

## Technology Helps Detailers Take Green Steps

By **Robert Kravitz**  
03/18/2010

Historically, one of the auto industry's challenges in going green and becoming more sustainable has been determining how to become more environmentally responsible and still offer quality products and services. This has been true for car manufacturers seeking ways to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions vehicles produce as well as our dependence on foreign oil, right down to service companies offering auto care and cleaning services.

Even seven or eight years ago, most auto manufacturers, including those now playing a leadership role in making cars more environmentally friendly, likely questioned whether much could be done to reduce the automobile's dependence on gasoline, lessen its impact on the environment and promote sustainability, while still offering an affordable product to consumers.

However, many did not factor in human ingenuity or the determination to develop new technologies capable of pushing auto manufacturing and car care in a greener direction. After all, according to Thomas L. Friedman in his book *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*, "The Stone Age did not end because we ran out of stones. It ended because people invented alternative tools [and no longer needed the stones]."

Friedman adds that the Stone Age ended "with a lot of stones on the ground," and he believes that once the auto industry develops new technologies and ways to become greener and more sustainable, the Oil Age will end with "millions of barrels of oil underground." In some ways this is already occurring in the car care industry, which has been under pressure for years in markets like California to develop new methods of cleaning and detailing cars that use less water and reduce environmental impact.

If you asked an auto detailer or carwash owner 10 years ago whether he or she could wash cars without using water, there likely would have been laughter. Yet the market now features several, so-called "waterless" products, and many mobile detail and carwash operations are using "waterless" cleaning techniques to gain notoriety. Chris Villegas and LeeAnne Hudson, owners of Chris & Lee Mobile Auto Care, even won an Emerald Award in 2008 from Broward County, Fla., officials in recognition of the company's environmental practices. Other mobile operations also have been honored by municipalities and environmental organizations.

Meanwhile, brick-and-mortar carwash facilities continue to look for ways to reduce water consumption during the wash process and inside their facilities. Manufacturers also are developing auto cleaning and detailing products that are recyclable, biodegradable and designed to reduce their impact on the environment. However, auto detailers and carwash owners are advised to investigate these products carefully before making selections.


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With increased scrutiny on green products and services, there is now a number of third-party, independent certification organizations that have developed recognized green standards to help ensure companies are using sustainable ingredients and methods that significantly reduce impact on health, plants, wildlife and the environment. The two largest such organizations in North America are [Green Seal](#) and [EcoLogo](#).

Related to car care, some of the criteria that green-certified products must meet include:

- Chemicals must have a pH greater than 4.5 and lower than 13.5.
- They must contain less than 1 percent phosphorus as determined by weight.
- They must not be formulated with aromatic or halogenated solvents, ozone-depleting substances, more than 3 percent butoxyethanol, or more than 5 percent nitriloacetic acids or its salts.
- They must not contain hydrofluoric acid or nonbiodegradable compounds.

At this time, there are relatively few carwashing and detailing products that meet these criteria. Among the exceptions are some carpet-cleaning products. Considering carpet comprises such a large surface area inside vehicles, detailers who use these green-certified products can help reduce their car care facility's overall impact on the environment.

"Detailers can select a number of cleaning solutions designed for use with carpet extractors that are not only green-certified but as effective as conventional carpet cleaning chemicals," says Charlie Marinella, head of the car care division at [U.S. Products](#).

These cleaning solutions are designed for use with low-moisture carpet extractors, which use less water, thus preventing mold and mildew from developing and helping carpets dry considerably faster.

"Even the use of ozone equipment to eradicate car odors is a green alternative," notes Marinella. "Instead of using large amounts of chemicals to eliminate odors, once the source of the odor has been removed, any remaining malodors can be eliminated safely and without chemicals by an ozone system."

Although the car care industry is headed in a green direction, it still has some distance to cover. There are few green-certified products developed for the industry, and many car care facilities could do more to reduce water consumption and implement initiatives and procedures to minimize their environmental impact without sacrificing service quality.

