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# Rental MANAGEMENT

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What you need to know about

## chutes

BY LARRY RINEY

**E**ver talk trash to your contract customers? If you haven't, you may be missing out on rental potential that can help you turn debris into gold. You can start with trash chutes.

Chutes are a necessity on most roofing, demolition, sandblasting, masonry and renovation jobs. They keep neighbors and the casual passerby happy and in one piece by reducing dust and debris and eliminating many of the hazards created by falling objects. Trash chutes also help create a good, professional image for any contractor by keeping the job site organized.

More importantly, chutes enable contractors to stay within city codes and federal regulations for many applications

"Even small contractors can get into trouble and be fined by OSHA if they throw anything free-fall off a building more than 20 feet high," says Benjamin Anson, vice president of Superchute in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

"That's a big point if your trying to rent to someone."

A basic, manufactured system found throughout the industry includes straight sections of plastic or steel tube about four feet in length, sections with doors or

**Chutes carry construction debris safely to the ground from any height. Right, door sections like this allow debris to be put into each chute at each floor. Below, a chute hoist is used to lift and anchor the chute safely in place.**



openings that can be positioned at different heights, such as the windows of an apartment building, and a wider section that serves as a funnel or hopper at the top. Sections can be combined to produce the required height and configuration.

"Diameters of our chutes range from 18 to 36 inches," says Anson. "Most companies make 30 inches their standard size. Most assembled chute systems can range from one story up to 200 feet."

A problem for some rental stores may be storage. "The round, welded plastic tubes take up lots of volume," says Anson. "We have a model that lies flat - as flat as a sheet of plywood. You can throw 10 to 20 of them in the bed of a pickup truck. We call them wrap-arounds. Only the straight sections of chute can be furnished this way. All you do to assemble them is to join the sides and clasp them together."

Anson says the prices for flat and pre-formed, welded chute sections are the same, and both are equally popular. [...]

Superchute suggests using a direct marketing approach to build product awareness. Anyone asking about masonry, construction or demolition equipment and tools is a natural candidate for a rental sales pitch.

Manufacturers also should be able to back their products with counter-top literature and point-of-

A cost-savings comparison is another hot button that can be used to market the products. The most popular alternative to a manufactured chute is a homemade, jury-rigged wooden structure. Due to the cost of material and the time it takes to assemble, a design like this can be very expensive. Besides the costs and upkeep, wooden ramps can wear quickly and they portray a less-than-professional image.

A natural add-on to a chute system is a mechanism to position the chute in place. Contractors can lift them with an on-site crane or similar equipment. A hoist designed especially for the task can be a good rental item if the contractor doesn't have the proper machinery.

### *Your best bet for marketing chutes? A direct approach, these experts say*

Hoists come in a variety of configurations. Manual winches are popular for the lighter weights. They can be supported in a variety of ways including frames and scaffolds attached to superstructure.

Outriggers are used on flat roofs or slab and counterweights attached to the flat surface keep the chute system balanced.

As for hoists, what you stock depends upon the rental markets

Another add-on is a tie-down/breakaway cord or rope that attaches the bottom of a chute to the container that is going to be filled with debris. If the container is a truck, let's say, and the driver pulls away without releasing the tie-down, it will break away.

Sandblasters sometimes need a tarp, used as a funnel, to catch material as structure is cleaned.

Some chute sections may require an adjustment kit to match each height of a door section to the work level.

You can prolong the life of a plastic system with steel liners. These are attached to the wall of the chute to protect heavy wear areas such as the last few sections curving into the container, the back wall of a door section and the back wall of a top hopper.

If you are purchasing chute systems, be sure to match the strength of the chute supports and lifting devices with the heights you expect to rent.

After a return, always check the product to make sure safety signs and safety features, such as cable gates, are properly in place. Cable gates and similar devices alert workers to the fact that it is unsafe to throw debris into the top hopper and door sections; this condition is created when a full truck or container at the end of the chute is being replaced by an empty one.

All the time site work is going on, rental store managers can make periodic safety checks on

purchase displays that help build product knowledge at your store.

Anson suggests putting the rental company's name on the sides of the chute. "What else can you rent that will be prominently hanging out in public?" he asks. "Not only does this help promote the store, it deters theft. I've seen stores set up scaffolding inside or outside the showroom and hang our chute from it. Some people even hang them off their rental store." [...]

your targeting.

both plastic and steel equipment, and while they're out there inspecting, they can keep in touch with the contractors, find out how jobs are developing and maybe pick up some additional rentals or get some leads for future rentals down the road.

[...] You can find Superchute on the Web at [www.superchute.com](http://www.superchute.com)

**RM**

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