

Window Cleaning magazine

A man in a dark blue shirt and jeans is standing on a silver extension ladder, cleaning a large, multi-paned window on a white stucco wall. He is holding a blue cloth to the upper part of the window. To the right, a brick wall and a grey door are visible. The ground is paved with red bricks.

January 2012

This issue...

Ladder work to die for

How safe are you?

100% traditional

We speak to ladder users

Is it time to give scrim a miss?

Blue glass cloth review

Heat Trace. What is it?

Protect your equipment from freezing

The only WFP user in his area

Matt Perry of Ohio, USA

and much, much more...

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Issue 2

03

Window Cleaning Magazine



Editorial

Officially we are now into winter! The days get shorter and the work is harder. But do you know what, I still wouldn't swap my job for the world.

This magazine was launched in October 2011 and I have been taken aback by how well it has been received. The response to the magazine has been fab and the number of readers subscribed to the mailing list is rising weekly! We are attracting readers from all over the world and as a result we aim to provide content that relates to these readers as well as those in the UK.

We have another issue packed with stuff, including winter information to help keep you moving and working in the freezing temperatures. There are also features on ladder users for the 100% traditional boys out there and much more.

We are also pleased to have the world's fastest window cleaner, Mr Terry 'Turbo' Burrows writing for us in his own column, plus guest writers such as Richard Lingford, Simon Sherwood, Chris 'Wagga' Dawber and Andrew Willis of Impact43 on ladders (excuse the pun).

We also liked Matt Perry from Ohio US so much, we have invited him back to provide tips and short articles. Matt is very active with his videos on line, as is Wagga, so check them out!

As always, this is your magazine so get involved. Send us your videos, articles, pics, and letters.

See you soon.

Lee Burbidge

Visit our website and blog at www.windowcleaningmagazine.co.uk

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OCS and their in-house PDA system in detail

Commercial window cleaning was one of the first services offered by OCS over 110 years ago. The business is now a leading international facilities services provider with a turnover of around £700 million, and the window cleaning services they provide today are a far cry from a 'man and ladder'.

Since 2008, OCS window cleaning operatives have been using PDA technology, removing the need for the traditional paper-based work bills and work instructions. The system ensures that vital Health and Safety procedures are electronically acknowledged and signed off by team managers.

Any attempt to bypass the system results in the task being locked out and the work instruction being withdrawn.

WCM talks to Paul Thrupp, who is OCS's Director of Cleaning, to learn more.

WCM: Thank you for talking with us Paul. Could you explain the objective of the PDA system and why it was needed?

Paul: As industry leaders, we felt that there was a huge opportunity for OCS to use technology more effectively in window cleaning. We wanted to embrace the increasingly demanding legislation surrounding Health and Safety, as well as ensuring compliance and management of risk, for our operatives, clients and the overall business.

We needed the system to focus our valuable resources by reducing administration and to support client demand for improved reporting information. With improved access to information on works completion and better site specific Health and Safety information, communication between managers and operatives would be enhanced. Better site visit records and training information would also be provided.



For the window cleaners themselves, the system would replace the traditional paper work instruction and provide all the information needed for their job, including payroll detail. Most importantly, however, it would help ensure that they are working safely at all times.

WCM: So how does it work?

Paul: It's a bespoke advanced software system which creates electronic tables sent through wireless transmission to the PDAs – and back again.

Every supervisor and team manager has a PDA where every work instruction held on the device can be reviewed. This includes basic job details, specification, risk assessment, method statements,

site specific control measures and details of any required certification. Payroll information can be updated and wage summary reports are produced automatically from the system.

WCM: This system helps you manage all high risk window cleaning tasks?

Paul: Yes, we can ensure that every one of our jobs is performed safely and to specification with a continuous review of work practices and performance by our operational management and Health and Safety teams.

OCS cleans the windows of some of the country's most difficult and demanding buildings and adopts a variety of solutions, including high-level abseiling, cradle-based access equipment, mobile alloy towers and mobile elevating working platforms. Technology, aligned with continuous training and competence testing at national, trade organisation and company levels, ensures that we meet the most important challenge of protecting our people, regardless of the size or complexity of the job.

WCM: Run us through the steps the system would take your employees.

Paul: Each day, the operative logs into the system where their name and vehicle registration appears at the top of the screen. If the team supervisor is absent, a different supervisory representative can be allocated and selected.

The next screen is a vehicle check, which is also carried out just once at the beginning of the day. After entering the mileage details, individual boxes must be ticked to confirm that oil, water and fuel have been checked, as well as tyres and screen wash. The next screen is for the team equipment check. For each piece of listed equipment, these must be signed off as a pass or fail.

Once these vital checks have taken place, the team for the day is confirmed. A default list appears which can be changed until the team list is current and correct. This screen can be revisited if people need to be added or removed throughout the day. This step is important as the PDA cross-checks staff competencies against each task to ensure that only trained and competent staff are allocated to the respective tasks.

Next is the 'job listing' screen showing all the stored work instructions which can be sorted alphabetically or numerically. The instructions show due date, risk assessment and safe systems of work, specification and other general information. Displayed dates for relevant certification, including PUWER, LOLER and



risk assessment expiry dates, are vital as any dates which have expired result in the task being withdrawn automatically.

The system holds details of staff who are certified and suitably trained to complete the tasks identified in the method statements and compares and advises on required training skills matched against contract related method statements. If a job is loaded, but the system cannot identify a team member who is qualified or trained to undertake the task, a warning screen appears.

Once the job the operative wishes to carry out is selected, the 'Start' button is clicked and a standard safety warning appears as follows: 'If, due to changes in site conditions, the current method no longer ensures a safe system of work – DO NOT CLEAN'. The operative is instructed to report immediately to the supervising representative. This process must be completed and agreed before progressing. Subsequent specification and control measure instructions must be positively acknowledged before any further progress can be made.

For the 'pre-work safety' check, the operative must sign with a stylus to confirm this has been undertaken and then the team on the job must also be confirmed.

Once the screens above are passed, the operative arrives at the 'work in progress' screen. When work is completed, 'finished' must be clicked or, in case of the job not being able to completed, 'incomplete'.

After a post job review, a customer signature must be obtained. Where clients require a workbill copy, a box must be ticked and this will automatically be posted or e-mailed to them. Clicking the 'OK' button will then return the operative to the 'job listing' screen and the workbill now disappears from the system.

WCM: The system has been in place since 2008. What is your staff feedback?

Paul: Change – especially such a big change as the introduction of the PDAs – always takes time to be accepted and for the benefits to be perceived by the end-user. However, quite soon after this system was introduced, we started to receive positive reviews.

Overall, the feedback from our operatives has been fantastic. One of them expressed his thoughts on the added Health and Safety benefits: "In spite of many people thinking that the UK has gone H&S crazy," he says, "when you're working at height, you need to feel totally confident that everything has been done to protect you and the people you're working with." The window cleaning teams have also reported improved and speedier remuneration processes and ease of administration as key benefits.

Involving window cleaners and supervisors in the development project for the system with a focus on making their jobs 'easier', encouraged acceptance and 'ownership' of the system.

WCM: How did OCS set about coming up with the right PDA?

Paul: Various hand-held electronic hardware solutions can actually be used with our system. Its success lies in the development of the system itself with its bespoke design drawn up by a project team from a variety of disciplines across the business. This ranged from cleaning managers and operatives to ICT, mobile communications and Health and Safety specialists.