"Going green is not necessarily an all-or-nothing proposition," says Marinella. "Any step auto detailers and carwash owners take to make their cleaning procedures more environmentally responsible is a step in the green direction. And as technology improves, we can expect more green-certified, environmentally responsible systems introduced that make car care more environmentally preferable."

*Robert Kravitz is a writer for the professional cleaning, hotel, health care, and auto care industries. He may be reached at [rkravitz@rcn.com](mailto:rkravitz@rcn.com).*

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## Product Preview: 2010 Car Care World Expo

03/26/2010

The International Carwash Association will hold its annual Car Care World Expo May 12-14 at the Las Vegas Convention Center. Following is just a sampling of some of the products and services that will be on display from approximately 300 exhibitors during the show. The expo floor will include a Green Pavilion showcasing environmentally responsible products and services, as well as a Detailing Pavilion featuring detailing and car appearance products and equipment. Use this preview to help plan your appointments, generate ideas or bring it along as your trade show floor companion.



### BAF Industries

PRO S-66 Liquid Blue Ice dressing is a ready-to-use, liquid exterior water-based dressing designed for tires, trim and bumpers. Designed to revitalize rubber, vinyl and plastic surfaces, Liquid Blue Ice uses a high-viscosity silicone fluid to provide superior coverage. The nonflammable formula dries to a water-repellent, non-tacky finish that won't collect dust. Biodegradable and reclaim friendly. Booth 2701. [www.prowax.com](http://www.prowax.com)



### Clean World Distribution

The Rhino-Mat automatic floor mat wash-and-dry system cleans and dries rubber and carpet floor mats within 30 seconds. Units use water and a special textured brush to clean ground-in dirt, hard to remove stains and pet hair. Mats are finished with a patented drying technique and groomed appearance. The Rhino-Mat also helps shops cut back on water and energy use, as well as reduce the use of harsh chemicals and detergents. Booth 116. [www.cleanwd.com](http://www.cleanwd.com)

### Detail Plus Car Appearance Systems

The Express Detailer System enables carwash operators to complete express detailing services quickly. The stainless-steel, portable cart includes the dispensing of four chemicals, spray gun express wax/sealant applicator, dual air lines, dual-action buffer, rotary shampooer tool, internal vacuum and an internal soil



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extractor. The system includes a DVD for service menu, info sheet and sign ideas, as well as employee procedures cards for each service. Booth 314. [www.detailplus.com](http://www.detailplus.com)

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## Dosatron

Dosatron's new D14MZ high-temperature proportional injector series operates with water up to 140 degrees F. Dilution rates are 500:1 to 50:1, 200:1 to 20:1 and 3000:1 to 333:1. Pictured is the D14MZ2, which features a water flow range of 0.05 gpm to 14 gpm and an operating pressure range of 4.3 psi to 85 psi. Pipe size is .75-inch NPT. The injector includes a mounting bracket, suction hose with strainer and weight, and operating manual. Booth 2408. [www.dosatronusa.com](http://www.dosatronusa.com)



## ERC Wiping Products

ERC Wiping Products' line of microfiber towels is lint-free, nonabrasive and designed for green cleaning. Colors include red, green, blue, yellow and grey, with purple and orange newly added to the line. Available in multiple sizes, including 14 inches by 14 inches, 16 inches by 16 inches, and 16 inches by 27 inches. Other body, window and detail towels are available, including thick terry, lint-free China and huck/surgical. Booth 717. [www.ercwipe.com](http://www.ercwipe.com)



## Erie Brush & Mfg. Co.

The patent-pending Erie Wheel Wonder offers a choice of maximum-density Erie wash material, including filament, Erie's Gentle Foam or Erie's Supreme Cloth. When tuned in, the brush's curvilinear, undulating, wavy design enables the material to remain in constant, full contact with customers' wheels for an improved cleaning experience. Recommended length: 96 inches. Recommended diameter: 18 inches. Booth 845. [www.eriebrush.com](http://www.eriebrush.com)



## Hamilton Manufacturing

Hamilton's Card Receipt Station allows customers to print receipts for credit card transactions in self-service bays, at vacuum stations or any device utilizing the Data Access Network. Users can set the receipt printer to print an individual receipt for each transaction or print a single receipt showing each separate transaction. Simply swipe the credit card used in the bay or at the vacuum, and the unit will print a receipt for the card transaction. Booth 833.

