

"I cannot change the environment I work in, so the best thing to do is to adapt to the environment I am thrown into."

– Mr Choy, (below) pumping out the content of a mobile toilet



It stinks, but someone has to do it

These S'poreans take cleaning portable toilets job in their stride



REPORT & PICTURES

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CLEANING mobile toilets may seem to be one of Singapore's least sought-after jobs.

But the pay is by no means the lowest, and there are a number of Singaporeans in this line.

One of them is Kallang Bahru resident Choy Tuck Seng, 48, who earns about \$2,000 a month.

Said Mr Choy, who works for ISS Facility Services as a service specialist: "Though people may not appreciate what I do, I am sure they appreciate having a clean toilet to use."

ISS Facility Services rents out mobile loos, most of which are taken up by hospitals, construction sites and outdoor event organisers.

Mr Choy's team is made up of eight Singaporeans and two Malaysians.

Every day, the company sends out five tankers to collect the waste from the mobile toilets islandwide.

The service specialists work with the drivers in teams of two. Mr Choy works with driver Masjor Sami, 51, who is also a Singaporean.

At 7am, they set off from their office on Soon Lee Road in Jurong. They are in charge of collecting waste from the mobile toilets in the west, south and central parts of Singapore. Each tanker can hold up to 5,000 litres of waste.

A pump with a hose, which works like a vacuum cleaner, is used to collect the waste.

It takes only about five minutes to clean each mobile toilet, pump out the waste, refill the water and put in fresh toilet rolls.

Mr Choy has to clean and maintain 90 toilets daily. Mr Masjor helps Mr Choy to speed up the work.

Their work day ends at 7pm, and they make a final stop at the Ulu Pandan Water Reclamation Plant for the disposal of the collected waste.

Mr Choy, who is single, was a contract shipyard fitter before becoming a service specialist with ISS nine years ago, attracted to the stable job and attractive pay.

He doesn't feel embarrassed when people ask about his job.

Though many may turn up their noses at even using a mobile toilet, Mr Choy said he didn't have any difficulty getting accustomed to the job.

"I could tolerate the smell since the first day I started work. I never wear a mask," he said, adding that he has adapted to his work environment.

National Day

Even then, there are challenging occasions, like National Day, when he has to clean 20 mobile toilets in a row.

There are aspects of his job which may make your stomach churn.

Said Mr Choy: "At some construction sites, some workers do not use toilet paper or flush. Instead, they simply use newspapers to cover their stools without flushing."

But he doesn't mind eating in the tanker's cabin.

Of course, he washes his hands first. There is soap and water for that on the tanker.

Mr Choy said that many users complain about the water pressure being too low in the mobile toilets, but they do not realise this cannot be helped as the water flow is operated with a foot pump.

Some even pull in a water hose from a nearby tap outside the toilet and flood the whole toilet.

Still, Mr Choy persists in his job and takes pride in ensuring that the toilets are clean.



TAKING A BREATH: Mr Choy and Mr Masjor wash their hands and faces with soap and water thoroughly before they have their lunch.