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## VEHICLE WASH NEWS FROM AUTOAUTO WASH

### WELCOME TO OUR OCTOBER NEWSLETTER!

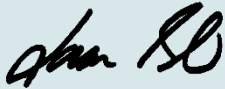
Welcome to this issue of AutoAuto Wash News; a periodic newsletter designed specifically for the car wash owner and operator. Our goal is to provide you with timely information that can save you money and help increase your business. If you ever have any suggestions, please give us a call and we'll do our best to address your concerns. We view the relationship as a partnership. Our success can only be measured by your success. Within this newsletter, it is our intent to HIGHLIGHT/SHOWCASE a specific product or manufacturer in each edition.

Instead, in this edition we wanted to highlight and focus on a very important topic: Preparing your wash for the winter season

#### Our Mission:

"PROVIDE THE BEST POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR THE CUSTOMER. DELIVER EQUIPMENT, SERVICES, PARTS AND CHEMICALS AT FAIR PRICES, WITH EXCEPTIONAL FOCUS ON INTEGRITY, HONESTY AND PRIDE IN EXECUTION...DO THE RIGHT THING!"

Loran Bourdo  
President



## PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT - PREPARING FOR WINTER

Fall is in the air. YIKES! Just yesterday it was hot! We all had good intentions this year...get out in front of the cold blast, but other things came up.

Car wash operators are notorious for forgetting the nagging winter issues once the weather warms up. The sun is a feel good prescription for the winter blues but don't let it dash one's memory of all the items that need to be addressed before the cold weather hits. Taking care of these general maintenance and winter prep items will make a wash more profitable during the cold weather. As an operator/owner, there is nothing worse than thinking – I should have taken care of this last summer!

Planning for winter can be overwhelming because of many issues that need to be addressed. The best way to tackle all the items is to develop a plan of attack. Many operators "claim" they have a winter preparations plan but when asked to view it they say "it's all up in my head". As a good owner/operator once told me if you don't have it written down, it's not a plan. With that in mind, one should sharpen their pencil and write down a list of items needing addressed; consider it a brainstorm session. One's next step is to categorize the similar items, such as, building maintenance, equipment preventative maintenance, back up supplies and lot maintenance. The following are some common items that one should consider when developing one's plan.

### Building Maintenance

- **General Painting:** Whether it is structural and/or concrete post guards it is a must to keep exposed items protected from winter oxidation.
- **Trough Insulation:** Trough hoses freeze and break, damaging the surrounding insulation. Many operators neglect replacing the insulation after a hose or fitting is changed. This leaves a mess and reduces the freeze protection level, exposing the new hardware to future freeze ups. One should take the time to look through the entire trough and replace any damaged insulation.
- **Roof:** Summer is a great time to check one's roof for leaks and possible weak areas. If one has a steel roof evaluate the need for a coat of sealer and if the roof is shingled look for any damaged/torn shingles. Replacing them now will be a lot easier than when it is below freezing and water is dripping into your pump room.
- **Lighting:** Important to every wash is ample lighting. Many operators have working lights but do not take the time to clean the glass lenses. Dirty lenses can reduce the available light by 25% or more. A well-lit car wash improves security and will attract customers.

### Equipment Preventative Maintenance

- **Weep System:** Weep sensors need to be cross checked to verify they are reading the correct temperature. Using either a handheld temperature gauge, the displayed temperature in your vehicle and/or the local weather forecast verify your sensor is within three degrees plus or minus. If one's sensor is outside of this range a

good investment may be to have it serviced and/or replaced. Keep in mind if one's sensor is in or out of direct sunlight this will affect the reading.

Weep control solenoids need to be checked for proper operation. Since weep systems operate using normally open solenoids operators tend to unplug their control systems in the summer and shut the water supply off to the solenoid. Periodically, check to make sure the solenoid is not opening and closing properly. By shutting off the water supply for long periods of time, this creates a place for any loose debris to build up. The resulting debris (line oxidation and/or contamination) can plug up the solenoid and create major issues when the first freeze hits. Water flow will be restricted or stopped causing unnecessary freeze ups.

- **Floor Heat System:** Recirculation pumps should be jogged throughout the summer to keep the impellers and seals lubricated. If the pump will not turn over, shut it off and disconnect the power at the main breaker. Using a pair of pliers, grip and rotate the shaft. Once the impeller is loose, turn the power back on and jog the pump.

Run the entire system for 30 minutes once per month – check for any leaks in the associated plumbing and proper anti-freeze level. Check intake and discharge venting for obstructions.

If ones trough heat system is integrated into the floor heat system make sure to cycle it and check for leaks or suspect lines, changing where appropriate.

**Boilers:** If one heats water year round this is a non-issue. If one does not, follow the same plan as the floor heat system. Run the boiler for 30 minutes once a month. Look for leaks, check intake and discharge venting for obstructions.

- **Pumps:** Depending on what make and model of high pressure pumps one has follow the manufactures guidelines for changing oil, inspecting high and low pressure seals and greasing (if required) the electric motors. Make sure to follow the manufactures guidelines. Over and/or under lubrication can cause severe damage to pumps and motors.





- **Vacuums:** If one does not have an extra set of vacuum bags, this is a must. Each vacuum should have its bags washed and dried at least once before the winter season. Using the extra set, replace one vacuum bag at a time, washing/drying the dirty ones and using them for the next and next and so on. Always check motor and coin acceptor operations. Fix those pesky cherry switches and/or suspect coin acceptors before it is cold. There is nothing worse than trying to wire a coin mechanism or vacuum motor when it is snowing and blowing!

