

Portable Restroom Purchasing Guide



Introduction to the Portable Restroom Buying Process

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Worldwide, an estimated 3 million portable restrooms are in use, serviced by a fleet of over 10,000 trucks. The chief benefit of portable restrooms is their portability. A single portable restroom can be hauled in the back of a pickup truck. They are inexpensive to rent from sanitation supply companies who offer services such as draining, cleaning, disinfecting and deodorizing. They also increase productivity and safety as personnel do not have to leave the work area to use public facilities.

These features make portable restrooms extremely convenient for industries with outdoor jobsites, such as:

- Road construction
- Civil construction
- Heavy construction
- Industrial construction
- High rise construction
- Residential construction
- Shipyards
- Farms
- Ranches

Beyond occupational functionality, portable restrooms also accommodate recreational activities. They are frequently used at weddings, music festivals, campsites, outdoor sporting events, and parades. They are also used by the government during military training exercises and in conjunction with disaster relief efforts.

Purchasing considerations

The location has an impact on the type of portable restroom you will choose. Beyond the common portable restroom that we are all familiar with, there are other options tailored to specific operating conditions, such as the high rise portable restroom.

Other concerns include the number of personnel at your jobsite, access to water or hand sanitizer, access for the drainage and cleaning crew and weather conditions. These factors will

have an impact on the number of portable restrooms you need, what type makes the most sense for your situation, and possible cost implications due to distance and travel time for the service crew.

Dealers have a variety of options that cater to many different needs and situations. Event organizers may choose portable restroom options that resemble an interior restroom. There are models that “flush” with a foot pedal, water and a special holding tank. Deluxe models offer more room for costumes or formal dresses, such as a wedding dress. There is a wheelchair accessible model or one that has running water and solar lighting.

Buying process

You can rent portable restrooms by the day or month. Purchasing portable restrooms is also an option. In such instances, due to the regulations and possible specialized equipment necessary for emptying, draining, disinfecting and cleaning large units, such services are normally hired out to a sanitation company. For this reason, renting is the more popular choice, as renting includes those services as well as delivery and pickup.

You can rent a standard porta potty for \$60 to \$100 dollars a day or \$150 to \$300 a month. Deluxe models or specialized versions, such as the high rise restroom, are \$100 to \$150 a day and \$300 to \$500 a month. If you are looking to purchase a unit, a standard portable restroom starts at \$700. Deluxe models, specialty units and handicapped/ADA compliant versions can cost up to \$3,000, depending on the amenities.

This purchasing guide will discuss in more depth the trends, types, regulations, and maintenance requirements that will help you choose the best portable restroom option for your needs. It will also provide information about various add-ons available and suggest topics you should discuss when speaking with dealers.

When determining where to place the office trailer, another consideration is the power source. Is it going to be hardwired into a local utility? If so, coordinate with the utility company as well as the office trailer company when it comes to delivery and setup. If the power source is a generator, keep safety in mind.

Types & Uses

As mentioned earlier, there are different types of portable restrooms, useful for a variety of needs. The portable sanitation industry has developed into a \$4 billion dollar a year business. Depending on your needs, there are trends regarding the industry that will impact your decision.

The first factor is the answer to the question: what are you going to use it for? And secondly: where? Industrial uses vary from event or recreational purposes as the latter has a presentation factor involved. Out on a jobsite, functionality is more critical than appearance.

Construction

There are a variety of [construction portable restrooms](#) to choose from. Rental prices typically include transporting, cleaning and disposal services. The purchase price is just to own the unit; arranging for cleaning and disposal services, if not self-performed, falls on you and the company.

- **Standard.** Standard portable restrooms are 88"x44"x48", large enough for one person. They are completely enclosed, with locking doors, non-slip floors and ventilation. New units can be purchased starting at \$700 while used units begin at \$300 for models in good condition. These can be rented for \$60 - \$100 a day or \$150 - \$300 a month.
- **Deluxe.** Deluxe models are wider than standard models at 62" instead of 44", giving occupants more room in the interior of the unit with extra features. Deluxe models offer more amenities in terms of hand sanitizer dispensers, sinks, urinals or shelving. New units are \$1200 and up, used units at \$700 and up, and rentals are \$100 - \$150 a day or \$300 - \$500 a month.
- **High Rise.** High rise models are slightly smaller standard portable restrooms equipped with lift points to be hoisted by crane to elevated levels on the structure. They are of sturdier construction to withstand rugged conditions and use. They may or may not be fully enclosed as providing just sufficient privacy makes them more transportable. New units are \$850 and up with quality used models at approximately \$500. They can be rented for \$100 a day or \$200 a month.
- **Rolling High Rise.** Rolling high rise portable restrooms are different from their high rise counterpart in that they are smaller and roll on heavy duty, lockable casters. The reduced design includes partial doors and open top that allow the units to be placed in tight spaces. New units are \$750 and up, used unit begin at \$400 and they can be rented for \$100 a day or \$200 a month.
- **Large Trailer.** Large trailer models offer multiple stalls and sinks for job sites needing more facilities with some creature comforts. They typically include paper towels, hand sanitizer, pump activated sinks and some models also feature flushable toilet action. Large trailer models, fully assembled, start at \$2500 while used units begin at \$1500. Rental prices are \$500 a day or \$1000 a month.
- **Waste Tank Expansion.** Expanding the waste tank size increases the duration of time between emptying and cleaning actions. Purchasing a tank can cost you \$150 or more, with used units at \$50 and up. Renting expansion tanks is \$25 a day or \$100 a month.

