

BOULEVARD

boiling point of water is 212 degrees.

Let's talk about water pressure, or psi, pounds of force per square inch of area. The psi of a garden hose with a pistol grip, for instance, is 100.

"Most of our customers have hot-water pressure washers of 2,000 to 3,000 psi, moving three to five gallons of (scalding) water a minute," he said. "I can sell you 40,000 psi, but we generally know what our customers need better than they do, and they're looking for our advice."

Usually, his clients "need more water flow and less pressure, but everybody wants more pressure. I call it the Tim Allen Effect – 'More power!'" Ditkof said. "We often get guys in who say, 'I want 5,000 psi, I'm going to clean trucks.' We'll say, 'You're going to blow holes in them.'"

Ditkof also owns pressure-washer companies in Stockton and Concord – a second Steam Cleaners and J&S, respectively – and has about 10 competitors between Watsonville and Chico, he said.

If you're in the market, the low end is \$900 for the smallest cold-water pressure washer

in the store – something you might use to clean your driveway – moving to a high end of \$80,000.

"We're a very industrial niche," Ditkof said. "Consumers account for less than 1 percent of our sales."

Among his clientele in need of washers to clean their equipment are a Caterpillar tractor company, three public works yards in Sacramento, a drilling company in Rio Vista, military installations, trash companies, auto dealers, construction companies and

the Shell Oil Refinery in Martinez.

"I got a call yesterday from Travis Air Force Base about systems to clean airplanes, and recent service calls from the City of Tracy and AC Transit headquarters in Oakland," he said.

"We maintain and fix equipment at its location when it breaks, whether it's our product or not. Service leads to sales."

Ditkof has a master's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Michigan and an MBA from Yale, credentials that seem a bit formal in the Steam Cleaners warehouse.

"I actually had a career at one time," he said with a chuckle, referring to his executive position with a \$5 billion industrial gases distributor in New Jersey, where his budget was \$2 million.

He moved to California and into a job with the Loomis cash-handling company, where "I had 1,300 guys with guns working for me up and down the West Coast."

I thought there had to be something else in life besides living on airplanes," Ditkof added. So, he spent a year looking for the right opportunity.

That led to the purchases and mergers of several pressure-washing companies into his present-day model.

Never still, Ditkof is in the midst of starting another project, Evergreen Gardens, a cannabis cultivation company in

a huge space conjoined to Steam Cleaners. But he's facing a track meet of bureaucratic hurdles. "We'll see," he said.

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Howard Ditkof
Owner, Steam Cleaners, Inc.



STEAM CLEANERS, INC.

960 Arden Way, Sacramento. 916-442-1118, www.pressurewasher.pro.

UPCOMING EVENTS

THURSDAY, JAN. 9

Teen Space

3:30 P.M.

Free.

Hang out with friends after school at the library and enjoy a teens-only space. Teens, ages 13-19, can play video games, watch anime, make crafts and more!

📍 North Sacramento-Hagginwood Library
2109 Del Paso Blvd.

TUESDAY, JAN. 14

Yeah Buddy Comedy Night

8 P.M.

Free.

Enjoy a free monthly stand up comedy show, featuring the best up-and-coming comedians from around California and hosted by Buddy Rahming. Stay tuned after the show to party and mingle!

📍 Carol's Books
1913 Del Paso Blvd.

FRIDAY, JAN. 10

Acapella Poetry Night

8 P.M.

\$5 advanced tickets, \$10 at the door.

Kick-off your Friday night basking in the talents of successful spoken word artists. The showcase features wordsmiths full of flair and free of any screens or papers. Doors open for all ages at 7 p.m., purchase discounted tickets at eventbrite.com.

📍 The Rink Studios
1031 Del Paso Blvd.

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