

Power Washing Do's & Dont's

by Paul Horsley, eClean Publisher

Power washing is an incredible thing. With only a few blasts from your power washer, years of grime can be swept away. However, it's important to understand how to properly use such a powerful tool in order to avoid causing damage to your business or personal property. The power washing dos and don'ts listed below will help you understand how to best use your pressure washer. We'll also discuss when it's smart to contact a power washing company for professional help.

POWER WASHING DOS:

Do protect yourself and others. Remember, this machine is exuding water at 1,500 to 3,000 PSI. When you're dealing with such high water pressures, it's not unusual for sharp particles to fly off the surface being cleaned. Don't risk permanent eye damage – wear protective eye goggles when using a power washer. For especially hazardous jobs, power washing company managers often require employees to wear full face masks. It's also smart to wear long-sleeve clothing, just as you would when using a weed whacker.

A little more safety advice: Be sure family members and pets stay far away from the spray of your pressure washer. Finally, avoid accidents by engaging the safety lock whenever you're not in the middle of power washing.

Do check oil levels before turning on your power washer. Running any engine without oil will cause lasting damage. Be sure to check oil levels in your machine before power washing. Your owner's manual should have additional maintenance instructions.

Do notice the distance between the surface you're cleaning and the tip of the power washing nozzle. Different cleaning surfaces will require more or less space. When blasting built-up BBQ gunk off of your grill, you can

hold the nozzle as close as three inches away. The highly pressured water emitted from a power washer won't damage a metal grill. However, other surfaces will require more space. When cleaning the exterior of a home, for instance, you should keep the nozzle at least six inches away from the surface being cleaned. In general, it's best to be cautious – start farther away, and move closer once you see that no damage is occurring.

Do conduct power washing tests first. If used incorrectly, a power washer can cause permanent damage to your home or business. Therefore, if you're unsure about the correct pressure setting, cleaning agents, nozzle type, water temperature or nozzle distance for any job, you should test a small, inconspicuous area first. Alternatively, you can call in a power washing company to show you how to properly clean a particular surface.

Do store your power washer in a climate-controlled area with good ventilation. If your machine will be kept in an unheated room, conduct winterization to avoid damage caused by freezing temperatures.

Do clean out your chemical injector after every use. Built-up chemicals will only cause problems down the road, so be sure to flush out your machine after using the chemical injector.

POWER WASHER DON'TS

Don't power wash windows. You're asking for trouble if you try power washing windows. They can crack or break, and weather seals can be destroyed. Moreover, manufacturer warranties are typically voided if the owner uses a pressure washer to clean windows.

Don't add fuel while the machine is running. Just as you turn your car engine off before adding gas, you should turn off your power washer before refueling.

Don't leave your pressure washer running unattended. If your machine is on, you should be right next to it.

Don't point your power washer at animals or people. Basic safety protocols advise against aiming any powerful tool at fellow living beings, even in play.

Don't use acid-based products or bleach with your chemical injector. This is both to protect your machine (which can be irreparably damaged by such liquids) and to protect people and pets (who could be seriously hurt by these chemicals). If your machine isn't powerful enough, call a power washing company instead of tinkering around with dangerous chemicals.

Don't use hot water unless it's approved in product specifications. Some pressure washer pumps are rated for hot water, and others aren't. Don't use hot water unless you're certain your pump is made for it. If not, a power washing company will have the tools needed to clean the surface in question.

Don't leave your pressure washer running for more than two minutes without pulling the trigger.

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