Agriculture

For temporary agriculture jobs, such as an annual harvest, many companies use the same type of portable units as in the construction industry. However, for long-term jobs that require employees to work in remote areas, the preference is to use commercial-grade, large trailer portable restrooms with climate control, china toilets and hot water hand stations are preferred.

For the following industries, the USDA requires hand washing facilities to prevent contaminated food:

- Farming
- Ranching
- Livestock and dairy
- Plantations
- Orchards
- Vineyards



Such units are larger, can serve up to 125 people and are pulled behind trucks similar in size and shape to a horse trailer or camper. They have steps and handrails for access to the facilities, water tanks, and waste disposal features so they can be emptied at a dump station.

Trailers begin at \$12,000 for new, mid-range models with used ones available for as little as \$7,000 in good condition. Rentals are \$500-\$700 a day and \$2000-\$2500 a month.

- **NOTE:** For new units used primarily in construction and agriculture, the price does not include a charge for cleaning and disposal services. Those charges depend on distance from the vendor or dealer to the job site and the frequency necessary to stay in compliance with regulations and maintain sanitary standards. Since pricing is so dependent on specific situations, speak with your dealer to determine cost and any deals or discounts connected to your purchase.

Luxury needs

Luxury portable restroom models are not necessarily larger than the types previously discussed. Instead, the features that make them stand out are the amenities that increase their similarity to regular bathrooms; they are even constructed in fashionable colors with modern lines and shapes for the best presentation effect.

Luxury portal restrooms can come equipped with the following amenities to simulate a real bathroom in every way:

- Mirrors
- Paper towels
- Steel or china sink bowls
- Fresh water flushing
- Soap dispenser
- Coat hook
- Shelving
- Toilet seat sanitizer

Luxury portable restroom models are available in single units and as large trailer units. They also have wheelchair accessible and ADA compliant units with all the same features and benefits. Single units can be purchased for \$2000 and up with gently used at \$1200 and up. Trailer models begin at \$15,000 for new mid-range models with used ones available for as little as \$8,000 in good condition. Rentals are \$600-800 a day and \$3000-\$3500 a month, although such rentals are normally for short period events lasting a single day to less than a week.

Outdoor Events

The type of portable restroom for outdoor events runs the full gambit of all the models previously discussed. The size and type for your event depends on your budget, number of people in attendance and duration. Single day family sport tournaments may not require luxury large trailers while a huge, fancy wedding might. A musical event over five days may require dozens, if not hundreds of units, to accommodate attendance numbers.

Plumbing Options

All models, from standard to large luxury trailer, will require disposal. There are, however, different flushing and plumbing options that move the waste to the holding tank.

- ◆ **Waste tank.** The most common version as the waste tank simply sits under the toilet.
- ◆ **Fresh water flushing.** This pulls fresh water from a holding tank through the use of a handle or pump.
- ◆ **Recirculating.** This option recycles the grey water (dirty water) from the sink use to flush the waste into the holding tank.
- ◆ **Combo flush.** This type combines fresh water and grey water to execute the flush.
- ◆ **Foot or hand-operated.** This option pulls fresh water from a holding tank via a foot pedal or hand pump.
- ◆ **Electric powered.** Most often found in large trailer units, this type requires access to an electrical outlet or a generator.

Regulations

Given the sanitary and environmental implications, the use of portable restrooms is heavily regulated. OSHA has requirements based on industry and most municipalities want you to get permits before placing portable restrooms in public areas.

OSHA

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires portable restrooms at construction sites to avoid adverse health effects that occur when employees do not have access to facilities. Employers must also provide adequate hand washing facilities in close proximity. Such stations need to be equipped with whatever cleansing chemicals will wash away the materials with which they work; for instance, paint, glue and grease.

