

More Power To You!

Fleet Cleaning Drives SCOTTS PRESSURE WASH SERVICES

by Terri Perrin



On any given day when he's driving to work, Paul Horsley, president of SCOTTS PRESSURE WASH SERVICES of Calgary, sees dozens of potential new customers driving by him. Whether they're small cube vans delivering products in the local area or big rigs on cross-country hauls, they all have one thing in common - they all get dirty.

The trucking industry in both the United States and Canada is one of North America's largest business sectors and, as such, represents an integral and vitally important part of SCOTTS business.

"Securing regular fleet washing contracts is one way that SCOTTS can be assured a year 'round revenue stream and a solid customer base," explains Horsley. "But many of our customers are surprised to learn that we clean more than 90,000 truck and trailer units each year."

What is Fleet Washing?

"The first thing our customers need to be aware of," adds Horsley, "is that fleet cleaning is not to be confused with custom detailing. For a standard wash, we're not polishing chrome and pampering someone's showroom quality Freightliner. Fleet cleaning is an assembly-line style of washing exterior surfaces, to rinse away the grime of

regular highway travel. When faced with a row of several dozen parked trailer units, it can be a daunting task."

With Alberta's tight labor market, securing fleet cleaning contracts also gives Scotts an added advantage, enabling them to maximize billable hours for employees seven days a week. The regular work keeps staff happy, ensures they can be well compensated, and enables them to form solid business relationships with their customers.

"Employee retention is of utmost concern for us," explains Horsley. "We have to be very careful in our screening and hiring process, since our employees are entrusted to service equipment that can be worth millions of dollars. Employees entering private property after regular business hours are responsible for opening and closing storage lots and the associated risks."

Equipment for the job

While some people think a standard power washing unit purchased at a hardware store could be used to wash their vehicles, these types of units are not commercial grade and simply cannot withstand the rigors of daily use. These small units also must be connected to a water source, which limits their versatility in large storage lots.

In contrast, SCOTTS has a fleet of 12 trucks with large industrial grade pressure washers and water storage tanks mounted inside. Not only is the equipment top quality, the service technicians are trained to know what chemical products and water pressure to use on various surfaces. It may look like a simple job, but it's not without unique challenges. Ideally, power washing

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Fleet cleaning provides opportunities for year-round revenue and a solid customer base.

equipment for fleet cleaning should generate from 2,000 - to - 3,000 pounds-per-square-inch (PSI) and produce hot water ranging from 140-160°F. The hotter the water, the better it is, as the efficacy of soap doubles with every 20°F increase in temperature. The types and concentration of soap and chemicals used will vary, according to current road and weather conditions.

More than sand and salt

Many jurisdictions are increasing the amount of road salt and chemical de-icers poured onto the nation's highways, and Alberta is no exception. In addition to the traditional sand and salt, some roads are now sprinkled with magnesium chloride. This chemical is believed to have better ice-fighting qualities and a rust inhibitor that prevents vehicle and bridge corrosion. It is also supposed to prevent snow from sticking to pavement and be effective at much lower temperatures.

Although more expensive than road salt, magnesium chloride is more effective, so less is used. It has also been credited with increasing highway safety and decreasing insurance claims. Even so, the product is the centre of controversy over the wear and tear it causes vehicles and potential human health risks. And,

while chemicals are proven to make for safer driving conditions, their use presents additional cleaning challenges!

"We're keenly aware of your concerns about the safe and efficient maintenance of your equipment during bouts of extremely cold weather," explains Horsley. "To effectively remove the accumulation of mud, road salt and chemical de-icers we combine the power of our proprietary industrial soap, hot water and water pressure. In the vast majority of cases, this cleaning process has proven to be highly effective. But, when the temperature drops well below zero, we face special operational challenges, too!

"A common concern during these cold months is that units are not thoroughly rinsed after cleaning and that a soap-like residue is left behind. Fleet operators should know that the residue is road salt, not soap. Even after considerable rinsing, road salt residue will seep out of key lock areas, from around headlights, lights above the windshield, and other areas where road salt accumulates. We are aware of this problem, and try our best to do a thorough rinse of your fleets under these difficult winter conditions."

Fleet operators are aware of the need for regular power washing – not just



best possible condition but to also present a clean corporate image. Despite the challenges, fleet washing is a rewarding part of *SCOTT'S PRESSURE WASH SERVICES*, with a potential for growth that seems almost limitless. As long as North America is dependent on the trucking industry for deliveries, the market for fleet washing will always be one where a well-run power washing company can clean up! ■

