

## KEEPING YOUR VEHICLES CLEAN

# Facts of Vehicle Washing



BY JACK JACKSON

There are many facts about water usage that continue to be discussed as issues or misnomers. The simplest assumption, often perceived as fact, is that hand washing is the easiest way to wash and the most economical. This can be debated depending on your opinion.

It seems as difficult to find great employees, and it is even more difficult to find great employees that want to wash trucks all day. If you have any

misconceptions about washing, then you will realize the difficulty of washing a tractor trailer or box truck by hand. To find anyone that wants to do this for a living is a perilous task. It is either the need of the worker for "any" job or forced labour on unwilling employees who know that this must be accomplished. A rarity is a dedicated wash crew that can achieve desired results. I am not saying there aren't any, but they are diminishing from my understanding of customers' needs today.

From a cost of water perspective, the usage from a 3/4" hose, on full open, will consume 17 gallons of water per minute. A pressure washer will use between 3 to 5 gallons per minute. Taking the fact that there can be as many as 30 minutes of wash/water time, water usage can vary from 540 gallons

for a straight water hose or 100 gallons +/- for a pressure washer.

If you are able to understand the cost of water, cost of chemical and cost of labour, you soon realize the washing of any large vehicle will be more than it appears. Does the job completed fit the desired results? Most suggest not the way they would want, but there are not many other choices.

Today, automated vehicle wash companies are constantly designing machines that can access any space in your facility, use less chemical and water as well as minimize labour. You may always need a person to oversee or work the automated machinery, but the results will pay for themselves.

There are systems available that use less water than a pressure washer and accomplish the wash time in a matter of min-

utes. Also, the chemicals are metered, thus assuring optimal usage per wash. It's always a matter of operator choice which often results in adding the most chemicals possible to achieve an optimum look when, in fact, this is really not necessary if you are applying a manual brush to the vehicle.

Everyone is looking for the magical machine that offers the complete detailed look, with a great wax shine, and with no effort and minimal cost. It is always a difficult goal to achieve when expectations are that a \$100.00 detail wash will be achieved with a \$5.00 investment.

When we discuss with customers the need to wash, it is a necessity for their vehicles and always an expense. Unless you sell washes at your facility, the costs must be absorbed into maintenance or operations. There is al-

ways a struggle to achieve balance unless the company mandates a budget to ensure that vehicle image is foremost and understands that clean vehicles last much longer.

There is no magical way to achieve the desired results without exploring the opportunities beyond hand washing, and with the company's acknowledgement that financial backing is required for

washing infrastructure. It is the cost per wash that will need to be determined and budgeted for and to yield the best methods available.

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