



Objectives

To discover how to maintain the facility appearance to help prevent problems while increasing the customers satisfaction and overall experience.

Content

1. From the time a customer drives by, to the time they leave, they are impacted by what they see at the car wash.
2. There are a number of areas that can affect the customer's perception and the marketability of the car wash.

Facility cleanliness can be broken down into three areas that require the most attention due to their impact on the customer experience.

1. **Exterior**
2. **Tunnel**
3. **Interior**

1. Exterior

a. Building

- 1) The appearance of the car wash from the street is one of the most powerful marketing tools that you can employ. A fresh coat of paint will sway the curb appeal in your favor. This curb appeal creates an attractiveness that is hard for the customers to pass up.
- 2) Using a high gloss exterior paint is visually attractive and more maintenance friendly because it is less porous than flat paint. High gloss paint is also more resistant to mildew growth caused by water trapped in the pores.
- 3) Paint life can be extended by pressure washing and applying a mildew inhibitor. These treatments should be done yearly in areas with high humidity, or every two years in areas with relatively low humidity.
- 4) Visually checking the paint surface at your facility is the best way to determine how often to apply these treatments.

b. Lighting

- 1) Bright exterior lighting is crucial to a car wash. A well-lit wash signals you are open for extended operating hours and provides a safer environment for customers and employees alike. Specific lumen levels may be required by a municipality to ensure safe operations. A well-lit wash also serves as a great marketing tool for the wash. Lighting also plays a major role in advertising the features of your tunnel.



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- 2) Checking the lights on a regular basis allows you to monitor, and ensure that the bulbs are replaced at the first sign of failure. Override the timer or electrical switch and observe every light, replacing bulbs that are burned out.
- 3) If a timer is used, time-on and time-off settings will need to be changed with the daylight savings schedule. The settings should be checked periodically to make sure accidental changes have not been made.

c. Landscaping

- 1) Landscaping dramatically influences a customer's perception of your car wash. For a first time customer, it is crucial to provide them with a good first impression. A well landscaped wash:
 - a) Implies that their car will look equally nice
 - b) Creates a stimulating curb appeal
 - c) Serves as a marketing tool
 - d) The percentage of customers who visit a car wash on impulse is an average, 40%. Impulse decisions are directly influenced by visual observation and a well landscaped wash will increase your opportunities to gain new customers.
 - e) Keeping grass cut, beds weeded and freshly mulched, shows you take pride in your facility which will translate to taking pride in cleaning the customer's vehicle.
- 2) Using the colors yellow and white in your landscaping will assist in your marketing efforts. Yellow is physiologically the most visible of all colors and white represents cleanliness, which is what you are trying to sell.

d. Trash Cans

- 1) Usually one of the most common oversights at the car wash.
- 2) Typically placed in parking lots and vacuum areas without much thought given to their appearance.
- 3) Keeping the cans half empty and clean will make a considerable difference in the customer's perception of their visit. Trash cans take a great deal of abuse and investing in more durable cans with longer life expectancies is recommended.

e. Signage



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- 1) Whether signage is used for informational purposes, guidance, directions or marketing, signage is very important to keep clean and maintained.
- 2) A lot of time and money was spent creating the signage to draw the customer's attention. It would be a waste of time and money to draw their attention to an eyesore.

f. Facility Entrance

- 1) Arguably the most important area on the car wash property to keep clean and well maintained. First impressions mean everything to a business that sells clean.
- 2) Landscaping, trash cans, lighting and signage, among other things, all play a part in giving the facility entrance the characteristics needed to give the customer a great first impression.
- 3) A clean, well groomed, uniformed employee at the entrance end also adds to the experience.

