

# PLUMBING

P E R S P E C T I V E



Randal Williams,  
owner of Randal's  
Plumbing

## Cycle of Service

Page 8





# Cycle of service

“S

ervice, service, service” is the official motto at Randal’s Plumbing Inc., in Palm Desert, Calif. The owner, Randal Williams, started the 10-person company in 1994.

As their motto suggests, service is key, along with a healthy dose of remodel work. The majority of that business comes from high-end residential customers. Randal’s Plumbing lives on referral, spending not a single dollar on advertising beyond truck wraps and cycle graphics.

You read that correctly: Randal’s uses a “Service Cycle.” It’s a Yamaha 650 outfitted with a special sidecar for jobsite visits and running parts. Southern California’s climate is conducive to year-’round cycle riding.

Unfortunately, it’s also conducive to drought. While the lack of rain has been a real concern for California in the past few years, it’s ushered in a lot of calls from homeowners looking to conserve water. Even heavy rain from the recent El Niño has not quenched the drought in California.

“The EPA has specified 1.28 gallons per flush as the standard for all new toilets being installed,” said Randal, “and a lot of folks are looking to do even better. We started offering Toto’s 1 gpf models and have since put them in our showroom.”

But according to Randal, they’ve gone beyond low-flow fixtures. The company has installed hot water recirculation systems for more than a decade, but today it’s a main focus. Demand for hot water recirculation is way up, and today’s products are easier to install and offer more functionality.

“When people hear that they can save as much as 12,000 gallons each year, the only question is, ‘When can you do it?’” said Randal. “Of course we’ll save you water, but we’ll also save you time. I can buy more water, I can’t buy more time; it’s really our most precious commodity. Waiting on hot water for five minutes each day adds up to 30 hours per year.”

## RETURN WITHOUT A RETURN LINE

For years, Randal’s has installed hot water recirculation pumps in homes with a dedicated return line. Today, the volume of calls means that they’re running into a number of different applications, with and without dedicated return lines.

“We went shopping for flexible solutions and discovered two different reliable options for homes that don’t have dedicated return lines: the TacoGenie and the Hot-Link system.”

Both systems operate by sending cool water back to the water heater via the cold water line instead of letting it go down the drain.





*Randal Williams' Yamaha 650, outfitted with a specialty sidecar for service calls, serves as both practical transportation and moving billboard, attracting business by catching the eyes of new customers.*

## REPLACEMENT WORK

"Many of the big homes in this area had dedicated recirculation lines installed during construction," said Randal. "Whether their pump fails or they need a new water heater, we often find ourselves replacing the existing pump."

It's a regular occurrence; the call comes in saying there's no hot water. Randal runs out to the job on his motorcycle to check the water heater. The Service Cycle has its limitations though, so if the water heater is shot, he goes back to the shop to load a new Bradford White tank and a recirculation pump on a truck. Randal's plumbing stocks plenty of water heaters and special recirculating pumps that reduce electric consumption when compared to a conventional recirculation system that runs non-stop.

## IHERO ON THREE WHEELS

"My sister-in-law comes for a long visit every year," said Randal. "After waiting for hot water to arrive at the shower, she'd ask my wife, 'Isn't your husband a plumber?' Well, it's like the cobbler and his shoes..."

Last year, just before his sister-in-law arrived, Randal installed a hot water recirculation system at his own home. From what he says, it made him a hero. It's not the first time

he's blended his profession and his personal life for the benefit of both.

The idea for the Service Cycle took hold as he was searching for a way to fit in a little more riding time. After having a friend custom build the big sidecar to haul tools, wax rings, and recirculation pumps, he realized he'd stumbled into a great publicity stunt.

"I really just wanted to have fun with the Service Cycle, but now everyone around town knows me," said Randal. "People wave and take pictures, and every once in a while, a new customer will say they called because they saw the bike." According to Randal, the bike is a throwback to the early 19th century.

"The sidecar was in broad use in the U.S. before Henry Ford introduced the Model T," he explained. "Once average folks could afford four wheels, they moved away from three. But until then, the sidecar was used as a delivery vehicle, tradesman's transportation and, later, even had some tactical applications in the big wars."

Whether throwing back to days of old on the Service Cycle or looking forward with water and time conservation, Randal's Plumbing is on the move. ●