



Biohazards are ‘Biogone’ thanks to CdA company that cleans up murders and suicides

Tue., July 5, 2022

By **Ed Condran** edc@spokesman.com (509) 459-5440

It’s no surprise that Rick Bennett is spotless. But there’s good reason why the tall, strapping, bearded senior citizen cleans up better than most.

The founder and owner of [Coeur d’Alene’s Biogone](#), a hazardous clean and removal company, specializes in making crime scenes disappear.

Bennett, 65, often receives calls after murders and suicides are committed.

“It’s what I do,” Bennett said while relaxing in The Spokesman-Review lobby. “The suicides are the hardest. There is a certain trauma and so many emotions, if families are still at the property. I show up at the scene and the families are crying since their son, daughter or parent just killed themselves. It’s always difficult.”

Jobs in Spokane make up 75% of Bennett’s workload.

“There’s five times as many people here in Spokane than Coeur d’Alene,” Bennett said. “There is more crime here in Spokane and more suicides.”

“Starting this company has been a great career move for me.”

“I was cleaning people’s businesses and homes, but cleaning up biohazards, well, that business found me,” Bennett said. “I was in California and I ran into someone who started a crime scene cleanup business. I asked what that was about and I was interested after I was given the details.” Bennett said.

Prior to establishing Biogone in 2009, Bennett owned a carpet cleaning business.

After spending a month learning the trade in Florida, Bennett earned his certifications from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and Biogone was born 13 years ago.

“My first job was a suicide in Coeur d’Alene and I was off and running,” Bennett said. “It’s not an easy job. This isn’t like mopping up the floor. It’s a lot to deal with, but I’m well compensated for working in a strenuous and dangerous situation.”

Bennett, who takes on about 50 jobs a year, said about half are suicides and homicides.

“When it comes to suicides, it all depends on what type of weapon is used,” Bennett said. “If it’s a handgun, there’s not a lot of spray. However, if it’s a shotgun, spray is everywhere, including brain fragments and body parts, which are all over the place.”

However, murder/suicide is not close to the most difficult job. Dealing with body decomposition is typically the worst situation Bennett handles, followed by cleaning up after hoarders.

“It’s always difficult when someone passes away at home and they live on their own. You have to wait for people to realize that they haven’t seen Joe around for a while and they discover the decomp and the horrific odor.”

Such cases are particularly difficult this time of year, he said.

“If a decomp happens now, it’s trouble. You add the summer heat to a body that’s been lying around for a while and you have a pretty lasting odor. I had to take someone’s house all the way down to the sheetrock and seal everything up

with a special sealer to mitigate the smell,” Bennett said. “Sometimes it’s almost impossible to get that odor out. The worst things to deal with is the trauma and the odor.”

Another element that shouldn’t be glossed over is the emotional toll on loved ones. Bennett is refreshingly old school since he answers his phone and typically arrives on the scene within an hour of being alerted.

“If it’s a suicide or a murder, they will want to get back into their house, so I get there and try to get started soon since I don’t want them to see all of that ugly stuff,” Bennett said. “I’m sensitive to that. They don’t want to see it. I’m trying to save them from a memory they’ll never forget. I also like to work at night, it spares us the aggravation of neighbors watching what is going on.”

Cleaning up after hoarders is the most physically demanding and dangerous job for Bennett.

“I’ll go into houses and from floor to ceiling there’s trash,” Bennett said. “Some hoarders make little trails around the trash and what they collect. It is physically taxing and often requires me to be fully suited and masked with a respirator since there is often rodent droppings, which can make you sick or kill you.

“We recently did a house that had more than 200,000 pounds of garbage that we hauled out of a 2,500-square-foot home,” he continued. “Every room was filled to the gills and it was loaded with mostly trash. They collected books. There were close to 200 boxes of books that we hauled out of there.”

Bennett also details the back of Spokane police cars and cleans up jails.

“Those vehicles are often exposed to biohazards,” Bennett said. “The jails and holding cells get contaminated. I come in and clean them up.”

Biogone is the only locally owned biohazard company within a 100-mile radius from Spokane.

“That makes a difference,” Bennett said. “When someone calls, the call is not bounced around. I take it. I know the area. I know what I’m doing. I sometimes get calls from people who are curious about doing this for a living. But it’s not something that you just jump into.”

Bennett trained for more than a month at a biohazard school in Florida.

“This isn’t a job where you just pick up a mop and clean up,” Bennett said. “You have to deal with chemicals and there are so many hazards. You have to know what you’re doing. You go to school for this and get training and get certified.”

Biogone is a family business with Bennett’s wife, Susan, and his son Brandon.

“We enjoy what we do,” Bennett said. “We cover this whole area. Much of my work is here in Spokane but I’ve done jobs in Coeur d’Alene, Sandpoint, Colfax and other places around here. It’s fascinating work. Every job is different and the bottom line is that I’m helping people, most of whom are dealing with a difficult situation.