2. Tunnel

a. Tunnel Entrance

- 1) At an Express-Exterior, Flex-Serve or even a Full-Service with an express lane, the customers drive their cars into the tunnel and ride through the wash. This can be a daunting experience for the customer. Having the entrance of the tunnel clean, clutter free, and inviting will make this process less intimidating.
- 2) Regardless of how you decide to equip the entrance of the tunnel, the main goal is to keep the area clean, and clear of clutter. Because of all the moving equipment and vehicles, it is very important to eliminate trip hazards that could potentially be extremely dangerous.

b. Tunnel Equipment

- 1) It is important to keep the equipment clean to provide a good customer experience. Equally important is monthly cleaning of the equipment to keep it operationally sound and easy to work on.
- 2) The customers point of view is that there is no way their car has come clean when washed with dirty equipment. The customer can see the equipment through their windshield or from the lobby windows (at full serve locations) and what they see can greatly impact their visit.
- 3) **A well-lit tunnel, free of debris and utilizing clean cloth offers as much to the customer experience as delivering a clean car.**
- 4) Depending on how heavily soiled the equipment is, there are various ways to maintain or restore the cleanliness.



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- a) If the equipment is lightly soiled, using a high pH soap applied with a Foamer or an applicator sprayer to help break down deposits and remove with high pressure.
- b) If the equipment is heavily soiled and restoration is required, other techniques will need to be utilized.
 - (1) Using high pH soap, apply a generous amount to the equipment that is to be cleaned. Let the chemical stand for several minutes but do not let dry. Using steel wool or similar material, scrub the areas that need the extra attention. With a prep brush or truck brush, scrub the remaining areas. Rinse the equipment with high pressure.
 - (2) If the high pH soap does not penetrate and remove the heavy soiling, an alternative is to use a low pH. When using, please wear proper PPE. Apply the product to the surface of the equipment and rinse thoroughly. If the equipment is not rinsed properly a chalky white film will be left behind when the equipment dries.
- c) In some cases of extreme neglect, the equipment may require the use of an angle grinder equipped with a bristle head. This will remove the toughest of buildup and stains but requires a tremendous amount of time.

c. Tunnel Windows

- 1) Car washes are trending towards customers remaining in their cars during the wash process and as a result, newly constructed washes are replacing concrete/block walls with glass. This trend allows more light in the tunnel, increasing the importance of keeping tunnel windows clean.
- 2) Dirty tunnel windows leave a bad impression and affect how a customer views the entire operation.
- 3) Windows look best when they are clean. Here are some ideas to help:
 - a) Cleaning one side of the window with horizontal strokes and the other side with vertical strokes will expose which side of the window is streaked.
 - b) On large windows, using a squeegee will help eliminate streaking as well as decrease the amount of time it takes to clean them.
 - c) Using an old newspaper is not only a “green” way of operating your business by reducing and reusing products, it offers a greater shine than cleaning with a towel or sponge. Newspaper also leaves a transparent film behind that is resistant to dirt.
 - d) Using wax, lemon juice, lemon oil or even tooth paste to polish the windows on a regular basis will prevent the chemicals in the tunnel from etching water spots on the glass surfaces.
 - e) When the windows are in need of a heavy cleaning you can use a product called CLR (calcium and lime remover). Mix the product in



bucket and brush it onto the windows. After allowing for dwell time, use a hose or prep gun to remove from the windows.

- f) Clean the windows every day.
- g) Add a manifold above all windows with water supplied from your RO unit. Have windows rinsed on regular intervals during the day to prevent buildup then clean as normal at closing time.

