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Home Ofc: P.O. Box 791290

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(210) 308-5800



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Prayer bucket inspires local invention

To morning commuters, the hulking truck encircled with barricades and traffic cones may be nothing more than a road-clogging nuisance.

For Dallas' **Kerem Tepecik** and **Dale Vith**, two electricians who have made a good living by changing light bulbs forty feet above the pavement, the so-called "bucket truck" is more ominous.

"Every time I go up, I wonder if this is the day I'll die," said Tepecik, a married father of two. "We call it the prayer bucket."

Naturally, spending hours swaying in the Texas wind while dismantling high voltage light fixtures as angry drivers on the street below zoom past, the two electricians shared a single thought - "There's got to be a better way."

After a couple of near-death experiences, the pair began to learn the truth of Edison's dictum, "Invention is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration."

Taking a cue from the 200-ft light poles used on freeway cloverleaf overpasses that feature built-in lowering systems, Vith and Tepecik spent nights and weekends designing and building prototypes of the invention they called Retropole.

Now patented, Retropole is a crank-and-rail attachment, which safely disconnects and lowers the light for routine servicing.

Following a soft launch in May/June 2005, **Retropole LLC's** small staff reports a promising customer response.



L-R: Electricians/inventors Dale Vith and Kerem Tepecik kiss the prayer bucket good-bye.

"The Retropole systems pay for themselves the third time a light bulb is changed," Tepecik added. "Do-it-yourself maintenance and low cost of operation is very appealing to maintenance staffs."

Perhaps more significant is the invention's positive impact on property value.

"For every dollar a property's annual maintenance cost drops, ten dollars are added to the property's value," Tepecik explained.

Marketing director **Sherman Allen** said the electricians are two good guys who worked hard to bring a terrific idea to life.

"How often does an idea come along that helps with safety and environmental issues, and also helps large businesses save a fortune?"

"Bucket trucks charge \$200-\$300 for minor service calls, whereas the bulbs are sold for \$20 at home improvement stores," Allen added. "Bucket trucks may cause concrete and landscaping damage and in terms of fuel, the 13-ton monsters make Hummers look like econo-boxes."

In an ironic twist, the success of Retropole will keep Vith and Tepecik in the prayer bucket just a little longer. The one-hour installation of the mechanism requires one final ascent for adaptation of the light fixture.

Tepecik said he's considering a sign on the truck that says, "I'm never coming here again."
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