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## MODEC begins to clean up with decontamination unit

By NOA JONES

OSHA + HUD x 600 DHA housing units = \$\$ for MODEC.

It's an equation adding up to good business for MODEC Inc., a privately held Denver manufacturer of hazardous-material decontamination units.

MODEC is prospering from strict new Department of Housing and Urban Development safety regulations and toughened enforcement of old laws. Those laws have pushed the Denver Housing Authority, among others, to begin the removal or abatement of lead-based paint in some 600 low-income housing units in Denver.

To protect its workers from lead poisoning on the job site, the Housing Authority purchased a \$35,000 mobile decontamination unit from MODEC.

MODEC also manufactures a smaller version of the mobile decontamination unit that fits inside a building and retails for \$10,000. About 100 of MODEC's units are in operation nationwide.

"We are the experts in the business of protecting lives," said MODEC President Brian Kalamanka, who purchased the 6-year-old company July 23 from founder Norm Flohr for an undisclosed price. "Our whole business is employee safety."

Safe workplaces are also the business of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, or OSHA, which sets the laws concerning laborers handling hazardous materials. OSHA has, like HUD, toughened requirements by adopting a new policy that spells out standard procedures on hazardous-waste removal and emergency response.

The systems MODEC manufactures at 4940 Oneida St. in Denver meet or exceed those new regulations, Kalamanka said.

The unit purchased by the DHA is a 32-foot-long, 8-foot-wide trailer through which workers pass after coming into contact with hazardous material.

A contaminated worker enters the "dirty zone" of the trailer and removes all clothing

except for a respirator-type mask that remains on until the worker has rinsed completely in a "dermal shower," an ordinary shower equipped with filtration to capture runoff water.

The worker then leaves the respirator in the

to come, they won't all be showering in MODEC units.

"A trailer is basically a luxury," he said. "We can get by at the other sites by following OSHA washing guidelines and setting up our own system."

But improvising at the job site can create other problems.

"You can set up a dermal shower, but what happens to the contaminated water when it runs down the drain?" asked Kalamanka.

And DHA construction Superintendent Tom Bartlett is sold on MODEC's units.

"It takes six to eight hours for us to set up a unit on our own," he said. "The mobile unit turns out being more cost effective."

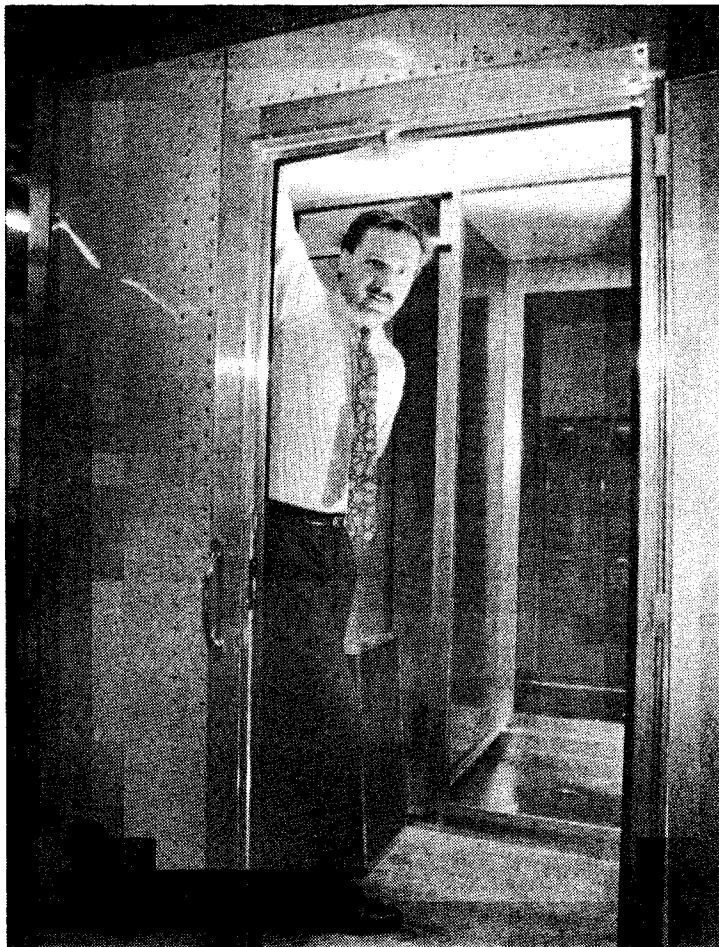
MODEC's net income for 1990 was \$78,000 on revenues of \$500,000, but Kalamanka has a hunch that the revenue figures may double as stricter regulations translate into increased orders. The company has six employees.

MODEC customers include the U.S. Air Force and Navy, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Westinghouse Hanford, Hess Oil, Kerr-McGee and the state of California.

Kalamanka recently met with the director of the New Mexico Department of Energy to discuss emergency decontamination needs of the Waste Isolation Pilot Project. Thousands of pounds of nuclear waste will be transported on state highways to the project site near Carlsbad, N.M., where it will be buried 25,000 feet underground.

MODEC also is teaming up with Council Bluffs, Iowa-based Timpte Industries, a trucking company, to design an emergency response unit that could accompany police and fire departments on emergency runs. The unit is expected to sell for \$8,000.

"Often those who are first on the site of an accident, a chemical fire, for example, are least protected," said Kalamanka. "We want to save those lives."



Brian Kalamanka, president of MODEC Inc.

... "We are the experts in the business of protecting lives."

shower, exits into the "clean zone" and changes into clothing kept in a locker.

Each unit contains four dermal showers and a negative air system that exchanges 500 cubic feet of air per minute, ensuring that no air transfers from the dirty zone into the clean zone.

Mark Ward, a lead paint poison specialist for the Denver Housing Authority, said that when the 15-person team of full-time DHA workers grows to an expected 40 in the months