WCM: Was the journey from the idea of the system up until its implementation a smooth one?

Paul: Yes, despite a couple of very minor technical problems, it was. We invested in a six month development period, from the first project meeting to the trialling of the system, and involved all interested parties.

WCM: Are there other PDA systems out there similar to yours?

Paul: There are other PDA systems being used by other service providers but these are off-the-shelf and none have all the functionalities that we have built into ours. The OCS system is tailor-made to our business and fits the industry of window cleaning perfectly.

WCM: Are there any plans to market your system to other companies?

Paul: At the moment no, as this is a system which meets the unique needs of our business, clients and staff and clearly sets us apart from our competitors.

WCM: It sounds like a great idea on Health & Safety grounds. Do you use the system for none window cleaning activity too?

Paul: We use similar systems in other parts of the business. Our pest control service, for example, use PDAs to replace traditional paper based methods and set out work patterns in the most efficient and logical way. Other pest control companies have similar technologies but our PDA system is the first to have the capacity to automatically schedule regular visits.

With the PDAs our pest control teams can record levels of pest activity and formulate an accurate picture of pest cycles so that bespoke preventative programmes can be built. Customers can also benefit from a full suite that is customised.

PDAs are also used in our waste management, compliance and auditing operations.

WCM: Is there anything else you would like to get across to readers about the system or H&S in window cleaning.

Paul: In times of economic austerity, customers need to be able to rely on their cleaning provider to deliver not only quality and value for money but also a service which can be guaranteed to tick the boxes regarding Health and Safety, quality and environmental compliance, innovation and corporate responsibility.

Real evidence of continuous development in these areas should be high on the client's list when selecting a service provider.

WCM: Thanks Paul

Interview with Sean Burke

from Brodex

Brodex BMS has been around for many years. WCM decided to catch up with Sean Burke, company Director.

WCM: The window cleaning industry has changed so much over the years, all of it in positive ways. What got you into this industry and what was your original background?

Sean: As an industrial chemistry graduate I worked in the water treatment industry in London. As I became more experienced, and my confidence grew, I realised I could set up my own business, and after much hard work it grew to a successful nationwide company. I was very much 'hands on' with the day-to-day running and always discovering new areas to work within. It was probably just over ten years ago that I became aware of basic water filtration needs and the importance of pure water in the cleaning market. I saw what was on offer at the time as window cleaning products and really believed I could come up with something which was more efficient and engineered to a higher level.

I designed a filtration machine and launched it through magazine adverts and the feedback was great. The product started selling fast and I really enjoyed working on other products because of the technical nature. I was always trying to improve and develop everything I'd designed, and this side of the business just grew and grew. I realised I had the basis of a new company and split off the window cleaning products, which became Brodex Machine Services. I always felt that having a thorough and in-depth understanding of the chemistry of water and filtration gave me that added advantage over the other competitors at the time

WCM: What is a water treatment engineer?

Sean: A water treatment engineer is basically somebody who works with the chemical manipulation of water systems, including bacterial control, corrosion and general water quality improvements. A good engineer should be skilled in one, or all of these disciplines. There is a whole area of the job which fits very closely with the use of pure water and cleaning applications.

WCM: Where do you see the WFP market going in the future?

Sean: I feel that the old mystique and technicality of the pure water equipment manufactured and sold in this country is already becoming diluted and our customers are educated and know exactly what they need and why. This will make the equipment more of a commodity product rather than a specialised 'unknown'. Customers make better educated buying decisions and they will dictate exactly what they need, and we will help make it happen.

WCM: What is your best selling range and why?

Our van mounted machine range is the best seller. I think this might be because of the efficiency, reliability and



robustness of the product. It's a well thought out design and it gives that added strength because it's a one piece mould.

All systems are crash tested too, which helps! I'd say the medium sized systems are probably the highest volume sellers. Along with this, the best selling poles are the Hydra Aluminium range; this has proved to be a great success! We paid particular attention to the engineering and design when it came to tolerance and quality, which meant we could give a comprehensive 3 year guarantee along with them! It has also been our best seller in the international market; again, I'd say this is due to the engineering precision.... It's very well accepted.

WCM: Lee Burbidge has actually bought recently the 18ft Hydra Aluminium pole. He was impressed by its price at the cleaning show. What makes your poles and systems stand out from the rest?

Sean: Many of the products we sell today have over 10 years of heritage behind them. We constantly tweak, improve and upgrade, so basically its years worth of learning and engineering made into the range we have today.

I still love working on the technical aspects of the product and the team always collects feedback from customers. We then go off and test and trial new ways of improving the products.

WCM: What support system do you give to your customers?

We have a dedicated customer services team and dedicated account managers. This means our team really gets to know the customer in their care and their specific requirements, as it is a relationship built up over time. We also have engineers that go on site across the country to see customers if there is a problem which needs to be fixed. We keep a large stock holding of spare parts too because that's part of a commitment you make to your customer when you sell them a product – you are selling them a promise to help them through the lifetime of that product too.

WCM: Tell me about the green aspects of your systems?

A good example would be the two product ranges just mentioned. All of the alloy poles are 100% recyclable, as are the polypropylene bodies of the tanks. All resin vessel and filtration housings do not need to be disposed of either, as the cartridges and resin can be re-filled. We are always striving to reduce the amount of water used too, and have addressed this in two particular ways: misting heads for internal cleaning use minimal amounts of pure water, and eliminating chemicals used internally to clean buildings. And we have now come up with a range of machines that have zero waste water and do not result in the display of resin like the conventional RO system.

WCM: How reliable is your hot box and why? How many problems have you come across with heating elements?

Sean: Our hot box is basically a diesel powered central heating boiler used for yachts. It has been around for a long time and is made in Canada. Its reliability is very high, as the manufacturer gives us a two year full parts and labour warranty (which we pass onto our customers). It is the highest kW rating unit on the market and uses just under 1 litre of diesel per hour of usage, making it quite economical. Regarding failures, we are happy with the reliability of the unit but there is probably a 5% problem fault rate of various components within the system, but these are all easily addressed through the warranty. We have now just launched and completed the Flame buddy range which is a gas powered system already well proven in the market place to meet the needs of the water fed pole cleaner. We've added our own modifications and are able to provide this to the market place for a fifth of the price of the diesel powered model known as the 'Flame'. We believe that if the market gives us a chance to prove this product it will become standard kit across the nation.

WCM: Is it better to hold heated water in a reservoir or heat the water as it passes a heating element?

Sean: When the pump (12V) pumps warm or hot water this will always reduce the life of the pump. Sometimes they can even fail within weeks of pumping hot water from the reservoir, as they rely heavily on the cooling effect of the water pumped. When pumping hot water, the internal



resistance raises and the pumps can burn out, or certainly reduce in life span. Heating a large body of water long before it is actually used will always result in far more heat loss than heating the water across an element as it is being used. Heating the water as it is being used will result in a higher temperature because the amount of water per kW of direct heat is proportionally a lot less. However, with our system we combine the benefit of both applications by holding a 20 litre reservoir within the direct water heater. This provides a thermal buffer to maintain a constant temperature for the operator, as opposed to very hot or very cold.

WCM: How much importance do your customers hold when it comes to crash testing systems for safety?

