

# House Washing: All-in-One or a Two- Pass Clean?

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*(This is the second part of the discussion I started last month.)*

Historically, house washes were single step chemical washes made just to try and clean the surface. But now, customers often want more from a house wash. Yes they want clean, but they want mold killing, UV protection, and a shiny appearance on their vinyl-siding homes.

As I stated in our last installment, most cleaners are alkaline since we live in an acid world, but it goes even further than that. Here's a little more of a chemistry lesson:

High pressure soap formulations are primarily an anionic (negative) soap. Most of the soils on houses are also anionic in nature, so the soap can clean off the dirt (Chemistry 101 teaches that "like dissolves like"). Un-likes, such as oil and water, are those that repel each other or can never mix.

Once rinsed, the cleaned surface of the exterior will remain slightly anionic. High pressure wax formulations are mostly cationic (positive) formulations that are attracted to the anionic cleaned surface – just like soil and dirt that are cationic and are also attracted to the just cleaned surface. So should your soap also contain waxes to help prevent this attraction?

## **Dirty Little Secrets**

All-in-one formulations must contain both soaps and modified waxes to clean and protect the exterior of houses at the same time. The difficulty comes in two areas:

1. The combination of both anionic and cationic ingredients in an all-in-one solution tend to bind with each other, reducing both effectiveness of the soap and the wax.
2. The wax needs to be attracted by the clean surface, but is hampered by the soap, which is in higher concentrations (typically) than the wax.

An all-in-one formulation is a compromise, usually shifted to cleaning, not protecting. Some

products enhance the wax and reduce the soap ingredients in an attempt to add better protection. This all adds up to a compromise of properties in all-in-one formulations.

## **Example: Wax in Car Washes**

At the end of a carwash tunnel, three streams of different colored foamy substance are squirted on your car just prior to the last rinse. Magically, the last rinse runs off the car – and quickly! You have experienced the automatic carwash "cheater wax," which is not a wax at all. Worse, whether you pay for the wax or not, you will receive a stream of "cheater wax" (most likely in the final rinse) because it makes the final rinse water run off the car surface quickly, enabling the blowers to more effectively dry the car.

You *may* get more of this product when you pay for it. The product is an emulsion of a solvent and a quaternary ammonium compound (a cousin of hair cream rinse's active ingredient). It's attracted to your cleaned car's painted surface (anionic) and puts a small amount of modified fat on the surface. Don't worry, it won't harm your paint and it lasts at least until the next time the car gets wet.

## **Two Steps: Soap to Clean, Wax to Protect**

Sometimes the compromise between soap and wax can be managed to yield an acceptable result, cleaning the exterior and protecting the surface. Generally, the results are better with TWO separate steps, using different formulations, requiring two passes around the exterior of the house being cleaned. The wash has no competition in the formulation, and has more than enough soap to clean. The wax spray will be attracted to the exterior surface that was just cleaned and will cover more completely. Properly formulated water-based waxes provide better protection of the exteriors and can even repel anionic dust and grime over time, plus be easier to clean the next time.

So shouldn't you also try and get the better results doing each step one at a time? That is for you, your business' profitability and your customers to decide.

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