[www.hamiltonmfg.com](http://www.hamiltonmfg.com)

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## IDA to Offer Detailing Education at Car Care World Expo

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The [International Detailing Association](#) has released session topics for its detail educational seminars during the International Carwash Association's [Car Care World Expo](#), May 12-14 in Las Vegas. The detailing sessions will be held on the first two days of the show.

The four sessions will discuss ways for detailers to improve ticket averages and revenue, as well as apply new technology and marketing strategies. Here is a brief overview of each session:

**Additional Services for More Profit** – A discussion of services detailers can offer to customers to increase revenue per car, including premium detailing services that are easy to perform and easy to upsell. The session also will examine more extensive restoration and appearance repair services that require an investment in training and equipment.

**Increasing Sales in a Down Economy** – This session will examine information and techniques designed to maximize sales to existing customers, minimize costs and attract new customers without heavy investment.

**New Detailing Technology** – This session will provide an overview of detailing technology, including a brief examination of the most popular tools currently in use and an extensive discussion of technologies that are new or emergent in the industry.

**Marketing in the 21st Century** – A look at which traditional marketing methods are still working well for many detail business owners, as well as new strategies, including Web sites and social media.

Speakers for the sessions have not been selected. The educational seminars will be geared toward existing detail businesses, carwash operators with detailing operations and anyone considering entering the detail business, according to the IDA.

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- [International Detailing Association Grows Its Roots](#)
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## Employees Deserve the Royal Treatment

By **Keith Duplessie**

03/10/2010

It was drummed into my head years ago that the customer is king/queen and that if I take good care of the customer, good things will happen. But having worked with consumers in many different businesses and observed the interaction between customers and employees, I have come to believe that the employee is king/queen, and the customer is the customer.

Look at it from a chicken-and-egg standpoint. What comes first, the employee or the customer?

When you build a business from the ground up, you first acquire the land, then build the building, purchase the equipment and inventory, and select the signs, supplies, etc. Finally, you hire employees. Without employees there are no customers; no one to sell detail services, nobody to detail the vehicles — just a building with fancy equipment, chemicals and supplies.

Employees come in all forms. Once in a while you find a superstar, and you certainly get your share of slugs. But good employees are your most valuable asset. They determine the success of your detail business and should be treated with kindness and respect.

Keep that in mind as you read the following scenarios I actually witnessed through the years. You can learn valuable lessons from the poor actions of others.

### Mr. Personality (Detail Business Owner)

Mr. Personality's detail business was losing money. Nevertheless, right before Christmas, he had one of his detailers go out and pick up two new iPods and a BlackBerry for his wife and daughter.

The news of the purchases spread throughout the shop. On Christmas Eve, Mr. Personality called a detail staff meeting to announce there wouldn't be any Christmas bonuses. He also told them they were lucky they still had jobs.

When he was called out for buying the expensive gifts, he told his employees that what he did with his money was none of their business. With that, Mr. Personality wished his staff a Merry Christmas and told them to leave.

### Ms. Benevolence (Detailer's Wife)



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Ms. Benevolence was constantly playing boss even though she didn't know much about detailing. One day she was having a conversation with an employee and, as usual, was very dominating. Her conversations were never two-way; you just had to stand back and nod your head as she babbled on and on. One day, she turned her attention to "her" employees and complained that they were never working hard enough and that her husband had to constantly correct their mistakes.

Out of the blue, she stated that "she" was the one who put food on the employees' tables and if it wasn't for her, they'd have nothing to eat!

