

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A PORTABLE HOT WATER CARPET EXTRACTOR

By Stephen Hanig

Portable carpet cleaning extractors have made several advances in the past few years. Once bulky, heavy, and moderately powered, today's portables are light, powerful, and offer many of the same features formerly found on much larger truck mount machines.

Along with these improvements, two overwhelming benefits portable extractors provide are their versatility and lower price tag. They can access and maneuver into places a truck mount simply cannot—and they do this for about one-third the cost of a truck mount.

Portable extractors, just like their truck mount counterparts, inject cleaning solution directly into carpet and upholstery by use of a wand. The solution “suspends” the dirt and soil embedded in the carpet fibers, extracts them using a powerful vacuum, and does this all in one stroke.

Important Features to Look for in a Portable Carpet Extractor

Although different portable extractors offer different features, some are of such importance that they should be considered above all others. These include:

Heat

To facilitate cleaning action, one of the first things contractors should consider when purchasing a portable extractor is if, and how well, it heats the cleaning solution. Heat improves cleaning efficiency and this improves worker productivity. And, a machine that has solid-state circuitry will maintain heat more proficiently and consistently because it can sense temperature change in the heat exchanger within one degree. Also, look for machines that have adjustable heat

settings at the wand tip: higher temperatures for carpets, lower temperatures for delicate fabrics and upholstery.

Self Contained Units

Along with heat, another feature contractors should consider when purchasing a portable extractor is to look for units that are as self-contained as possible. This helps improve organization as well as productivity. A self-contained unit will have a wand caddy for easier transport, a chemical tray, and a *live* hose management system. A *live* hose management system, found on some models, holds up to 25-feet of hose and allows the contractor to use all or only as much hose as needed. The hose winds back on the reel for easy storage or can be removed for loading.

Low Moisture Systems

Another feature to consider when purchasing a portable extractor is one that has a low moisture system. A low-moisture system utilizes heat, discussed earlier, combined with sufficient water pressure to reduce drying time. This means less water is needed to clean. The combination results in faster drying times, less chance for mold or mildew to develop, less shrinkage of the carpet or wicking from the pad.

Holding/Recovery Tank

One of the most time-consuming elements of carpet cleaning with a portable extractor is filling and emptying the solution/recovery tank. A final feature to consider, which helps improve productivity, is purchasing a machine that has a 12- to 16-gallon (+/-) holding/recovery tank. Additionally, a low-fill solution tank allows for easy bucket fill with less lifting and back stress.

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