OSHA also requires one unit per ten workers for a forty-hour work week. They must be kept in sanitary conditions, which by [ANSI Z4.3](#) means the units provided per the OSHA standard should be serviced at least once per week. These same standards apply to all industrial and agricultural activities as well, although agricultural organizations have an additional requirement – which we explain next.

USDA

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has instituted a program to prevent contamination of fresh food as it is grown and gathered. The measure, called “Good Agricultural Practices” or GAP, measures a participant’s compliance with the standard. It evaluates portable restrooms to ensure they are GAP compliant restrooms, ensuring food is safe and healthy. Beyond properly provided and maintained facilities, employees are expected to:

- ✓ Wash their hands before returning to work.
- ✓ Understand posted signs issuing such instructions.
- ✓ Document that facilities are serviced and cleaned on a regular basis.

Locations

If you are renting portable restrooms, the driver(s) from the rental company will inspect your site, and with your input on considerations and preference, determine the most reasonable and safe placement of the units. Regardless of jobsite or recreational event, these are the [guidelines](#) from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in their storm water prevention plan guidance for location determination:

- ✓ Units should be placed on flat ground, stable with clear access to the door.
- ✓ Units should be at least twenty feet from any slope storm drain, pond or stream.
- ✓ Units should be at least ten feet from any curb or gutter.
- ✓ If the last two distances cannot be met, the unit should be surrounded by sandbags or spill retention devices.
- ✓ Avoid placing on concrete, asphalt or similar surfaces. Grass, sand and gravel will absorb liquid in case of spills or leaks.
- ✓ Locate away from main traffic areas for pedestrians or moving equipment.
- ✓ Position for easy access by the pump truck and service staff.
- ✓ Secure units to the ground or each other in high wind areas or conditions.
- ✓ Note the location of the portable toilets on the storm water pollution prevention on construction sites.

Permits

There are no federal requirements for portable restroom placement or use. However, that varies by state and by municipality. Many counties, towns and cities have permit requirements for placing porta potties in public areas and jobsites. Work with the local government officials to determine your responsibilities.

Security

Most units will come standard with a catch mechanism in the door signifying occupancy and holding the door shut while in use. If you need additional security, such as the ability to lock the unit to keep unauthorized personnel from using it in your absence, there are portable toilet locking kits starting around \$15 each. Talk with your dealer for specialty add-ons or other advice on what to use.

Maintenance

Maintenance is an absolute must for portable restrooms, not only for sanitary reasons, but also to stay compliant and ensure proper operation.

If you are renting units, the dealer will clean, empty, drain and service them as part of the rental price. It is important to give them the following information, not only to help you determine how many units are necessary, but also how frequently they will provide services:



- **Type of event.** Will everyone want to use the restroom at once, like intermission at a concert? Is attendance constant throughout the day? This influences both number of units and service frequency.
- **Number of attendees.** The number of people at your event at any given time will help establish the frequency of cleaning for the portable restrooms. Fewer restrooms mean more frequent cleaning at consistent high volume occasions.
- **Duration of event.** This lets the company know how long the units will be in place to schedule the determine number of services.
- **Outside temperature.** Warmer temperatures will necessitate more frequent services to control odor.
- **Food and beverage availability.** Units are used more frequently when food and drink are available at the job site or event site, especially on a continual basis.
- **Special needs.** Will there be families? Do you want to provide separate male and female facilities? If there are handicapped attendees, or possible ADA compliant issues, accommodations should be made.
- **Terrain and curbing.** It needs to be considered for pump truck access as well as a handicap accessibility concerns during placement.

If you own the portable restrooms and are handling maintenance yourself, here are recommended activities and checkpoints:

- ✓ The dealer or manufacturer should provide you with a recommendation for a suitable number of portable restrooms for your anticipated use, as well as guidelines for cleanliness and servicing.
- ✓ OSHA requires emptying and cleaning at least once per week per ten individuals to one unit in a forty-hour work week.
- ✓ Develop a cleaning and maintenance schedule. Cleaning and emptying should be done well in advance of reaching full capacity to make both actions easier and control odor, bacteria and related negative atmosphere attributes.
- ✓ Check for damage, leaks and spills daily. On a construction site, add this action to your weekly storm water site inspection.
- ✓ All waste, even rinse water from cleaning, must be properly disposed of in approved areas, not on the site.
- ✓ Display owner information on the unit.

An unwillingness to perform maintenance is why portable restrooms are more frequently rented than purchased. PSAI estimates that as high as 90% of portable restroom owners that are not industry dealers or renters still pay a waste disposal company to perform cleaning, servicing and maintenance on their units.