Sean: Not enough. Whilst we feel that generally they understand the lengths that we have gone to show our systems are well designed with safety in mind, we still feel this should become more of a factor when making a purchasing decision. It's one of those things that is only ever really considered after the event!

WCM: How do you cater for the window cleaner just starting out with very little money?

Sean: We still feel that regardless of budget, this type of operator should endeavour to clean with purified water. As it's the purification aspect of the system that is generally the most expensive, we have put together a package that provides a glorified domestic drinking water system with a portable pumped trolley and one of our mid range aluminium poles for the grand sum of less than £700+vat. With this, the operator will be able to compete on quality, if not scale! It's up to him to address the needs of his local market, which is generally domestic. We do pride ourselves on being very educational and spend a lot of time trying to help. We go to extra lengths for virgin buyers too, as they need to make a decision that is right for their particular needs.

WCM: Sean, we would like to thank you for this interview. We look forward to hearing from you again regarding new products that Brodex will be releasing.



Ladder Work to Die For?

By Andrew Willis of Impact43

Let me tell you where I stand.

Amongst those who know me, I have a reputation as a straight talker. Perhaps at times I'm too straight for some people. But when it comes to working at height in general, and to ladder safety in particular, I don't think anyone could deny that I know my stuff.

Thousands of words have been written about working at height. However, it seems to me those words are often written by people who lack a clear understanding of statutory law: people who also sometimes appear to lack basic common sense!

I have common sense, and I feel comfortable with my knowledge of the current statutory legislation. But when it comes to writing an article, I feel myself immediately slipping into self-preservation mode. What if I misquote or get a fact incorrect? I'm only human after all.

But that isn't my real problem. My real problem is, although I'm confident and I know my stuff, the sheer mass of information and legislation on working at height makes writing this article a daunting task. So let's focus. Let's look at one particular area: the legislation covering the subject of safe access and egress to a flat roof or balcony.

Recently I read an article about this in Window Talk, published by the Federation of Window Cleaners. The article is by Simon Brownlee (who has the title of policy advisor / Environmental Health Officer) and it's nicely written – but it left me with several unanswered questions.

From what Simon says, it seems to me that if you're a window cleaner accessing flat roofs, you're likely to be breaking the law!

Mr Brownlee says: *“Where a leaning ladder is being used to access another level (e.g. a flat roof) it should be long enough so that it extends sufficiently (at least a metre) beyond the landing point to provide a handhold, unless other measures have been taken to provide a firm (secure) handhold. The balcony or flat roof also needs to be safe. (i.e. measures are taken where necessary to prevent falls from or through the roof or balcony). Leaning ladders used as a means of access should be tied. Where tying is not possible, alternative access equipment should be used. Where it is not reasonably practicable to tie a leaning ladder or use other equipment, then as a last resort the leaning ladder stiles could be wedged (against a wall or a heavy static weight). Each situation would need to be assessed on its merits.”*

He also stresses that ladders should only be used if working from the ground is not reasonably practicable. That is, if the use of more suitable work equipment *“is not justified because of the low-risk, short duration of use.”*

I'd like to shout something from that unprotected roof. My issue is this. I can't see how we can possibly comply with statutory law when we're climbing off a ladder onto a flat roof, then returning back to the ladder. At that time, we are not complying with statutory law! Think about the practical implications of the comment: *"measures are taken where necessary to prevent falls from or through the roof or balcony."*

For window cleaners to comply with this they would need to secure the ladder, tie off or weight the ladder at the bottom, tie and secure at the top – then have a fall protection system in place to allow the operative to be able to step onto the roof and back onto the ladder!

What fall protection systems might we use? If you cannot prevent the fall then legally you need to mitigate the effects of the fall.

Well, the Work at Height Basics Information Sheet 1 advises the use of "Airbags and Safety Nets" amongst other examples. Airbags?

Imagine Tommy and Bert, two domestic window cleaners, cleaning Mrs Brown's house for £20. "OK, Bert," says Tommy. "It's a flat roof job. Get the Airbags!"

Likely? I don't think so!

Let's imagine Tommy and Bert access the roof safely. They immediately have to assess additional hazards and risks like unprotected roof edges. What's the composition of the roof? Has it been checked to make sure it's structurally load-bearing?

It seems to me we will have to tell domestic residential window cleaners they can't access flat roof situations, because they are simply not going to apply the controls required. Commercial cleaners? Sorry, guys. If you can't apply all the controls, same thing applies.

We need simple advice, and perhaps this will come out of the Government's Löfstedt Review, which is to receive evidence on health and safety law reform. The Working at Height Regulations are, I'm glad to say, being re-examined.

For window cleaning these issues should be collectively debated and shared. Decisions should be driven by our trade association on behalf of members and general window cleaners.

Is it really that hard?

Let's look at the information we have to refer to so we can make sensible decisions. Imagine you have a bookcase in front of you with lever arch folders on it.



You have one labelled Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Go to General Duties of Employers to their Employees Section 2 (d):

"So far as is reasonably practicable as regards any place of work under the employer's control, the maintenance of it in a condition that is safe and without risks to health and the provision and maintenance of means of access to and egress from it that are safe and without such risks."

It's important to know that the definition of 'reasonably practicable' involves weighing risk against the money, time or trouble needed to control it.

I want you to put that folder back and take the next one, which has The Work at Height Regulations 2005 on the front.

Go to section six. Avoidance of risks from work at Height (3):

"Where work is carried out at height, every employer shall take suitable and sufficient measures to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, any person falling a distance liable to cause personal injury."

Reading on, you will find if you can't prevent a fall you need to provide sufficient work equipment to minimize the consequences. You must also: *"provide additional training and instruction, or take other additional suitable and sufficient measures to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, any person falling a distance liable to cause personal injury."*

Just this month a video clip went viral on YouTube showing a safety trainer for the maintenance group Morrison's demonstrating a ladder fall protection system. He ended up in a neighbour's front garden on his arse!

Work at Height Regulations 2005 clearly state you must Possess suitable and sufficient means for preventing a fall. You should also look at Schedule 6 (Requirements for Ladders).

Now put that folder away and go to the next one: Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER).

Part II General (4) Suitability of Work Equipment

"In selecting work equipment, every employer shall have regard to the working conditions and to the risks to the health and safety of persons which exist in the premises or undertaking in which that work equipment is to be used and any additional risk posed by the use of that work equipment."

You also read: *"Every employer shall ensure that work equipment is used only for operations for which, and under conditions for which, it is suitable."*

Under PUWER the key is that the equipment should be suitable for its purpose and you should be trained to use it:

"Regulation 9 —(1) Every employer shall ensure that all persons who use work equipment have received adequate training for purposes of health and safety, including training in the methods, which may be adopted when using the work equipment, any risks, which such use may entail, and precautions to be taken.

(2) Every employer shall ensure that any of his employees who supervises or manages the use of work equipment has received adequate training for purposes of health and safety, including training in the methods, which may be adopted when using the work

equipment, any risks, which such use may entail, and precautions to be taken."

Before sole traders challenge me, saying that I am referring to Employers and to their Employees, the reader should refer to Part I Introduction (3) Application: *"The requirements imposed by these Regulations on an employer shall also apply to a self-employed person, in respect of work equipment he uses at work."*

Over the last three years IMPACT43 has provided training and workshops to over 1500 candidates under the City and Guilds QCF (NVQ) Level 2 qualification and certification. A general survey of those candidates has shown 90% have not attended ladder training before, and therefore have not been certificated in the safe use of ladders. Moreover, 80% have not attended a water-fed pole training course before, so under PUWER 98 they were also trading illegally. We have noticed a positive change to the service delivery of those that complete the QCF certificate in the way they begin to manage risk.

