

Equipment maintenance — vacuums

by David Stanislaw

Vacuum cleaners account for almost 20 percent of all equipment purchases made by facility service providers, according to David Frank, president of



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KnowledgeWorx, a JanSan consulting and training firm.

This is because vacuum cleaners are usually the professional cleaner's most important tool.

Due to its importance, it is imperative for vacuums to remain in tip-top condition for as long as possible.

Not only will this keep the machines

Helpful tips for getting the most out of your purchase.

operating correctly — along with more productive and efficient cleaning — but also because a properly functioning vacuum cleaner is less likely to mar indoor air quality (IAQ) or damage floors and carpets.

Although backpack and canister vacuum models are becoming more common in commercial cleaning, the upright overwhelmingly remains the most frequently used type of vacuum.

Accordingly, most of the maintenance care tips listed below will apply to an upright machine, while some will apply to all types of vacuum cleaners.

The un-connection

A common and potentially dangerous problem with vacuum cleaners is when the busy cleaning professional, in haste, may unplug the machine by pulling on the cord and not the plug itself.

Pulling on the cord instead of the plug can weaken the connections and possibly cause an electric "short."

Most vacuum cleaners have specifically grounded plugs to protect the user, the machine, and the building.

It is vital to always unplug the machine by its plug, and not by the cord.

Better roller bars

Agitation is a major component of all cleaning work.

A vacuum cleaner's roller bar — designed with bristles of the proper denier and count — help agitate and loosen soil from the carpet fibers.

Throughout time, these bars can become covered with threads and debris, hampering the effectiveness of the bar's brushes.

Periodically check this area — with the vacuum cleaner off and turned upside down — by removing the housing that protects the beater bar.

How is the belt holding up?

An older vacuum cleaner's drive belt may need to be changed every few months.

Follow the steps above to remove the beater bar and check the belt to see if it is worn or cracked.

If it is worn, loosen the belt from the motor pulley, slide it off, and replace it.

Make sure the belt turns the beater bar in the correct direction, so dust and debris are deposited into the machine.

Newer vacuum cleaners often have belts that are geared or have sprockets, which rarely wear out and usually perform better than rubber belts.

For more information:

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Fine filters

The vacuum cleaner's filters are very important.

Filters protect the machine's motor and inner workings, and exhaust filters prevent impurities from escaping the machine and becoming airborne.

On newer vacuum cleaner models, the filter can easily be removed.

To do so, remove the holding or access door and simply lift it out and check for any secondary filters.

The safest way to clean a filter is to vacuum it with another vacuum cleaner.

High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters may need to be cleaned frequently because as the filter becomes filled with debris, the suction ability of the machine will be hindered.

Bag care

Air-filtration bags must frequently be changed because if they become too full, the machine's suction power will decrease.

Some more advanced machines have indicator lights, informing the user

when it is time to change the bag; otherwise, regularly check it.

Once the bag is three-quarters full, it is time for a new bag.

Some newer machines also have lever controls, which makes bag changing easy, and prevents impurities from being

released into the air during the changing process.

Pulling the lever out releases the bag, so a new bag can be attached.

Just push the lever in to secure it. □

David Stanislaw is an engineer with Tornado Industries, Chicago.

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