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It's a wrap -- and the money's good

Storage » New franchise seals and protects boats, buildings.

By Dawn House
The Salt Lake Tribune

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Cooks know that food stays fresh when leftovers are wrapped with a plastic film that shrinks to fit the container.

That same concept goes to shrink-wrapping a boat, an RV or a construction site to protect them from the elements.

Shrink wrap, which has been around since 1978, is made by big names such as 3M.

Now, Reno-based Fast Wrap has opened a mobile-service franchise that uses a fire-retardant wrap that, with the ironic application of heat, shrinks to fit whatever needs covering.

Entrepreneur Blair Ford stumbled onto the concept while traveling a northern Utah highway. He spotted a Fast Wrap vehicle from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and jotted down the telephone number posted on the van's panel. Now he and his two sons own a Utah franchise.

"It's surprising how many boat owners there are in Utah," said Zad Ford, 38, as he and his father wrapped a boat at the SS Marine in North Salt Lake. "We do up a lot of them."

Shrink wrapping an average size recreational boat for the season costs about \$250. And customers wanting to get inside the boat while it's in storage can pay an extra \$30 for a zipper door.

Such a practice is not uncommon in the industry. Factories shrink wrap boats before they're delivered to dealers, said Jake Wouden with SS Marine.

"It makes sense to protect them in the off season as well."

Franchises also are open in Reno; Las Vegas; Denver, and Spokane, Wash. Nevada-based

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After trimming the extra plastic, Zad tucks the plastic... (Paul Fraughton/ The Salt Lake Tribune)

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Franchise owner Mike Enos, 42, got the idea for his business when he saw a new boat that was shrink wrapped for shipment to a dealer.

He had bought an air boat that was too big to fit in his garage, so he parked it outside his Reno office. When he called a firm about wrapping his boat, the company sent him the materials and a heat gun.

Enos opened Fast Wrap two years ago -- at an opportune time for him.

When the bottom fell out of the Nevada housing market, developers were left with half-finished buildings and construction sites full of depreciating equipment. His customer base expanded from boat enthusiasts to builders.

Fast Wrap, which has 14 employees and was financed by Enos, has built a client list that extends beyond the construction industry. Enos has also

wrapped large truck tires, no longer needed when the construction industry weakened, and hay bales for farmers. The company also provides a bag when the covering is unwrapped for recycling.

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