So why risk personal injury for want of training?

Let's all get trained and certificated. Let's work safely. Let's remove liabilities on all and help to make window cleaning what it ought to be: a recognised, respected, professional occupation.

Safe use of portable ladders and water-fed pole systems

The FWC Safety training DVD "Safe use of portable ladders and water-fed pole systems" shows the importance of a thorough inspection of the site and of the equipment, as well as the importance of safety in securing the ladder and its correct use with an emphasis on the potential consequences.

Using these telescopic poles might seem like the ultimate solution, but they're not without their Dangers, in this short video, we'll aim to show you not only how to get the most out of your water-fed Pole system but how to keep you and the people around you safe.

This DVD compliments our existing IOSH accredited "Cleaning Windows Safely" training... and IOSH accredited Risk Assessment course. Making sure the information and training provided to our membership is of the highest standard.

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100% traditional 100% ladders

Here at WCM we wanted to talk to window cleaners who love to work from ladders.

We caught up with Richard and Pete of P&R Window Cleaners and asked them about their way of life.

Some of their answers are typical of many window cleaners and what they believe may be right or wrong.

WCM: You have been working together for the past 10 years. How have you managed to agree on things for all these years?

Pete: It's down to a good working relationship.

Rich: You have the odd disagreement on stuff but mainly like pricing we are not far off each other.

WCM: You guys are 100% ladder users. Does it bother you that statistics show serious injuries and deaths from the use of ladders are high in the window cleaning trade?

Pete: No.

Rich: Not at all.

WCM: Is that because you have not had an accident yet? Have you ever had an accident?

Pete: Personally, I have not.

Rich: I have had a couple of stumbles.

WCM: So it doesn't bother you that ladders can be dangerous then?

Pete: No, because as long as you are careful, ladders are not dangerous if you use them in the right way.

Rich: That is exactly right. They are only dangerous if you are not using them right. It is like a bloke using a drill - it is going to be dangerous in the wrong hands.

WCM: You have public liability insurance. Have you ever considered health insurance? What do you do if one of you is sick or can't get into work? After all, if you don't work you're not getting paid, right?

Pete: We both have a day off (laugh)

Rich: Yeah, we both have a day off (laugh); don't put that in the magazine.

But seriously, we have a system that works well. When one is off because of sickness, or even holidays for that matter, we pool the money and share it. Even if one is just working. We have been approached by a few insurance companies in the past but they always turn out to be quite a bit of money. We cover ourselves because most of the time one of us can work.

WCM: So you don't think health insurance is worth it?

Rich: No because we have this system where we look after each other, and besides, health insurance is usually too exact.

WCM: You mean that it is too specific such as it will only cover you for the loss of an arm or eye, as opposed to an ache in the arm or eye that would also prevent you from working?

Rich: That's right.

Pete: It is the fact that when you look into health insurance a bit more, when you pay your premiums you actually get nothing for it, really. If you break your back you might get 5K but you are out of work for the rest of your life. Overall, what you get out for the money when injury occurs is rubbish, I think.

WCM: So you think that the insurance is too particular, injuries too severe and pay-outs too low to benefit greatly. So you would say it was a waste of money?

Pete: Yes.

WCM: What would you say is the best part of your job?

Pete: Being your own boss!

Rich: Being out and about, meeting people, and the freedom to do the hours you want.

WCM: So you wouldn't work for anyone again?

Pete: Never! It's just the freedom at the end of the day. It's an outdoor lifestyle for me personally.

Rich: Yeah, I can't see myself working in an office. Being in charge of yourself is the top runner for us.

WCM: What motivates you the most then?

Pete: Just the job itself!

WCM: What is the worst part of your job?

Rich: I'd say winter! When it gets really cold, I hate it sometimes.

Pete: Winter is not much fun but you get by. You just have to dress up warm and don't let your hands get cold.

WCM: What gloves do you use?

Pete: Seal skins.

WCM: Have they lasted you well? Some gloves split or let water in after a short while.

Pete: These have lasted me two years, so two winters. They were about twenty something pounds.



WCM: So you've got your gloves. Do you ever put anti-freeze in your bucket?

Pete: We tried it last year. It seemed to work and the windows have not fallen out yet (laugh).

WCM: Any other parts of the job you think are bad?

Rich: Awkward customers, and I dislike collecting too. Awkward customers can be people that don't pay regularly or ask you to do extra jobs and not expect to have to pay you for them.

WCM: How do you tackle non-paying customers? Do you stop cleaning after the third month until you get paid?

Pete: Every customer is different. We have some customers that we only see once a year and they always pay when we see them. There are more good things about our job than bad things. That's why we love window cleaning.

WCM: What would you say your percentage of work is between domestic and commercial work?

Pete: We would say 75% domestic and 25% commercial. Domestic work is a lot easier to get than commercial.

There is also more work involved in getting commercial, whereas the domestic is more immediate.

Rich: Houses are also word of mouth. It's a lot easier to build up a domestic round for sure.

WCM: When you started your business, how did you get new customers?

Rich: We both knocked doors and dropped leaflets. Personally I think door knocking is best.

Pete: I don't agree. For me leafleting was better.

Rich: But Pete, the success rate was far better. We would walk away from knocking with about 7 new customers.

Pete: We knocked on one estate, Rich, and that was pretty much the only estate we knocked on. We canvassed with leaflets all the local villages around us. Now look at those various villages, some take us three days to clean and we didn't knock one door!

Rich: In some of these villages we heard a rumour that a window cleaner was retiring, so that may have helped. I remember in one village walking for miles leafleting and we did not get a single call. Well, door knocking is still best in my eyes.

WCM: This is why you have to try different things until one actually works for you. Some potential customers might keep your leaflet and not actually call you for months. Also, some leaflet designs work and some don't, so you would have to experiment.

Pete: Next time, I would rather leaflet than knock doors, simply down to time. You cover more houses leafleting than knocking.

WCM: Have you employed someone to help out before and what is your experience of this?

Rich: We have tried a few.

Pete: Yeah, mostly friends or family.

WCM: How does that work out?

Pete: Not very well. We will definitely advertise for an experienced window cleaner in future. We have not found the right person yet.

Rich: Personally, I think it takes a good couple of years before you have all the experience on quality and speed etc.

WCM: What do you think about the new regulations surrounding working at height? The essence of this is that you should not use ladders as a first choice but explore alternative ways of cleaning windows at height first.

Pete: The last course I went on 3 or 4 years ago had a thing called the 3 minute rule. Is that still allowed? We would like to know what the current rules are. We will certainly keep reading WCM for this type of information.

WCM: Rich, let me ask you first as you have used WFPs only a handful of times. What do you think of the WFP system?

Rich: I have not got that much experience of it but what I do know is it would be brilliant on commercial but rubbish on houses.

WCM: Why would it be rubbish on houses?

Rich: Because of the amount of water needed and all the hoses everywhere. Sometimes you have to jump over gates or fences and then you have to jump back over to switch the water on. I have not used it much but I have had ago. Plus in the summer with open windows and all the messing around getting poles and kit out, in that time you could of whacked a ladder up and have done it!