Cleaning chemicals

One portable restroom, on average, can handle 720 uses before it reaches full capacity. Portable restrooms, when cleaned and serviced properly, provide a safe and sanitary setting. The industry average is servicing every 240 uses. Some dealers make it a point to estimate a possible 90 to 100 uses and base their service schedule around that.

There are many different cleaning chemicals that can be used to clean portable toilets. Since the cleaning chemicals will be disposed of in the same place as the other waste, talk with the dumping station or other facility to ensure they approve of your cleaning supply product list. Industry-wide, manufacturers and dealers are suggesting the use of products that eliminate harmful chemicals that would impact the environment. These include:

- Citrus-based, non-caustic and non-flammable cleaning liquids
- Toilet deodorizers that are free of formaldehyde
- Uses of refills versus aerosol cans to reduce propellants and disposable cans
- Purchasing cleaning chemicals in bulk to reduce or eliminate waste

Add-ons

There are add-ons and options you can choose to customize your portable restroom purchase or rental to meet your specific jobsite or event needs. There are several [listed in this article](#) and organized below:

Construction Use		Event Use	
Restroom Sink	\$250	Restroom Sink	\$250
Liquid Soap Dispenser	\$30	Liquid Soap Dispenser	\$30
Paper Towel Dispenser	\$10	Paper Towel Dispenser	\$10
Split Tank	\$200	Recirculating Flush	\$400
Recirculating Flush	\$400	Shelving	\$20
Shelving	\$20	Gender ID Signs	\$20
Locking Kit	\$15	Deodorizers	\$15
Deodorizers	\$15		

There are also add-ons for cold weather. These are typically used by construction and industrial industries to maintain comfort. The most common is to mix anti-freeze with the deodorizing water that is put in the tank. It keeps the water from freezing. If you own the units and self-perform disposal, check with the dump station or disposal facility to ensure the anti-freeze is acceptable.

Those units that will be in storage or not in use during cold weather conditions should be winterized. This is accomplished by using one half cup antifreeze for every five gallons of water. Flush the mixture down the toilet. This inserts anti-freeze through the entire plumbing system. Next, flush one half cup rock salt into the tank. When the weather warms up, service the portable restroom as usual.

For event management purposes, you can add diaper changing tables or child-sized toilet seats. They are huge conveniences for families that may be in attendance, especially weddings and family reunions.

Questions to Ask a Dealer

Dealers are there to be your number one resource. Be sure to cover the following considerations with them before you purchase or rent.

Support and warranties

The industry standard warranty on the purchase of a new portable restroom unit is four years

(forty-eight months) and is a full warranty. Limited warranties exist on used units depending on the dealer. The average is two years on parts like the door latch and attached pieces like a handrail or shelving. Ask if the dealer offers a plumbing system warranty with purchase or if you can buy additional coverage.

On-site service

Ask to ensure that the rental pricing includes delivery and pick up of the units, as well servicing and cleaning throughout the duration of the rental period. When it is delivered, inspect each unit. Use the same inspection suggestions and techniques as you would if you were purchasing a used unit.

For used purchases, inspect the unit thoroughly. Make sure it is clean and you can see every inch of the tank to look for cracks or chips. Check the plumbing and flushing mechanisms to make sure each piece functions, is free of rust or residue build up and has no holes or cracks.

For units with fresh water pumping, by pump or electric, check to make the tubing is securely fastened and free of holes, cracks or discoloration indicating fatigue. Luxury restrooms should be examined by both a plumber and electrician, as there are more moving parts that require special attention.

Rental or buy packages

Dealers offer rental packages with varying benefits. Ask about each package to pick one that best meets both your needs and your budget.

Standard components:

- Delivery
- Installation
- Service and waste disposal during the rental term
- Pickup
- Toilet paper and toilet deodorizer.



Optional components could also include a sink and hand sanitizer pump. Deluxe restroom trailers should include several sanitized toilets and/or urinals and hand-washing stations. Starting at two stalls each, some include separate facilities for men and women. With heat, A/C, lighted vanities, hot and cold water sinks and flushing toilets, deluxe trailers are supposed to provide a VIP experience.

Be wary of additional costs. Read contracts carefully to determine where the dealer or company may charge additional or non-refundable fees. Look for:

- A fuel surcharge on delivery and pickup.
- A waste disposal fee.

- A non-refundable reservation fee, for example, \$50 to \$200 on deluxe restrooms.
- A premium charge for weekend delivery of pickup. It is best to have weekend rentals delivered on Friday and then picked up on Monday.

Training

If you intend to purchase new portable restrooms and perform all associated tasks, ask if the dealer provides any training on maintenance, cleaning and disposal activities for you or employees in charge of taking care of the portable restrooms.

By learning all you can from the experts on portable restrooms, you can make an informed choice on the best type of unit to satisfy your requirements.

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