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Clean equipment sends a message

by **Danna Adams**

The appearance of our cleaning equipment and the way we maintain it says a lot about us — including how professional we are and what quality of work our customers might expect.

Here are some tips on keeping carpet extractors looking good and in good operating condition:

Caring for the body of the machine

For most extractors, the body of the machine can be wiped clean using a mild detergent.

Special care should be taken to keep water away from the control panel, the switches, and other electrical areas.

After cleaning the body, a protectant, similar to what is used to clean vinyl and leather in car interiors, can be used on the exterior of the machine to help keep it clean.

It is also important to avoid extreme temperatures. Too cold or too hot can increase the likelihood that the machine's body might crack or developing a leak.

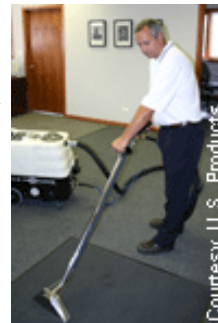
Flushing the machine

Many times, carpet cleaners will use a machine for several months and then realize it does not seem to be heating the cleaning solution or performing as effectively as it had in the past.

Carpet extractors should be flushed regularly with an acid-based descaler. This keeps lime and mineral deposits from building up inside the heater, the pump, and the lines in the machine, hampering the machine's performance.

Follow the manufacturer's recommendations when using the descaler.

Too strong a mixture can damage seals in the pump and elsewhere.



Clean equipment not only looks good but runs better too.

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If the machine receives regular use, it should be descaled about once a month to maintain performance.

Hoses

The hose on a carpet extractor should never be dragged across pavement or cement; doing so can cause it to develop weak spots that will eventually ruin the hose.

Some portable machines heat the cleaning solution above 200°F to improve the effectiveness of the cleaning process.

This tends to soften the inside of the hose while the machine is being used, making it more vulnerable.

Additionally, carpet cleaning professionals should never pull an extractor along by its solution hose as this might stretch the hose, which can cause internal leaking or weaken other areas.

Wheels

The wheels on a portable carpet extractor must turn quietly and easily to maximize maneuverability and worker productivity.

Every few months, it is a good idea to lubricate them using a silicone-based lubricant. This will also help the wheels last longer.

Lids

On the top of most portable extractors is a lid covering the tank where cleaning solution and water are poured into the machine.

Any crack or other damage to the lid or seals can reduce or eliminate the vacuum suction power of the machine.

Never use the lids to hold anything heavy, and take care not to let anything drop or fall on them.

Leaks

Leaks on a carpet extractor, especially around the pump and seals, are usually caused by wear and prolonged use.

It is important to attend to these as soon as they are noticed to prevent liquids from damaging motors, pumps, and other electrical parts of the machine.

Filters

Some higher-quality extractors may have filters in their wands, just behind the spray tips. These should be checked frequently, cleaned or replaced as necessary.

A filter is used to remove debris from the cleaning solution before it flows into the pump.

If a filter becomes clogged with debris, it can limit the amount of solution flowing into the pump; the result can be low output from the carpet wand or even no output if the pump loses its prime.

Additionally, a filter protects the vacuum motor from sucking in damaging rubbish as the dirty water flows into the recovery tank.

Brushes

Finally, another area of an extractor that tends to wear out over time is the brushes in the pump motor.

Usually these last a few years and should be replaced by a trained professional.

Danna Adams is a technical support manager for U.S. Products, manufacturer of professional carpet cleaning and restoration equipment.

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