WCM: You can get little trolleys to help you get around the back of houses and you can work a lot more independently than if you were connected to a van mount.

Rich: It's still pulling and lugging water around. It sounds more trouble.

WCM: Some window cleaners use back packs too. The concept of working with WFPs, what benefits do you think it sells?

Rich: Go on....

WCM: A safer way to clean windows, faster than traditional window cleaning, do more work in a day. Do you believe any of that?

Rich: I think so.

WCM: Do you think your customers would like it?

Rich: You see, there's another thing. No I don't think so because some would complain about the water all over the place.

WCM: A lot of this is about having experience with WFPs and educating customers. Maybe once you have explained the first clean then subsequent cleans you could use less water. Do you think you could do a better finish with traditional rather than WFP?

Rich: Finish? Defiantly, it's hands on isn't it. I would say so, yes.

WCM: Pete, same questions to you. You have a lot of experience with WFPs.

Pete: I think Rich has covered quite a bit of it all ready, but there is something I would like to add to that. I have

used it on commercial and to be honest it is ideal. You can't get ladders on some of the heights of some commercials, so it is perfect for that. For domestics; I have not used it on domestics so I don't really know. Some of the points Rich has covered seem a little awkward. Having said that, surely for the backs of properties you could just take your ladders anyway and just WFP for the fronts.

WCM: Actually some window cleaners choose to use WFPs on top windows only and traditionally clean the bottoms.

Pete: Yes, that might work. I have not used WFP on our domestics but I have spoken to window cleaners who do and swear by it. One guy, Phil, has got two

vans out there now and he would not go back to traditional cleaning. So for that reason and pretty much that reason only, I think it is the way forward.

WCM: Way forward? So what would make you change now to WFP on your domestic work?

Pete: It's the price of the initial set up. It would cost us 1000s. There is no point in putting one of these systems into a £500 van, so it means a new van too.

WCM: What would you say if I told you that you could do it with just a few hundred pounds?

Pete: Yeah but you would need to buy a new van or trailer etc.

WCM: There is a guy that writes for WCM, you may know him as Wagga. He goes out in his car. He has put together his own trolley system that folds down and he puts it in the back of his hatch back with several 25L jerry cans of pure water. His pole is on the roof rack.

Pete: Yeah, I guess there is cheaper ways of doing it.

WCM: So you worry that it will be expensive?

Rich: It is, compared to a ladder and bucket! That is probably the most off putting thing about it. If we had loads of spare cash then I would probably look at this.

Pete: Yeah, we would.

WCM: So you would worry about the extra costs of the filters too? You don't have this with ladders.

Rich: That does make a difference. It would also be a scary change because you would have to tell customers that their windows might look rubbish for one or two

cleans. Also, WFP might be good on normal UPVC windows but I think it wouldn't be as effective on some leaded windows or wooden and stressed windows. You know, with paint peeling etc.

WCM: So you would agree that the WFP is just another tool in the window cleaner's tool box. In other words, you would use ladders to get the finish on certain windows but would consider using WFP for other windows wherever you can be safe or access permits?

Rich and Pete: That's right.

WCM: Thank you boys!

WCM wants you to stay safe should you choose to use ladders so we have added links on ladder information for your safety.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.pdf>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg402.pdf>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/misc613.pdf>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/index.htm>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/ladders.htm>

http://www.laddersafetydevices.co.uk/products_list.asp

<http://www.ladderfix.co.uk>

<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osh3124.pdf>



Lee Burbidge says: In my eyes, Pete and Rich are happy using their ladders. But they would consider using WFPs if they had the spare cash or if they could find the confidence to explain how cleaning with pure water works to a potentially sceptical customer.

I was walking to the entrance of a school the other day. I was asked to quote the windows of it for the local authority. As I was getting closer to the school I noticed a 100% traditional window cleaner. I ran over to him in

order to say 'hi' and ask him a couple of questions. He was at the top of a ladder as I approached, blading off a skylight on a terrace house front using an Unger pole as the windows were tall. He wouldn't give me his name at first and in a typical guarded way he began to slowly warm to my questioning.

Moments before, as I was parking my car, I saw him lugging a ladder over a garage that was at the back of a terrace house, obviously the only access to the rear for that property. I wanted his views on WFP vs. ladders. His views were simple. Why over complicate window cleaning? The equipment is too expensive and he has seen too many window cleaners get into debt by buying systems. He also raised his exposure to liability claims with having trip hazards everywhere.

I think window cleaning is a great industry and a great living. This article proves the wide variety of opinions that exist in the industry today.



To discuss this topic
press this button

Art for profit

Your van can act as a moving billboard to promote your window cleaning services. We look at the best way to get your message across.

When choosing a van, naturally you will carefully consider payload and load space capacities to work out which van suits your needs. Savvy business owners will also think about how they can best transform their vehicle (or fleet) into a mobile advertising billboard for their services. This is where livery comes in, and there is more to it than getting the local sign writer to scrawl the company's name and number on the side of the van.

There is the choice between a full or partial wrap, standalone cut out graphics, and digital print on colour or transparent vinyl. Every van on the road is an ambassador for your company. Whether the wrap partially or completely covers the van's surface, the graphics can be digitally printed from artwork images for advertising purposes. Another option is to change the colour of the van with colour vinyl as a more cost effective and reversible alternative to a re-spray. Either way, the vinyl is heated and stretched over every contour of the van's surface to conform to its shape.

Remember, you will need to take extra care removing a wrap. Although it can usually be relied upon to protect paintwork from sun, rain and salt damage, as well as minor abrasions, if the correct amount of heat and pressure is not used when stripping off the vinyl it can cause damage.

It normally takes between 7 and 14 days to livery a vehicle after artwork has been approved, depending on what you have chosen. Costs also depend on the models concerned, the complexity of the design and how long the wrap needs to stay on.

The durability of the vinyl is an important consideration too. Some companies use products from 3M, Avery and Metamark, and you can expect these wraps to last for up to 5 years. Liquid and overlay laminates can be used to protect wrap against abrasive cleaning products and general wear and tear.

Most livery specialists can produce graphics from a client's own designs or carry out the design itself on the customer's instructions. However, presenting the livery company with ready-made artwork is likely to reduce costs. Some companies use templates to draw up graphics, taking into account the van's contours.

The choice between a full wrap and individual lettering often comes down to your budget. Nevertheless, businesses are increasingly opting for bright, bold, full



An example of a partial wrap with stand alone graphics

colour wraps to turn their corporate vehicles into moving advertisements. Basic single colour lettering can start from £100, whereas a complex wrap can cost up to £2500.

Making your livery an effective ad tool

Avoid using typefaces that are script fonts and stick to clean lines to ensure the text is easy to read when the van is out on the road. Colours should be chosen based on the colour of the van, but generally it is advisable to look for a strong contrasting tone. For example, yellow lettering will not work on a white van, but yellow can be very effective on a black background.

Some people are still wary about colour change wraps and need to be convinced that they are not 'cheap paint jobs'. Nevertheless, the two overriding concerns related to livery are downtime and the time it takes to carry out the application, which affects the cost of labour. If you have one or more vans in your fleet then you should carefully consider the cost of downtime as part of the livery price.

For a paint job, you can expect vans to be off the road for seven days, whereas for a wrap this can be cut to two days. Lead times can also be reduced from up to eight weeks to one or two weeks.

