

Advocates with Respirators

Life can abruptly shift through tragedy. It can come in the form of depression, dysfunction, or unresolved anger, manifesting into addiction, violence, hoarding situations, or in the most extreme of circumstances, homicide or suicide.

While much of society likes to elaborate on the harsh realities of these living conditions surrounding the many configurations of trauma, very little is known about what comes after. Specifically, about who helps families rebuild their homes after the violent loss of a loved one, who removes the needles, or who can safely deconstruct the walls of forgotten animal/human waste built up over years of neglect. Constantly working in the background of grief-stricken families with circles under their eyes and sweat dripping from their respirators is an entire industry of crime scene cleaners.

Reaper Clean is Fresno's local biohazard remediation business serving the Central Valley since 2020 for trauma cleaning, hoarding, accidents, and disinfections. Independent and locally owned, they are a small team of professional cleaners who broke away from a corporate infrastructure that overcharged its customers and neglected the well-being of its hard-working field members.

As Fresno is centrally located in California, Reaper Clean can easily reach families two and a half hours in any direction to quickly assist them in emergencies. A Fresnan herself, owner and operator, Amber Lynette, grew up witnessing an unmet need in trauma situations and developed a profound passion for changing it.

Reaper Clean goes beyond just the clean-up – something other companies neglect or refuse to do. The team participates in the community by talking about local resources such as grief support, suicide prevention, and the many other intersections that cross their line of work. From re-homing animals whose owners have died to speaking up about fentanyl amongst the youth—the team works hard to make themselves highly personable and direct about their services, especially about the kinds of jobs they'd like to see reduced overall in the community. They even advocate for the health and safety of other crime scene cleaners and the ethics regarding the cleaning of scenes, especially concerning social media and news outlets.

The first media exposure Reaper Clean ever received was in the Tower District. A passerby had stolen a biohazard bin out of Lynette's work truck. Her worst fear was that the waste would be strewn across

somebody's lawn after the thief popped the lid and realized what they were hauling. So Reaper Clean posted on the "Please Help Stop Crime in Tower" Facebook page to inform the neighborhood that if this waste ended up on their property, Reaper Clean would pick it up immediately. The post received a significant response from the public and even gained the attention of multiple news outlets – many reached out for an interview. Reaper Clean only responded to one reporter for a small internet article hoping it would spread the word about finding the bin. However, the result was twisted into a negative portrayal of the neighborhood, with multiple misquotes to sensationalize crime scene cleaning to the viewership. It was a hard lesson learned quickly; unfortunately, the bin never resurfaced.

This column serves to create an ongoing conversation about the community intersections of crime scene cleaning in the Central Valley from an honest, grassroots perspective. Crime scene cleaning can be interesting, educational, and refreshing without being cringe, invasive, or disconnected. If Reaper Clean can demystify the conversation surrounding biohazard cleaning in a down-to-earth and personable way, perhaps the public will have a better understanding of who crime scene cleaners are—veterans, first responders, death care workers, crisis advocates, and a growing number of millennials and younger people that genuinely want to help families find their way through tragedy by doing the work.

For more information about Reaper Clean, go to www.reaperclean.com, email onthescene@reaperclean.com or follow on Facebook, Instagram or TikTok @reaper_clean.