

Wanna wand?

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Detailer's Spotlight

Five points to consider when selecting a carpet extractor wand.

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Many carpet-cleaning professionals have a little secret I would like to share with carwash professionals: A carpet extractor wand, along with hand tools used for cleaning carpets and upholstery, can be almost as important as the extractor itself. And in the case the wrong wand is selected — one that is uncomfortable to use or simply does not perform well, no matter how powerful and efficient the extractor — it may be difficult to complete auto upholstery and carpet cleaning to your satisfaction ... or your customers.

There are some pretty good reasons many cleanings professionals might be unaware of the importance of wands.

“For years, most people simply thought they were all the same,” said Charlie Marinella, who heads the car-care division of U.S. Products Inc., a manufacturer of carpet-cleaning, hard surface-cleaning, and restoration equipment. “And many manufacturers promoted this belief because for years they were primarily concerned with finding new ways to make their extractors more and more powerful.”

However, in the past five years, as the carpet-cleaning industry has increasingly focused on becoming more green and sustainable, engineers have revisited carpet extractor wands, looking for ways to make them more effective, healthier to the user and environment, and easier to use.

The result is that new wand technologies have evolved and some of today’s wands and upholstery tools utilized in both professional carpet cleaning and car care are much lighter, easier to use, environmentally responsible, and high performing.

Wand basics

Before venturing into things to consider when selecting a wand, there are some “wand basics” we should explore and fully understand. Some of these basics may apply to professionals cleaning carpets regularly, but according to Marinella, this information should still prove useful to car-care professionals when selecting a wand.

For instance:

- Wands are made from all types of materials. This includes aluminum, stainless steel, titanium, and rotationally molded plastic. (Rotational molding was refined in the 1950s. A hollow mold is

filled with a plastic. It is then slowly rotated around two axes, causing the softened plastic to dispense and stick to the walls of the mold. The plastic is removed from the mold and now becomes the body of the product.) Some materials are heavier than others. The weight can improve cleaning performance because it helps seal the wand to the carpet for more effective extraction. However, too heavy and it can be difficult, tiring, and stressful to work with.

- The diameter of the wand tube will affect extraction effectiveness. The diameters will range from 1.5 inches to 2 inches. In most cases, a 2-inch wand tube will move air more effectively than a smaller tube, improving cleaning effectiveness.
- The number of jets on the wand can vary from one to five or more. When it comes to jets, there are several considerations, including the number of jets, the distance of the jet to the carpet, whether the jet is enclosed or not to prevent overspray, the material used to make the jet, and the size of the jets. For instance, with a single-jet wand, the jet may provide only limited coverage; with multi-jet wands, the spray from each individual jet must spread enough to intersect with the spray from adjoining jets or some areas of the carpet may not adequately be cleaned.
- Air flow issues are a big consideration. Technicians should know that most wands today have what is referred to as “turbulent” air flow. “Air bounces off the insides of the wand’s shoe, which slows airflow and can negatively impact cleaning performance,” said Marinella. “A new generation of “laminar” air flow wands has rectified this problem. Laminar technology allows air to flow smoothly through the wand. There is less resistance and less turbulence, optimizing performance.”

Selecting a wand

Now with a better understanding of wands, what things should car-care professionals consider when selecting a new wand to perform upholstery and carpet cleaning? These are Marinella’s suggestions:

- 1. Weight.** As referenced earlier, this can be an issue because a heavier wand does have its benefits. But, if too heavy, the wand will be too difficult to work with. Look for a wand that is light yet provides an effective “seal” to the carpet and upholstery to work effectively.
- 2. Ergonomics.** Ergonomic means the tool is designed to work with the user. Along with being light, the wand or hand tool should be comfortable to work with in all kinds of positions. Remember, car upholstery and carpets are contoured to the car with few flat areas.
- 3. Durability.** Some wands are exceptionally durable but because they are so heavy, they are hard to use. Rotationally molded wands are proving to be some of the most durable — and lightweight — available.
- 4. Glide.** Some wands now have customized glide-holders molded right into the head of the wand for greater durability. Because of the materials used and the custom fit, they glide over the carpet, making the extraction process much easier for the technician.
- 5. Advice.** One of the most important business relationships a car-care professional can ever make is with a knowledgeable, trustworthy distributor. If you have such a person, they can be

an excellent source of information on wands and all types of business products.

Wand maintenance

Although wands have few moving parts, they still require some maintenance to keep them operating at tip-top performance. If the wand has filters, these should be cleaned along with the jet openings. Review the wand's manual, where you will also find troubleshooting suggestions, on how these and other maintenance tips should be carried out.

“The most important thing, though, is to not underestimate the importance of wands,” Marinella added. “Like so many things, picture the wand as another link in the chain. The better it performs and the easier it is to work with, the more effective the extractor, resulting in a superior overall job, and happier customer.”

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