The costs are £30 - £40 per panel for a cut text (approx.) and flat panel livery with a mid-grade three to five year vinyl.

A vehicle wrap, colour change or full printed design wrap on a MVB high-roof Ford Transit would probably come in at around £1150 - £1450. It is advised that you should always use vinyl manufacturer-approved companies and for full or part-wraps you should go to Avery, 3M or Hexis-approved centres.

Making it work

- Make it clear what you do – preferably with an image.
- Prominently display your brand name.
- Include your website address.

Prolong the life of your livery

- Do not wash the van for a week after the graphics have been applied.
- Do not use a jet power wash to clean the graphics area.
- Hand wash the vinyl with a soft sponge

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No more keeping one hand on a trigger, reaching down to find your tap, getting wet trousers from leaking belt taps or annoying hose loops from a trigger setup. Wipe sills down on top floor windows once the water flow is off.

SAVES TIME

Spend less time messing about locating, bending down and turning off taps or waiting for your remote control to kick in.

Opportunity to increase your flow rate because of the water you save and work faster!

SAVES WATER

Flow control is instant meaning you can even switch off water between windows. Our users say they are saving between 60 and 150 litres a day!

Answers environmental concerns about water wastage!

SAVES MONEY

One user is in the process of reducing his 1000 litre tanks to 650 litres. Smaller vans equal cheaper tax, servicing, running costs and more importantly than ever, a reduction in fuel costs. Not to forget water processing and metering costs!

MAKES PROFIT

Extra water in your tanks gives you an opportunity to do extra jobs in the day.

Many Aqua-dapter users claim to be able to complete an extra 4-5 jobs per day.

FIND OUT MORE AT WWW.AQUA-DAPTER.CO.UK



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Golden Nuggets of business tips and advice

Create a killer business with this tip bit on focus

How much of your 'work' time do you spend running your business?

How much of your 'work' time do you spend on strategic work?

Most small business owners spend 100% on running their business and 0% on strategic work. So what's the difference?

Running your business:

Quoting, putting out flyers, paying bills, collecting money, window cleaning, training staff, and I am sure you can think of a lot more!

Strategic work:

Creating a marketing plan, analysing marketing results, improving the staff training system, developing a plan, implementing better payment methods for clients, improving your marketing material, and working on the vision of your company and spreading this to your staff.

Running your business will keep your business where it is. Growth will be as fast or as slow as it is right now.

Strategic work will separate you from every other small business owner and lead you to being an actual business owner, as opposed to just being self-employed. The difference is in what you spend your time on, not how much time you 'work'. Get focused on things that will actually grow your business.

Grow your business and increase profits without finding new customers!

What a sweeping statement – I know!

Many of us focus on finding new customers. After all, your business always needs topping up, or if you plan to expand profits you need to get the profits from somewhere.

The easiest way to increase profits is by raising your prices. Der! That is a no-brainer I hear you say, but actually you would be surprised how many fear the idea of increasing prices. The fear is that the customers will fall away in droves when in actual fact they are more likely to turn around and say "about time". Honestly, no one will complain!

So don't put off increasing prices and don't let year on year inflation eat away at your profits!

Other ways to increase your profits without getting new customers is to increase the frequency of cleans. Moving from cleaning windows once every calendar month to every 4 weeks will make a hell of a difference to your annual turnover.

Another way of increasing profits is through add on jobs. These can range from gutter clearing to conni roof cleans and UPVc cleans, to name but a few. This golden nugget is more for the newbies. I don't want to teach the veterans how to suck eggs!

Who is sucking your window cleaning business dry?

I was thinking back to the early days of my window cleaning business. I remember one of the biggest drains on my business finances was.....me!

If the business made £20,000 (or \$) profit, then I made £20,000. If the business made £80,000 profit, then I made £80,000. The more the business grew, the more my 'luxurious' lifestyle grew. So it didn't matter if I was making £20,000 or £200,000, I sucked every last penny out of the business and spent it on me.

What I should have been doing was setting a low budget for my 'wage'. That's right, a wage! Don't drain every penny out of your business. Set an amount that will be the same each week that you will pay yourself. Everything extra will stay in the business.

This helps in many ways. Firstly, have you ever noticed how hard it is to set a personal budget with a small business? This is because your income changes from week to week. By setting the amount and then reviewing it every 2-12 months, you'll be able to know what your income will be each week.

Some weeks you will have a down week in the business, but that's ok because the business will have enough funds from the good weeks to be able to pay you.

Secondly, by not draining your business of every penny, you'll be able to build a profit into your business. You can then use this profit to test marketing ideas, invest in new equipment, and employ more staff. Whatever it is, you'll have a surplus to be able to pay for things, and when those unexpected bills come in, the business will be able to pay for them without you having to take it out of your personal income.

Just make sure that when you set your wage you don't increase it every time you get more business. Keep your wage the same and let the business take the profits.

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Are you straight or do you swivel?

By Simon Sherwood

If you were to ask this question to an ordinary kind of person you would probably be greeted with a bemused look, or even worse. They might start whistling and look the other way. In the world of window cleaning though, especially in the world of water fed poles, this question means something entirely different.

For years the traditional window cleaner has been able to buy squeegees that have the ability to swivel. Take the wagtail squeegee, you just simply twist the handle and the squeegee blade turns to the left or right. For the past few years there has been a small contingency of water fed pole window cleaners that have been trying to do the same thing with their brushes. Various innovators and companies have stepped up to the challenge, but not many have succeeded.

Why would you want to make your brush dance around on the end of your pole in the first place? Quite simply, because you can always make your brush sit squarely on the window, no matter where you stand in relation to the window. Big deal, you might think, but just consider some of the benefits that this gives.

Think of those windows above conservatories or extensions that you can only get to side-on. With a fixed gooseneck or angle adapter you end up having to clean the brickwork surrounding the window as well as the window. Not a massive problem, you might say, but it can contaminate the brush and therefore affect the finished results. Especially if you're a bit of an OCD sufferer, this can present a problem. With a swivel, the brush never needs to touch that dirty brickwork again.

How about those gardens that have a network of washing lines that almost seem to be set up with the sole purpose of stringing up the window cleaner. Well no longer do you have to lower your pole under the washing line, just to get to the next window. In fact, without moving your legs at all you can clean 3 or more windows in a row. Yes, I have to admit that using a swivel is making me a little lazy, as whenever possible I try not to walk between the windows.

Even cleaning ground floor windows is made easier. No longer do you have to hold the pole above your head whilst standing on tip toes next to a french door just to get the corners. Again, the brush will always get to the extremities of the window without washing the wall.

All of this comes with a few drawbacks. To begin with, a swivel on the end of your pole adds weight, albeit just a few grams, but right at the place that you least want it, on the end of your pole. The other disadvantage is that whilst a swivel provides a pivot so



that you can position the brush at the angle you like, it also adds a little instability, and depending on the swivel, also unwanted flex.

The swivel deserves a place in every water fed pole's toolbox, but it isn't to be over used. Due to the drawbacks, larger commercial properties are cleaned faster with rigid lighter goosenecks. But on domestic, and especially small domestic windows the swivel comes into its own and for many will cut down cleaning time.

