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Getting Started in Fleet Washing

Many Power Wash contractors are deciding to venture into fleet washing work these days. The work is steady, year-round, and it pays pretty well in high volume. Like any discipline, there are things to know before you start fleet washing that will help you get off on the right foot. Besides buying a nice soft bristle brush, there are several things you need to think about before you venture into a business like fleet washing.

There are a number of different fleet cleaning products and types of cleaning methods for vehicles, for example. Everyone knows how to pull out a bucket and a sponge and some soap to wash the family car and then rinse it with the hose. While that works fine on Saturday morning on your Saturn, it is probably not the most efficient method you could choose for finishing 50 trucks.

One well-known professional fleet wash method is called "two-stepping". In this technique, you hit the dirty surface with an acid-based cleaner and then finish with an alkaline neutralizer. By switching between the opposite ends of the *pH* spectrum, the dirt is "popped" off the surface. The acid cleaner used for the first part of the process is usually made with hydrofluoric acid. Our hydrofluoric-based cleaner is called Aluma Brite. This very aggressive cleaner is perfect for any type of truck or fleet washing and for cleaning aluminum surfaces.

Hydrofluoric acid is extremely dangerous for inexperienced people to use, however. It travels through the skin to seek and destroy the calcium in your bones and body. Severe exposure to hydrofluoric acid can be fatal in a matter of hours. Since so many professionals rely on the two - step method for fast, effective results, Sun Brite Supply developed a Safety Ointment for emergency use after exposure to hydrofluoric. It can add several hours of time for you to get medical attention. We offer this with every purchase of our hydrofluoric cleaner.

We also offer alternatives to hydrofluoric- based cleaners, for those who are willing to sacrifice some of the aggressiveness of hydrofluoric for the safety of a different acid. We offer a citric/phosphoric solution called Aluma Safe that we sell all over the country to fleet wash companies.

If you are cleaning paint-only surfaces, such as UPS or Frito Lay trucks, you will probably want to move up to Fleet Brite pretty quickly. This is an aggressive one-step cleaner that is very inexpensive to use. It will get you off the job quicker than any other cleaner we know of.

My personal favorite overall fleet cleaner is Big Truck Brite. This product is less aggressive than Fleet Brite, but it can be used on all surfaces and it leaves the vehicle with a near-wax shine. I use it on my own truck, and those of you who know how I feel about my truck will understand exactly what that means. By the way, we have Wet Wax that you can add to any truck wash to get that shine on the vehicle that fleet managers are looking for. (NOTE: We have lots of customers who even buy Wet Wax and add it to house wash mixtures for a nice gleam on vinyl and aluminum!)

Most fleet cleaners work better with hot water than cold. If you don't have hot water, you will use about twice as much cleaner to get the job done. It's pretty tough to wash vehicles in January in Alaska if you don't have hot water, too. There are alternatives to buying a new hot water pressure washer if you don't already have one, though. Sun Brite Supply has Hot Boxes, which are heaters designed to connect to cold water machines.

The water you use for fleet washing makes a big difference, too. Many professionals like to use de- ionized water (D. I. for short). This water goes through a treatment that makes it rinse off the vehicle without spots. A good clean rinse is the key to getting the most professional results. If you don't have a D. I. system, there are some easy alternatives to D. I. that are extremely inexpensive. We have a product call SoSoft, for example, that costs only pennies to use and is almost as effective as using D. I. You just add it to your water to end up with a spot-free rinse.

The big pink elephant in the room that nobody wants to talk about these days is the Clean Water Act and the related local regulations. Most areas are targeting fleet washers and gas stations for strict enforcement of these regulations. If you clean environmentally, you can charge significantly more for your work. The reasons are simple. First, you will invest in tools and education and those are legitimate costs to pass on to the customer. Secondly, both you and the customer will likely be fined if you are spotted violating your community's rules while fleet washing. No, you don't get to split the fine – you BOTH are fined. Saving your customer a \$10,000 fine certainly justifies a modest up-charge for your expertise in fleet washing, don't you think?

Sun Brite Supply has everything from tire dressing to fragrances for your vehicle cleaning operation. If you have questions about any of our products or if you need any fleet washing equipment or supplies, please give us a call. We'd love to help you get off on the right foot

**Guaranteed Low Prices * Extended Service Hours * Low-Cost Shipping
Black Knight Pressure Washers * Deckster * Ready Seal * QwicClean * Mosmatic**