If one has combination vacuums such as combo fragrance or shampoo/spot remover, make sure you have stocked up on your "winter" fragrances and shampoo/spot remover

**Locks:** One of the most overlooked items to prepare for the winter time is locks. Ironically it takes the least amount of time and effort to service. Using either an aerosol can or oil drops; lubricate each tumbler (lock). Make sure to work the lock several times to ensure the oil has spread throughout the lock, coating each mechanical piece. This helps fight corrosion because the oil will naturally repel water.

**Coin Boxes:** Coin boxes are in the direct fire of moisture intrusion. This leads to corrosion and eventual shorts inside the box. Inspect each box for suspect wiring and corroded fittings. Replace the corroded fittings and apply a light coat of di-electric grease to protect for the upcoming winter season.

### Back Up Parts

**Swivels, Hoses and Guns:** Winter conditions are hard on swivels, hoses and guns. Make sure one's back up supplies are in good shape, including an appropriate level of stock. Always keep in mind the following situation, one's weep system fails due to loss of power, solenoid plugs and or any other reason. If ones car wash freezes up the hoses, swivels and guns will be the "durable" items needing replaced. The question to the owner/operator, "Do I have

enough stock to get my car wash back up and running?" Make sure one has ample stock or can re-stock quickly.

### Lot Maintenance

**Parking Lot:** The summer is a great time to tend to parking lot damage created by the freeze/thaw effect and snow plowing. If one has a concrete or asphalt parking lot, evaluate cracks, pot holes and faded parking lot markings. If one is not well versed in parking lot maintenance contact your local contractor to address the issues. The cost to maintain an existing lot is considerably less than having to replace it. Keeping your lot well maintained is a good capital cost avoidance measure.

**Snow Plowing:** Investigate the cost to sign a contract for winter snow removal. Most contractors will give discounts for upfront deposits made in the summer.

**Car Wash Pits:** Check your pits debris level and clean if necessary. Secondly, don't forget to check the parking lot interceptor. Remember it is always easier to clean them out when they are not completely full. If this service is contracted out, make sure to schedule it before the snow flies.

After reviewing some of the basic winter preparation items, one must keep in mind that all car washes are different. Each wash has its own special nuances which must be accounted for. Make documented plans accordingly. Engage the plan by assigning responsibility to a person(s) and document when the task was completed. Post your customized plan in the pump room or most visible location.

One's plan does not need to be an electronic spread sheet. A piece of paper, ruler and pencil will create the exact same plan. Most important, complete the car wash plan before winter arrives!

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Take a minute to think about unfinished projects around your house. I'm sure fixing up the guest room seemed like an easy job when you started but then something came up. And then something else came up. Pretty soon, the half-finished guest room seems like it will never get done. Then all of a sudden, out-of-town relatives are coming to visit and it is imperative that you finish painting the guest bedroom. Wouldn't it have been easier to do this earlier when you had plenty of time?

This easily translates to your business as well. How often do you come up with an idea or start a project and then run out of time or get distracted? Suppose you want to completely redesign all of your menu boards and signs and create a whole new look for your carwash. Then, your water reclaim system breaks or your college-age employees leave for school and you have to hire new employees quickly. Suddenly, your great redesign idea is pushed to the side as you struggle to solve these more pressing problems. Replacing a sign may seem simple enough until everyday problems take precedence. If you plan to add a monthly wash program - how long does it take you to get it in place? It can take months or years to accomplish your new project, and months in lost profits.

How can you avoid leaving projects unfinished or rushing through them? By setting deadlines for yourself! Plan your time wisely and allow yourself time to take care of these extra projects. Don't let your

good ideas slip away. Put a deadline down on paper at the idea inception and hold yourself and your managers to accomplishing the project within that time frame. Deadlines and goals drive progress. Start with a list of goals you want to accomplish, a "mirror list". Then add reasonable deadlines for these goals. Post your list of goals and deadlines somewhere highly visible - on your bathroom mirror, perhaps - as a reminder and encouragement for yourself. Share your goals with others and encourage employees and coworkers to create their own lists. By sharing goals with one another, you can create your own support group and further ensure that you all gain the success you aim for!



## THE TRUE VALUE BEHIND VACUUMS & VACUUM ISLANDS

Car wash owners typically look at vacuum islands as a necessary evil, instead of seeing their true value. Contrary to popular belief, vacuum islands are one of the most under-rated revenue generation points at car washes, vacuum islands can draw customers into your wash increasing revenue in other cost centers such as self-service bays, in-bay automatics, tunnels, pet washes... etc. The following are concepts that could be addressed by an owner/operator to increase revenue.

### Things to consider:

- Appearance
- Functionality
- Maintenance
- Vacuum Options
- Island Location

Read detailed descriptions at:

[www.autoautowash.com/aaw-news/vacuum-islands](http://www.autoautowash.com/aaw-news/vacuum-islands)

On average, self-service owners generate \$210/month per vacuum or \$2520/year (PC&D January 2008). The cost range of a combo vacuum is \$3,000 – \$6,000 based on options. The typical self-service car wash can generate enough revenue to pay off multiple vacuums in one to two years. With such a short payback period it is cost justified to add or upgrade your current vacuums. As stated above, differentiating your wash from the competition will drive business directly to you! Drawing business to your self-service bays, pet washes, in-bay automatics and other on site cost centers which benefit the owner. Don't look at vacuum islands as a headache but as a solid source for revenue and good investment for the future.



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