Gardiners' solution to the swivel

This brings me to the Gardiners newly released quick release resi-neck with swivel. For the past few years I've been screwing a universal swivel onto a standard angle adapter, as have many fellow swivellers. But now Gardiners have cleverly morphed the two together. How does it fair?

As you would expect of a product from Gardiners, it's as light as can be, shaving off nearly 40 grams from the previous combination of parts needed to make a swivel but about twice as heavy as the standard

Gardiners carbon gooseneck. The product feels quality, the plastic seems tough, but only time will tell how it will last, although it does look promising.

The resi-neck is quick release in more than one way. Not only can it be swapped in seconds with Gardiners' quick release neck system, you can also adjust the angle of the neck in moments with a clamp that looks not dissimilar to the pole clamps on the SLX CLX range of poles. The clamp is shaped so that when closed it hugs the angel adapter closely - very nice! It just makes the product look nicer and brings an air of quality that you wouldn't normally associate with a window cleaning tool. Also, the angle of the neck is already preset to what most window cleaners would use. In other words, it looks as though there is a crook in the neck of the angle adapter. Surprisingly, this works very well.



Example of a fixed gooseneck touching dirty brickwork

the old style angle adapters that used to pinch the hose and look unsightly due to being drilled out, the update is a very welcome sight indeed.



Pictures of the standard Resi-neck with no swivel and the old style swivel

As for the swivel itself, it's made from two separate pieces of plastic, held together with a locking bolt nut set. This is a very good idea, as you can easily slacken or tighten the swivel to suit your taste, or even the weight of your brush. The swivels I've used in the past come in the form of ball and socket joints. These do get stiff over time and are eventually unusable, but Gardiners' design looks like it will last a lot longer. Again, time will be the true test.

There is also a neat hole incorporated into the resi-neck for the pole hose to feed down into the pole. This may not sound like a big deal, but compared to

The swivel on the resi-neck seems to be extreme as well. You get nearly 180 degrees of pivot, which is far more than the standard universal swivel joints. In use, the brush moves only in the directions that you need it to: left and right. It swivels but it doesn't flex up and down.

Could Gardiners have made this product any better? Maybe if they had made it from some superlite space age material that cost a few thousand pounds per gram. No, in all seriousness, if you are into swiveling then you will most probably love this beauty; and if you're not then maybe if you spend a little time playing with this swivel, you might just turn.

Product Development vs “Real World Testing”

“In the beginning” we made the Aqua-dapter® Mk1, and you had to cut your pole (or heat up the glue and remove the end screw) to fit it.

Why? Well, the push-fit connector was too big to fit through the “hose through” type end screw on a Water Fed Pole, so taking out the end screw meant the connector could move freely; it also meant that the Aqua-dapter could fit to any pole section with an outside diameter of 20-23.5mm - nearly every No.1 section on the market - without needing any other fittings.

Looking back, as a new company with a brand new product and concept it's amazing we sold as many of those as we did, but they sold pretty well, even though a few people were (understandably) dubious about cutting the pole.

We quickly realized that if the Aqua-dapter could be fitted to a pole without any cutting or heating needed it would be far more popular, and that quickly led to the development of the “Mk2”:

Although we had tested the Mk1 extensively with quite a few Window Cleaners, nothing substitutes for feedback from “real-world” users, and in the months leading up to the release of the Mk2 we had picked up a lot of comments that led to improvements in the new design, not least changing the shape of the body to allow the Aqua-dapter to be retro-fitted very easily,

and without modification, to virtually any residential pole.

Improvements:

- widened the end of the body; this meant it could be used with new parts an “End Screw Adapter” or “Brodex Collar Adapter”.
- changed the plastic used to a high impact engineering plastic • increased the thickness of the trigger and the side body, strengthening the whole unit.
- upgraded the rivets to improve the end screw fixing
- reduced tolerances to remove the possibility of any ‘play’ of the end screw when in use
- chamfered trigger edge to reduce wear, help the tap to turn and the trigger to return upright
- shoulders added to the carriage inside the Aqua-dapter to minimize rotation of the carriage inside the body, and improve performance of the mechanism.
- changed the pipe material used in the Aqua-dapter to Aluminium, making the Mk2 suitable for use with hot water systems.

<http://blog.aqua-dapter.co.uk/2010/11/the-aqua-dapter-mk2-is-now-available/>

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aqua dapter

So, around 5 months after the first Mk1s went out, we released the Mk2. Some people thought this was a gimmick, as we'd got it out so soon, and we heard jokes that soon we'd be on something like the "Mk38"!!! But although there have been a few other small tweaks and improvements along the way, so far we're still on the Mk2.

The Mk2 has been very reliable and popular with our customers. In a recent survey we got 95% positive feedback, 60% rating it as "excellent". We contacted the other 5% and sorted out their issues, so we hope for even better results in the future.

[What do our customers think of the Aqua-dapter?](#)

Our hose is also new to most users, and takes a couple of days to get used to, but we got 91% positive feedback for our orange hose in our survey.

[Aqua-dapter hose - the verdict](#)

Customers are eagerly anticipating a "Mk3"... I can't give out any secrets about that yet, but we're taking on board all of the comments we receive and if/when a "Mk3" is released I'm sure it will be even more popular. Don't let that stop you trying out the Mk2 though! We've recently reduced the price of the Aqua-dapter, and you can use the code WCM2 to get a further 10% off your first purchase from our website. If a "Mk3" comes out any time soon, we'll have an upgrade offer

We offer a 1 month money-back guarantee, so you can try it and send it back if for any reason you don't like it.

For more information about the Aqua-dapter®,

visit www.aqua-dapter.co.uk
email sales@aqua-dapter.co.uk

or call Aqua-dapter Sales on 0844 272 3990.

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Available April 2012



How not to clean windows

Professional window cleaner or circus act?

Is it time to give scrims a miss?

by Wagga

For years, most window cleaners have used the humble scrim to detail and polish up those leaded windows. It generally works just fine, so if it 'ain't broke' then why fix it? Because there is a 'new kid' on the block. This comes in the form of a much improved microfibre cloth. So what's the difference between scrim and microfibre? Is there really any advantage to making the change?

I got sent two large microfibre cloths in the post from a friend who swore by them. On the day they arrived, I eagerly tore at the large envelope in which resided two large blue microfibre cloths. The first thing that struck me was the silky shine that the cloths possessed and also how smooth they felt, so different from the 'towel' feel of ordinary cloths or the course 'sack-cloth feel' of scrim.

The shiny look to the cloths immediately made me sceptical as to whether or not they would be absorbent enough, or even capable of polishing up glass in an effective way. They just didn't look like they could hack it.

The size of the cloths was excellent, coming in at approximately 77cm x 62cm or 38" x 24". The brand on the tag was 'Ramon'. The size of a scrim, on the other hand, is about 84cm x 77cm or 38" x 24", so the size was very similar, the scrim being a bit larger.

That afternoon my son and I decided on a trial run to put these new microfibre cloths to the test. Once we got started we were pleasantly surprised to find that they were indeed absorbent enough, but also the perfect size to handle. My scepticism was immediately dispelled.

Detailing work was accomplished with ease and without a doubt they performed as good, if not better than scrim. But it was a revelation to find out how well this new cloth performed when used to polish the dreaded leaded light window or any window that required a polish instead of WFP or the traditional soap method with a blade. Where scrim, as good as it is, will often leave lint (minute particles of fibre) on the glass after polishing the window, the new blue microfibre left nothing. Results were seriously good.

