



## How to Clean Faster and Better with a Pressure Washer

Pressure washers can be a maintenance facility manager's best friend. They save time, labor, money and even water. Besides making things look better, pressure washers protect your investment because facilities and equipment last longer when they're clean.

But, like good friends, high-pressure cleaning equipment should be used, not abused.

Here are a number of hints—offered by Kärcher Commercial, the world's largest manufacturer of pressure washers—on how to get the most out of your pressure washer as well as insure it lasts longer.

### How to choose a pressure washer

Choosing the right pressure washer for the job is as important as how you use it. The right pressure washer will clean faster and more effectively. Key factors in making your choice include:

- **Hot or cold** Hot water pressure washers clean faster and better. If you're cleaning floors or engines with grease or oils, hot water is a must. You wouldn't think of washing greasy plates in the kitchen sink with cold water. The same applies to power washing. If you operate cold water equipment more than a few hours a week, you should closely consider the labor savings you could realize by switching to a hot-water pressure washer.
  - **Belt or direct** If you're going to be operating the pressure washer as much as five or more hours per day, five days a week, then consider a belt-drive model in which a vibration-absorbing belt connects the pump to the motor or engine. On the other hand, direct-drive models, where the pump is coupled directly to the motor or engine, are more compact and economical.
  - **Gas or electric** Traditionally electric-powered pressure washers are less expensive, but are "tethered" to an electrical outlet. Pressure washers with gasoline-powered engines are much more portable, but they're limited to outdoor use.
- In addition to these basic decisions, users should look for equipment that is easy-to-use, safety certified, and efficient to operate.

### How to use a pressure washer more effectively

There are a number of tips that make pressure washing more efficient and effective, such as:

- Always start back three or four feet and then slowly walk up to the surface you're cleaning to make sure the pressure spray doesn't burrow into soft surfaces such as wood or asphalt.
- All pressure washers come with one or more spray nozzles, some with fan spray patterns that vary from 40 degrees in width to the pencil-thin 0-degree stream. The 40-degree fan will clean faster because it covers a wider area, but the 0-degree will clean deeper. Before cleaning, it's a good idea to test in a non-conspicuous area the different nozzles to determine the spray's impact on the surface you plan to clean. Rotating nozzles, like Kärcher's popular Dirtblaster, deliver the cleaning impact of a pencil-jet nozzle with the coverage area of a fan spray nozzle.
- Detergents that are formulated for use in pressure washers add a helpful dimension to the power washer's effectiveness. Apply with an attachment that injects the soap into the water stream after it has left the pump. Many soaps, because of their extreme pH level, can damage the seals and rings in a high-pressure pump, hence the need for "downstream injection" or injection of the detergent into the water stream AFTER it has passed through the high-pressure pump.
- All pressure washers combine flow rate (GPM = gallons per minute) with pressure (PSI = pounds per square inch) to deliver their cleaning punch. While pressure (PSI) generates excitement, flow (GPM) has

even more impact on cleaning. A pressure washer with cleaning power of 4 GPM at 2000 PSI typically will clean faster and better than one with an output of 2 GPM at 4000 PSI.

- When cleaning a floor, move the wand side-to-side and always with the grain, if washing a wood surface. When cleaning a wall, avoid streaking by washing with soap from the bottom up and rinse with clear water from the top down.
- Surface cleaners use a rotating arm equipped with high-pressure nozzles, delivering even and constant cleaning to a greatly expanded coverage area, making quick work of big cleaning jobs.
- Be sure to follow directions when using chemicals and detergents. Some soaps work best when applied over wet surfaces while others should be sprayed directly on soiled areas. Allow the soap to dwell for no more than 10 minutes then rinse from the top down.

#### **How to make your pressure washer last longer**

Here are ways to help your pressure washer stay in tip top shape longer:

- Change the oil in the high-pressure pump after the first 50 hours of use and every 500 hours (or annually) after that.
- Replace the high-pressure nozzles every six months.
- Change the oil in the gasoline engine every 25 hours and the oil filter every 50 hours; or, for a unit powered by an electric motor, grease the motor every 10,000 hours.
- Change the engine fuel filter and spark plugs every 500 hours or six months.
- Clean the water screen filter weekly.
- Remove burner soot and de-scale the heating coil at least once a year.
- Winterize your pressure washer to prevent freeze damage to the pump and heating coil.
- Never start a pressure washer without water.
- Always neutralize and flush detergent from the system after use.



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