayroq is beginning to turn its attention to the international market and adding another location. This involves setting up shop in Shanghai and reaching markets and other areas that can utilize its technologies.

"Today, we have some truly exciting developments taking place in the international marketplace," says Gordon. "We are preparing to open an office in Shanghai in the first quarter of 2009. Sprayroq is also negotiating and providing engineering assistance to a number of cities in China, Singapore and Australia for rather large projects where SprayWall will be an appropriate solution for their particular situations."

Currently, Sprayroq is in the midst of hiring a Chinese-based national management team that will be based in the Shanghai office. The company even has an active presence in Singapore, with one of its contractors being awarded a number of projects to rehabilitate more than 1,300 manholes.

"We have been approached by contractors from Egypt,

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South Africa, Philippines, India and Malaysia," says Gordon.

### Standing Out from the Crowd

As in any industry and targeted market, competition is a hurdle for companies to clear and the water and wastewater industry is no different. With high demand for sewer infrastructure rehabilitation, Sprayroq and other companies must compete with one another to become the method of choice for

municipalities and others in need.

"The industry is very competitive, especially since the need is so great," says Gordon. "Due to budgetary constraints, some cities still choose to use products over other methods for cost purposes. However, those products are often a short-term fix. Due to the lack of funding, these products are usually chosen since they are a lower cost solution, although not necessarily a long-term solution."

Additional competition comes from other resin manufacturers in the industry. With this type of competition, Sprayroq must rely on its products, contractors and its reputation to stand above other companies.

"Each of us in the polymer world is trying to position our companies to be the best solution for underground infrastructure corrosion control and renewal," says Gordon. "The satisfaction of our end-users speaks for our work."

Besides client satisfaction, Sprayroq also relies on product testing to prove its place in the resin industry. With good results from ASTM testing, the company can boast that its product meets the standards of an effective solution for wastewater collection system rehabilitation.

"We do not do our own in-house testing for ASTM standards," explains Gordon. "We believe that it brings us greater credibility in using a qualified ASTM testing facility, so any numbers that we report are backed by third party, independent testing."

Aside from a product that has been developed to handle the test of time, Sprayroq also believes that its contractors give the company an edge over competitors in the marketplace.

"The big difference that separates us from our competitors is the quality of our SCPs that install the products," says Gordon. "We pride ourselves in the fact that we have thoroughly trained highly knowledgeable contractors. Our operations team spends an extensive amount of time training new contractors, along with repeating the training process to those who have been doing the work for years."

This training involves a two-week course in which Sprayroq works with new contractors on the application process, as well as other important aspects of the business. On top of the time spent in the office, the contractors also experience supplemental time in the field until they are comfortable in the application process.

"We teach the contractors everything about the process, including basic safety, chemistry, equipment maintenance, resin spraying and surface preparation," explains Gordon. "Good surface preparation is the key to successful resin spraying. We spend two weeks out of the gate with our contractors and teach them all of those critical components."



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## Forward Thinking

Even after nearly two decades in the business, Sprayroq continues to look at ways to further develop its existing products and create new ones that will benefit the trenchless industry and infrastructure rehabilitation.

"We always seek to be innovative when creating new products," says Gordon. "We like to see ourselves as a leader in polyurethane development in the sewer systems, and even today, SprayWall is still a tremendous innovative solution for the problems that cities face with their infrastructure."

To continue the tradition and hopes of providing innovative products, Sprayroq has turned its focus to "green" technology. Through extensive research, the company has developed SprayShield Green, a semi-rigid polyurethane.

"We have been working with our SCPs on educating others about this new green product," explains Gordon. "SprayShield Green is a corrosion coating for existing and new infrastructure. What makes this a green technology is that Sprayroq has removed 35 percent of the product's petroleum-based materials and substituted them with renewable source content, which is a proprietary-blended vegetable oil to create this new polyurethane solution."

This product, introduced earlier this year, exceeds the Department of Agriculture's guidelines for green technology, which requires that a product contain 20 percent or higher of a renewable source content.

Aside from introducing a new product to the marketplace, Sprayroq also plans to dive into different industries that may benefit from its products.