d. Tunnel Walls

- 1) One of the most innovative ways to accomplish a clean tunnel is with PVC wall liners. These require minimal maintenance and can usually be cleaned with ease. The PVC is a glossy, often white, material that brightens the tunnel by reflecting the light source, offering a clean, wide open feeling for the customer.
- 2) If installing PVC wall liners is something that cannot be done at your facility, a new coat of high gloss paint can add that feeling of freshness and cleanliness. Using high gloss paint not only helps brighten the tunnel, but also inhibits the growth of mildew and is more chemical resistant.
- 3) How often the walls need cleaning depends on how wide the tunnel is. If a tunnel is 18 feet wide, it will require more frequent cleaning than a tunnel that is 25 feet in width. Some helpful hints to clean both painted and PVC surfaces are:
 - a) PVC Surfaces
 - (1) Using a diluted mixture of a high pH wheel cleaner applied to the walls will help break down soils.
 - (2) For tougher soils, lacquer thinner will remove the toughest of stains. Rinse well after use.
 - (3) There are PVC cleaners that can be bought in bulk or concentrate form that will clean various soils.
 - (4) Allow the cleaners to do the work. Start at one end of the tunnel and apply the chemical cleaner. Apply to only one side of the tunnel wall at a time. Return to where you started and either scrub, or high pressure rinse the wall. This process allows the chemical to break down the soils, minimizing the amount of elbow grease required.
 - b) Painted Surfaces
 - (1) Using a diluted mixture of a high pH wheel cleaner applied to the walls will help break down soils.
 - (2) Use a 3:1 ratio of water and bleach to clean mildew.
 - (3) Allow the chemicals to do the work. Scrub brushes and high pressure rinsing can damage the painted surfaces.



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- (4) Chemicals from the car wash and cleaning process can cause the paint to breakdown over time, requiring regular repainting. Paint typically has a two year lifespan under normal conditions. With the extreme conditions in the tunnel, paint life will be greatly reduced.

e. Tunnel Floors

- 1) Cleaning the tunnel floors helps give that crisp, clean feeling as well as brighten the tunnel. Because dark colors absorb light more so than lighter colors, it is important to eliminate dark colors when possible. One area that we can eliminate loss of light is on the tunnel floor.
- 2) The dark buildup on the floor is caused by the removal of the soils from the vehicle, as well as the growth of mildew. This buildup robs the tunnel of the precious light it needs to offer more attractiveness.
- 3) Using a concrete cleaning chemical in conjunction with a high pressure washer, cleaning the floor is made easy.
 - a) Apply concrete cleaner and allow it to sit for several minutes. This allows the chemical to break down the soils and mildew growth.
 - b) Using a high pressure washer, remove the cleaner and lift the soils from the concrete surface.
 - c) If stubborn stains remain, reapply the cleaner and use a stiff bristle brush to coax the stain out. Let the cleaner sit for several minutes and rinse with a high pressure washer.
- 4) The exit of the tunnel will accumulate soils faster than other areas due to the dripping of residual water and tire shine buildup forming a slick surface on concrete. This is not only unattractive; it also creates a safety hazard. Cleaning this area should be done on a regular basis to minimize safety hazards and eliminate permanent staining.



3. Interior

a. Restrooms

- 1) Restrooms, especially customer restrooms, need to be cleaned thoroughly and frequently. Of all the areas that a customer visits at a car wash, the restroom can be more detrimental to a customer's overall impression than any other area. With scare tactics being the number one marketing technique used for selling sanitary products, customers are afraid to use a dirty restroom and will judge the entire car wash based on the condition of the restroom.
- 2) A dirty restroom may prevent your customers from returning.
- 3) Don't be afraid to invest extra money in the restrooms to ensure that the impression made on the customer is a good one. Some tips to keeping a clean restroom:
 - a) Use toilet cleaning tablets and fragrances.
 - b) Have a checklist of items that need to be inspected daily and have the employees responsible for completing the checklist initial upon completion.
 - c) Hold employees accountable for keeping restrooms clean.
 - d) Have a separate restroom for employee use.
 - e) Seal the restroom floors. This will help keep them clean and inhibit the porous surface from absorbing odors and forming mildew.

b. Lobby

- 1) For those car washes with a waiting area for customers, nothing will put a customer at ease like a comfortable place to sit, something to drink and a little reading material.
- 2) Having coffee, doughnuts, chocolates, mints and hard candies available will make the customer feel relaxed and comfortable. These offerings will calm the customer, which will ultimately affect the overall experience, potentially lowering the number of complaints.
- 3) Keeping this area clean is of the utmost importance. This area has the biggest payoff for a Full-Service car wash when it comes to having a clean, crisp feeling.
On average, sixty to seventy percent (60-70%) of customers are Full-Service or detail customers who will wait for their services in this area.