

PRESSURE WASHERS

Over a period of time a house becomes covered with dirt, grime, and contaminants from a variety of sources: dirt-laden rain droplets, environmental pollution, mildew, moss and chalking paint. Peeling and flaking paint can also become an unsightly problem.

Pressure washing is the fastest and most effective method of cleaning. If only dirt and grime is a problem, a power wash will brighten the house and painting may not be required.

Most situations, though, consist of a multitude of sins that require repainting and the key to a successful re-paint is surface preparation. Power washing will remove chalk, dirt, under-eave deposits, loose or peeling paint and minor surface mildew (bleaching is required for killing mildew). Power washing is 10 times quicker and more efficient than standard elbow grease. An entire house can be properly prepared in 2-8 hours depending on size and severity of contaminants.

Proper selection of a pressure washer and tip is essential. A washer with a pressure rating in the 2,000-3,000 psi will be needed if removing peeling paint is part of the job. Washers below 1,500 psi are not very effective and above 3,000 psi are more prone to damaging the substrate if not handled properly. Tip size is also important. A 15° tip is generally the most effective size and is a good "chiseling" nozzle for paint removal. A 0° tip can gouge wood and damage fragile surfaces. Even though water-blasting will remove almost all blistered, peeling and loose paint, many times the paint edges will curl up after being pressure washed. It's a good idea to use a scraper on these areas just prior to painting. Tips of 25° and 40° are more for "washing" jobs only. For stubborn stains, oxidation and mildew, many pressure washers can be fitted with a chemical injector. When using a chemical injector, spray from bottom to top, then be sure to rinse from top to bottom with a 40° nozzle.

A power washer is very simple to operate, but it is not a toy. Improperly handled it can become a dangerous piece of equipment. Never point it at anyone or get hands near the spray tip. Stay away from power lines and care should be taken when on a ladder since the initial power burst could knock you off balance.

Here are some other tips to keep in mind:

1. Cover all electrical fixtures and outdoor lighting with plastic bags.
2. Close all windows and doors.
3. Cover lawn and landscape, this will avoid a messy clean up.
4. Protect eyes and skin; wear goggles.
5. Keep the nozzle 4 to 12 inches from the surface.
This distance will vary depending on whether it's concrete, wood or metal, and what you are trying to remove.
6. The spray nozzle should be directed at a 45°

angle to the surface and used like a scraper.

7. Don't spray directly at windows, they could break.

8. Don't spray into un-caulked cracks or up under the laps of horizontal lap siding. Do not spray into vent openings on gables and soffits.

Don't limit yourself to just one job with a pressure washer once you have it. It can also be used to clean gutters, autos, boats, patios, sidewalk barbecue grills, lawn mowers, swimming pools, hot tubs, fences, garbage cans, etc. Also, pressure washing weathered, wood decks and fencing can remove that decayed "gray look" and provide a sound base for refinishing.