

According to Bob Wittkamp, a certified IICRC Master Cleaning Technician, some manufacturers in the past and may currently provide a little 'secret' insight into how well the wand will perform by placing tiny, engraved numbers on the unit. For instance, each jet on the wand may have specific characteristics and those numbers identify those characteristics.

As an example, the first two or three numbers, typically numbered from 15 to 110, indicate the angle of the spray pattern's spread. Lower numbers refer to a narrow spray pattern; higher numbers, a wider spray pattern.

Further, the last two numbers on this wand indicate the amount of solution passing through the wand at 40 psi. Often, this number is expressed in 1/10 gallons per minute. For example, a tip with the last two numbers being 05 will pass 5/10 of a gallon of water/solution per minute at 40 psi.

WAND SECRETS



Gliding into 21st century with new wand technology

BY ROBERT KRAVITZ*

When selecting a new extractor, whether portable or truckmount, many carpet cleaning technicians investigate the machine but spend little or no time analyzing the wand that comes with the unit or a wand recommended for the extractor. This can be a serious mistake because as far as hot water extractors goes, next to the extractor itself, the wand is the most important tool.

"The key reason wands get scant attention is because for many years they were all pretty much the same," says Stephen Hanig, vice president of sales and marketing for U.S. Products and Hydramaster, manufacturers of portable and truckmount carpet cleaning equipment. "Manufacturers believed improved cleaning performance came from the extractor; the wand played a relatively minor role [in the past]."

However, in the last five years, as manufacturers looked for ways to make their machines even more efficient, effective, and greener, the wand has gotten considerably more attention. And, the result is new and improved wand technology that can further enhance carpet cleaning. Made from new materials and with more advanced engineering, some of today's wands are designed to be more ergonomic, while also meeting a facility's special needs.

VIEWING WANDS AS HELPERS

Around the early 1960s, some of the first carpet extractors for professional use were developed. In the US these early machines were often called box extractors and they were usually cold water machines. In line heat exchangers that heat the water/solution came much later. Most operated with about the same technology, allowing the wand to spray water and solution on the carpet as it was pulled back extracting the water or solution, removing soiling in the process. These older machines also put down much more water as they did not have the heat technology to help make the cleaning process more efficient.

Most wands, similar to today, were made of a metal material. Although the weight and design of the wand was a consideration, the big emphasis for engineers, as mentioned earlier, has always been on the extractor itself.

Today, many wands are lighter, user-friendly, and have added glides as a design element to allow for enhanced airflow and ease of use. Some are also more ergonomic. This means the wand works with the user and, because carpet cleaning can be so taxing on the body, this is very important. Selecting an ergonomically designed wand starts by testing the different wands available. It should be light and responsive. "Instead of metal construction, some of the more advanced wands are now made of rotationally molded plastic," adds Hanig. "These wands tend to be exceptionally light — half the weight of stainless steel wands — but their lightweight can be deceiving. They are also quite durable." Further, some wands have built-in glide holders and design and the custom-designed glide has made using some wands so much easier that it may give some technicians a false impression that they are not getting the pick-up necessary for proper cleaning. [They] are used to backbreaking labour are thrown off by how little effort these new wands require."