

The Machine You Need Even Though You Did Not Know You Needed It

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There's a must-have cleaning tool that many correctional facilities not only don't have but may not even know they should have. The system I am referring to is a "jumbo vac," also known as a wet/dry vacuum system. However, since the new generation of wet/dry vacs are so much more powerful and effective than their predecessors, the term wet/dry vac is no longer applicable.

Jumbo vacuums typically look like large drums or trash cans with a motor on top and a four-wheeled dolly on the bottom. They generate compressed air and it is this compressed air that gives the vacuum enough waterlift (a measurement in inches of a vacuum cleaner's strength) and generates enough psi (pounds per square inch) to pull soil, dust, debris, and moisture off floors and other surfaces so that the contaminants can be

completely removed from the facility.

Just to be clear, these are not shop vacs that can be purchased at a building supply company or mega-retailer. While those machines can be effective when used in residential and light industrial settings, jumbo vacs are much more powerful, versatile, and dependable, and they are made for heavy industrial cleaning tasks—many of which are encountered in a correctional facility.

In industrial locations, they are often used for vacuuming floors and workstations. Further, they are often employed to deep clean tools and factory equipment because they are able to effectively and safely remove dust, oil, metal chips, grease, ash, wood-related debris and dust, and other contaminants that a traditional vacuum cleaner or wet/dry system is incapable of handling or that might cause damage to the machine.

In a correctional facility, a jumbo vac can be used in any industrial-type area of the facility. These may include educational and vocational training areas (especially if they involve industrial-type work); laundry areas; floor care (specifically when floors are stripped and refinished); large food preparation and service areas; even areas around Dumpsters and trash containers. They are also very effective when cleaning up after emergencies or in "restoration" situations such as after a flood.

Jumbo Specs

With a jumbo vac, dry and liquid waste and debris are pulled into the machine by the vacuum. This dust, debris, and moisture are then deposited into the drum of the unit and eventually removed completely from the facility. Some of the most powerful and advanced vacuum systems employ more powerful and dependable Venturi power heads. Some units also have a liquid shutoff so that moisture collected in the drum does not come into contact with vacuum motors or related mechanicals.

Correctional administrators considering a jumbo vac should select a jumbo vac with a 55-gallon steel drum. This offers enough capacity to work effectively before the drum must be emptied, and a steel container may prove more durable than a traditional or even stainless steel drum.

Although the amounts of waterlift and psi of the jumbo vac help determine its effectiveness, it is the CFM (cubic feet per minute) that tells the true story of the machine. The higher the CFM the faster debris and moisture will travel through the vacuum hose into the collection drums. This improves worker productivity and reduces the number of passes over the same area to thoroughly clean it. Look for systems that have approximately 10 CFM up to 258 CFM.

Many jumbo vacs come with an assortment of attachments and tools to meet different cleaning needs. These include the wand, hoses, squeegees, and crevice and dusting tools, along with attachments made specifically for hard-surface and carpeted floors. Such accessories make the machine more versatile and easier to use. Also, be sure the entire system is on some sort of secure dolly so that it can be easily wheeled from area to area where needed.

Multiuse

We started this article referring to jumbo vacs as the one tool every correctional facility needs. The reason for this is once these systems are selected, administrators invariably find many more uses for them than ever anticipated. For instance, forget the plumber. Some administrators have found them to be the fastest and most effective way to unclog sink drains. Others have used them to help remove snow from steps and walkways—plus snow is removed along with the moisture. In all likelihood, if your correctional facility selects a jumbo vac, you too will discover some unique and unexpected ways to use it.

The diameter of the vacuum hose can impact CFM. Especially when vacuuming up dry materials, a larger-sized vacuum hose will prove more effective.

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