## Mr. Smooth (Detail Business Owner)

Mr. Smooth would pull into the detail shop lot every morning between 9 a.m. and 9:30 a.m., get out of his car, walk into the shop, throw his keys to the shop manager and demand him to "wash and vacuum it." Once completed, Mr. Smooth's car was parked in front of the shop for all to see. The shop had only three parking spots for customers, so many times there weren't any spots for walk-in customers to park.

You shouldn't be surprised to know that Mr. Smooth had a lousy detail business. Customer service was non-existent; employee morale was low, employee turnover was rampant and the shop manager felt like a lackey. Mr. Smooth set this business up to fail each morning he pulled into the lot.

## Ms. Touchy Feely (Detailer's Girlfriend)

Ms. Touchy Feely was given shop status by the owner even though she had no real responsibilities. She hung around the shop all day shopping on the Internet, making personal calls and piddling away the day. But she did dabble in customer relations from time to time and was the ultimate giveaway artist.

When unhappy customers came in, they went to Ms. Touchy Feely. She was an emotional person who would listen to the customers' concerns and acquiesce to their demands. Not once did she ever talk to the shop owner or the detailer involved. To her, "the customer was always right."

## Mr. Beat'em Up (Detail Shop Manager)

Every morning Mr. Beat'em Up would hold an employee meeting. He would make announcements, review the previous day's business and asks questions of the staff. During one meeting, Mr. Beat'em Up didn't like what he was hearing. Frustrated, he launched into a verbal assault on his staff, complete with nostrils flaring and neck veins bulging.

The meeting became a "his way or the highway" directive, and when he was done, he looked at his employees with a straight face and said, "Alright, let's go detail some cars."

Gee, go team go!

Human relations gurus would have a field day dissecting the actions of these owners. Draw your own conclusions, but remember that your employees are not chattel; they are your lifeline to your customers. No employees, no customers.

*Keith Duplessie is technical services manager for Portland, Ore.-based [Detail Plus Car Appearance Systems](#), in charge of all installations, training and technical services. He also serves on the board of directors for the [International](#)*

*Detailing Association. Keith can be reached at [keith@detailplus.com](mailto:keith@detailplus.com).*

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## Smart Wax, Total Pros Launch Smart Detailing University

03/03/2010

**Smart Wax** has teamed with **The Total Pros Inc.** to form **Smart Detailing University**, an education and training facility specifically designed for the auto detailing and reconditioning industry. The program will offer a mixture of training, supplies, chemicals and equipment. Training will emphasize water conservation and eco-friendly practices.

“Our training programs will be designed specifically to enhance the water-smart solutions offered in the industry as well as get each and every student properly prepared and trained in entering today’s eco-friendly auto detailing and recondition business world,” said Mel Craig, founder and president of The Total Pros. “In an era where the importance of going green is widely understood, Smart Detailing University will pave the way in how we clean and protect our vehicles.”

Through the arrangement, Smart Wax will offer a full line of eco-friendly auto detailing chemicals and several solutions designed to minimize water use.

“We were very interested in adding a dynamic training program to include several areas in the auto reconditioning business, including eco-friendly and water-smart auto detailing, windshield repair, paint restoration, headlamp repair and much more,” said Smart Wax CEO Dave Knotek.

For information on specific classes and course schedules, visit The Total Pros [Web site](#).

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## Address Safety Hazards in Your Detail Shop

By **Keith Duplessie**

02/10/2010

Many business owners, including detail shops, can fall into the trap of believing they are doing the right things to manage and run a safe shop simply because they haven't experienced any accidents. They may honestly and earnestly look out for the well-being of their employees and have years of experience without any incidents. However, when subjected to an inspection from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), some shop owners learn a difficult and costly lesson about safety compliance.

