

A photograph showing a person in a grey shirt and dark pants using a high-pressure water spray to clean the exterior of a building. The building has a light-colored upper section and a textured, reddish-brown lower section. A person in a blue shirt is visible in the background near a white van and orange traffic cones. The sky is clear and blue.

Commercial Pressure Washing: Essential Elements of an Employee Training Program

by Paul Horsley, eClean Publisher

Photo courtesy of Ramon Burke, Spray Wash Exterior Cleaning, www.spray-wash.com

As any experienced commercial pressure washer knows, pressure washing equipment is anything but intuitive. For those of us who are not commercial pressure washers, this may come as a surprise. After all, how hard can it be? Just point and shoot, right? Not quite. To become successful professional power washers, employees must receive training in how to properly use pressure washing equipment.

Below, we outline the essential elements of a pressure washing employee training program. Whether you are planning on starting a pressure washing business or simply using pressure washing equipment in-house, use these tips to ensure your workers are well prepared. And if you're hiring a commercial pressure washer, this framework can help you assess the professionalism of power washing companies.

Avoiding Commercial Pressure Washing Injuries

Pressure washing equipment is extremely powerful. Commercial pressure washers can emit water at 4,000 pounds per square inch. That level of pressure will certainly blast away grime, but if used improperly it can also cause

serious injury. A few of those injuries are listed below:

Abrasions. Just as with guns, pressure washing equipment should never be aimed at people or pets. Should a person be hit with a commercial pressure washer, painful skin abrasions can occur. A power washer is strong enough to sweep away entire layers of skin. And if such injuries are not properly treated, they can become infected. Commercial pressure washers are also strong enough to lift and throw objects, which can be dangerous if they strike others.

Electric shock. Some commercial pressure washers are powered by electricity. If safety precautions are not followed, electric shock can occur while using these machines. Workers must understand the importance of wearing rubber-soled shoes, which will not conduct as much electricity if an accident does occur. They should also be taught to avoid dragging power cords into puddles and to use GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter) plugs.

Monoxide poisoning. Other power washers are gas powered. If they are used in confined spaces, monoxide poisoning can ensue.

Preventing Property Damage while Pressure Washing

Employees must also be trained in how to apply the proper pressure levels, cleaning solutions and techniques for various materials. If too much pressure is applied, or the wrong tip is used, softer materials such as wood can sustain serious pressure washing damage.

Choosing the correct cleaning solution for the job is also crucial. Some pressure washing equipment is outfitted to spray chemical cleaning solutions as well as water. This comes in handy when extremely greasy or oily stains must be removed. However, if the wrong kind of cleaning solution is applied, a commercial pressure washer might also eat away at underlying material, causing permanent damage. Commercial pressure washers must train their employees in how to safely remove all kinds of grime from all kinds of materials – as well as how to safely handle commercial cleaning products.

Maintaining Commercial Pressure Washing Equipment

Today's commercial pressure washers can clean with cold water, hot water or steam. As mentioned above, they may also be able to shoot special cleaning solutions. In other words, these are complex machines that require regular maintenance. Employees must be trained in how to use power washing machines properly. As workers become more experienced, they may also be trained in how to conduct maintenance by changing a machine's oil, repairing faulty pumps, refueling or any number of other tasks.

Protecting the Environment

Wastewater from power washing operations can harm downstream life forms. Heavy metals and other toxins are removed during pressure washing; these chemicals can be deadly to flora and fauna. Environmentally aware power washers prevent ecological damage by collecting their wastewater and transporting it to the proper disposal facilities. Eco-friendly cleaning solutions also help prevent environmental damage.

In certain parts of the country, such as

Colorado and California, these green power washing techniques are required by law. In these locations, employees must receive training in green power washing. In other areas, a commercial pressure washer may choose to educate employees on green techniques as a way of protecting the earth and garnering new business.

Pressure washing employees should be trained to avoid injury, prevent damage and maintain equipment. Depending on commercial pressure washers' locations, local laws may also require environmental cleanup. If you operate a power washing business, make sure to provide comprehensive training to protect your employees and your brand. You will also want to carry three types of power washing insurance: workers' compensation (in case your employee is injured), liability insurance (in case your clients' property is damaged) and equipment insurance (to protect your investment in your pressure washing equipment).

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