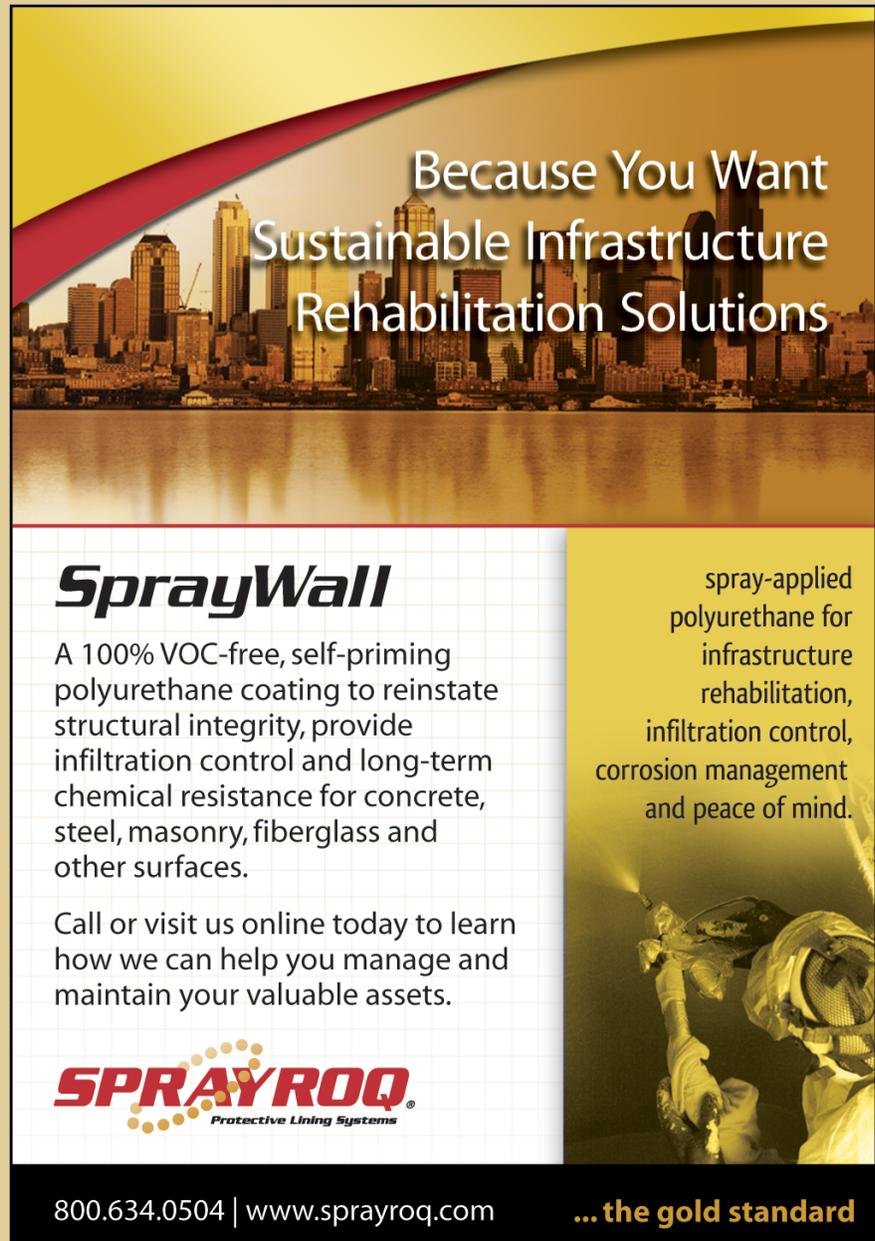
"We're going to be looking at industries market by market to determine where we want to go and where we will have the greatest impact," says Gordon. "We have been working with our Sprayroq Certified Partners in order to address the needs in their marketplaces that go beyond water and wastewater infrastructure."

For example, in Australia the company is fielding requests to provide spray-applied coatings with high-abrasion resistance for the mining industry in western Australia. Gordon notes that Sprayroq is working on the development of a product that would be used in plant maintenance shutdowns at various mining operations that could provide high-abrasion resistance, as well as corrosion resistance.

However, Sprayroq does not plan to lend its products to just any industry. Gordon notes that this expansion into other markets will be through its trained contractors and not available to the open market. "We are taking a look at mining, agricultural and even maritime applications," he says. "But all of this will play out in time and we will decide where we want to be."

With new and old proven products and contractors that complete solid work, Sprayroq can continue to thrive in both the North American and the global marketplace. By providing sewer rehab solutions to communities in need, the company keeps all-important infrastructure up and running for those who rely on it most.

Pam Stask is an assistant editor of *Trenchless Technology*.



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