Many OSHA violations are not blatant or reckless on the part of the shop owner, but they still can produce substantial fines. Some examples of these seemingly innocuous violations can be failure to have a safety plan or failing to provide proper eyewash stations. Did you know that OSHA has standards regarding fit tests and medical evaluations on employees required to wear respirators? Be sure to check local requirements to make sure your detail shop is in compliance with such procedures.

Here are a few ideas to help ensure workplace safety and avoid OSHA violations and fines:

### Protective Equipment

**Eye protection** – If you have ever watched the PBS series, *The New Yankee Workshop*, you have heard host Norm Abram talk about shop safety at the start of every show. Abram says, "There is no more important piece of safety equipment than these — safety glasses," and he is absolutely right!

**Eye injuries** can occur easily and cause irreversible damage. Debris can become airborne when a pressure washer or air blower is used, and there are plenty of dangers lurking under a car hood, including blown batteries, radiator caps and hoses. Chemicals, in particular, are dangerous and can easily splash into a worker's eyes.

Protective eyewear is effective insurance against unnecessary injuries, and detail shop owners should make wearing a pair mandatory for almost every type of work activity.

Even with a protective eyewear policy in place, proper eyewash stations are a must in the event that an injury occurs. The items you will need depends on the chemicals and hazards your employees can be exposed to. Make sure you have the proper setup to mitigate injuries from every type of chemical you use.

**Respirators** – If you use hazardous chemicals, such as hydrofluoric acid, you should provide respirators and conduct basic training and fit testing as OSHA requires. Some respirators do not require any special training



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and can be put on and adjusted for use by anyone. Others, though, require a fitting and a physical check-up and approval by a licensed health-care provider.

Again, the types of chemicals and environmental hazards employees are exposed to will determine which respirator types you need. If respirators are needed, you may need to implement uniform policies regarding facial hair. Beards, stubble and even sideburns can prevent negative pressure respirators from forming a proper seal, for example, resulting in dangerous leaks into the mask. Positive pressure respirators do not require a face seal and can be worn by bearded employees.

If you cannot afford the appropriate respirators, associated fit testing and medical exams for the chemicals you currently use, you may want to consider changing your chemicals. While nonhazardous chemicals may be a little more expensive and require a little more effort to use, the cost savings from not having to use respirators or pay potential OSHA violations may make this a palatable solution.

**Gloves – Hand injuries account for more lost work days in the automotive service industry than any other type of injury. For that reason, providing the correct hand protection for work tasks is important in minimizing injury risks.**

It should be noted that gloves designed for one purpose may not be appropriate for another use, even though they may appear to provide adequate protection. The types of chemicals being handled, the nature of contact and duration of contact, grip requirements, thermal protection and abrasion resistance can all be factors in selecting the proper hand protection.

In general, the thicker the glove material, the greater the chemical resistance, but OSHA points out that thick gloves can impair grip and dexterity and compromise a worker's safety. Always check a manufacturer's specifications to determine if a glove is appropriate for protecting against specific chemicals and conditions.

Leather gloves typically provide protection against sparks and moderate heat, while chemical-resistant gloves can be made from a variety of different rubbers for a range of purposes. For example, butyl gloves are effective protection against highly corrosive acids and other chemicals but do not perform well with aliphatic and aromatic hydrocarbons and halogenated solvents, according to OSHA.

Nitrile gloves are made of a copolymer and provide protection against chlorinated solvents, oils, greases, acids, caustics and alcohols but are not recommended for use with strong oxidizing agents, aromatic solvents, ketones and acetates. Nitrile gloves also typically provide ample dexterity and stand up to heavy use.

## Employee Training

As I have written previously, proper training on procedures will create awareness and prevent potential injuries and hazards within the shop. Here are some important areas to focus on regarding recommended procedures:

**Back injuries – Back injuries are common in some work environments because employees do not use proper techniques to lift objects. As part of employee training procedures, remind team members how to properly lift heavy objects.**

Before lifting, the person should stand close to the object with their feet about shoulder width apart. Squat by bending at the hips and knees, while keeping the back straight. When preparing to lift, grasp the object firmly with

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