Of course, much will depend on the user, but as long as this cloth is used in the correct way, such as making sure you change it frequently, especially when it gets wet (this applies to scrim as well), then the results are without a doubt superior.

I'm going to get me a whole bunch of 'em. Recommended by Wagga.

Should you make the change? Is scrim dead? Well if you still have a big pile of scrims and are happy with the results then keep on using them, but as soon as they need replacing, go for this new type of cloth. It's ready to go and worth the money. Not only that, you won't have to break in scrim ever again.



Blue is hot by Lee Burbidge

For ages my window cleaning friends had been banging on at me about this new cloth. 'Lee, I don't believe it, dude, you're still on the old scrim!!', they would say.

It was true, for the past decade or so scrim cloth had been my only choice for detailing after window cleaning traditionally. They had told me about this new cloth and how great it was for some time, but as always, we get a little stuck in our ways and it can take a while for us to change our habits or methods that we have tried and tested.

After a few times, just to shut them up and with mild interest but with slightly more curiosity, I took one off them to give it a go.

I am ashamed to say it hung around the van for a while unused. It wasn't until I hired a young man called Sam that things changed.

After a few days, Sam would complain about the scrim I gave him to work with and the subject of these blue cloths came up again. "They are brilliant Lee. I am used to them for giving me a good finish. We used nothing else in the last company". In the end I took Sam to a supplier and ordered a box of 10. I said I would give it a go. So we now had 11, including the one from my friend before.

The moment I started to use them, I could tell the difference straight away. They seemed to soak up water with no smudges and 1 cloth ended up doing 3 and 4 times as many houses as I could do with scrim!! Even wiping off water drops was easy with no smears.

Of course, the more dirty you get the cloths the higher the probability there is of leaving a mark on the glass (that goes without saying), but they last way longer and unlike scrim, which leaves smears as soon as it starts getting wet, this does not.

The other added benefit of this cloth is the laundry aspect of it. Years ago I found putting my scrim through the home washing machine blocked the filter with fibres and would leave fibres in the drum that would transfer to your dark clothing after doing the next clothes wash.

Because of this I used to take my scrim to an industrial launderette. This was great for the home washing machine and it meant that I would wait for a good pile of dirty scrim to get the most out of the washing machine.

Of course, I had to buy more scrim.

Am I feeling blue?

by Richard Lingford

I was kindly sent these blue cloths to try. I was told to have a look at them and give my honest opinion, as several other window cleaners rate them highly.

So I used them and here are the results.

The cloths are meant to be used in the same way as scrim and microfibres for the detailing of traditionally cleaned windows. Now over many years, window cleaners have been introduced to various 'lint free' cloths which promise to be the next best thing; surgical towels, huck towels, beer towels, scrim, and more recently micro fibres. I believe scrim in all its multidirectional woven pure Irish lineal greatness is by far the greatest tool a window cleaner can have for detailing windows. I think you would have to go a long way to beat a well broken-in piece that is nice and soft and full of holes.

Even the mighty microfibre is quick to dampen on the job, so you can imagine my scepticism in using these new detailing cloths. But as I was asked to do so, I worked with them and to be honest I haven't stopped since!

The best way to describe these cloths is that they are a large version of the small cloth that comes free in your glasses case, only heavier; the perfect size for window cleaning really. "Now that will get wet really quickly!" I hear you say. Well my friends, I can tell you that this is not the case. They seem to stay dryer for far longer than scrim and are effective until they are pretty soaking.

So how about the job? I was using them the same way as I would use scrim, one damp and one dry, and let me tell you they are great! They glide around the edge of the window detailing perfectly, making it easy for even the most unskilled window cleaner to leave no smears whatsoever, even in direct sunlight. I have found scrims can leave some fibres on the glass.

The cloths, I am sure, will become a must have for all window cleaners. The only downside I can see is the £5 price tag.



*To discuss
these articles
on blue cloths
press this*

The World's Fastest Window Cleaner

Terry 'Turbo' Burrows says...

Luck is a funny old thing. Last year, for example, I placed a bet on four horses. To my complete amazement, all of the horses I placed a bet on won! This netted me a staggering £41,439!! Safe to say I was celebrating for a while after.

Another day I drove into a petrol station, filled up my car and made my way to the payment point to pay for the fuel. I walked up to the till, the floor was wet, and before I knew it I was flying up into the air, coming crashing down really hard on the floor. My back was in pain. The floor was wet and there was no 'wet floor' sign to be seen. My back still hurts me today.

Luck is never certain to be good or bad, but when it's bad it can turn out to be really bad. Luck is just as unpredictable when it comes to ladders. You can be window cleaning for years and never really experience any accidents, but equally you may experience one. Sometimes one accident is all it takes to stop you earning for months, years or forever.

I'm not against ladders, I have used them all my life and they have earned me a good living over the years. I do think that if you choose to use ladders or have your employees use ladders then proper training must be given and a risk assessment carried out. If you are a sole trader you still have responsibilities to yourself and the people around you, but it's not so bad. If you employ people then your exposure to risk is greater. One good idea is to keep records of all your training, including records of your ladder checks.

Fortunately for me, there is no ladder work involved in the speed cleaning of my record breaking events; although I do think I need a parachute sometimes like those drag race cars.

Stay lucky, stay safe. Come and see me at Windex 2012.

Terry



Traditional Window Cleaner Using Ladders

Getting Insurance

Since the changes to the **Working at Height Regulations** in 2005 more and more window cleaners have purchased waterfed pole systems to carry out the majority of their work. But have they completely stopped using ladders? The likelihood is that window cleaners still need to use ladders for access and not all window cleaners can completely eradicate the use of ladders from their day to day routine.

What effect does this have on their insurance? Generally none if they work as a sole trader as most **window cleaning insurance** policies will provide cover for working to heights of 15m or less. Therefore if the use of a ladder is needed for access then their **window cleaners insurance** policy is still valid. However, for bigger businesses that employ staff, the use of ladders can increase the premiums that they are asked to pay.

Falls from height

Falls from height remain the most common cause of workplace fatality. In 2008/09 there were 35 fatalities, 4654 major injuries and a further 7065 injuries that caused the injured person to be off work for over 3 days or more, due to a fall from height. Not all of these were window cleaners, but with the window cleaning industry employing over 100,000 in the UK in 2010 they are responsible for between 3-5% of these statistics.

Consequently insurance premiums are more expensive where employees are using ladders, which therefore

increases the chance of an Employers Liability Insurance claim being made. If you employ staff your premium is based on either the number of staff or your approximate wage bill for the staff. The lower the percentage of your work from ladders, the cheaper your premium.

Don't be put off by stories you may hear on the internet or from other window cleaners – The fact is that **insurance for window cleaning** using ladders is still available and until (if ever) ladders are banned, it will continue to be available. Despite what you might have read in the past, ladders are not banned and you can still obtain **window cleaning insurance** if you use them.

You can request a quote for **window cleaning insurance** from GLEAMING INSURANCE online or you can contact us on:

01257 424420 or 0845 474 0068 (local rate).



The D.I.Y. Trolley System

So you have your pump box from the last issue (ideal to take inside in the cold)

You can attach it to a trolley (either for the odd job that your hose cannot reach, or you might just be wanting to try the WFP route)

This would be ideal if you are a trad window cleaner still working from an estate car, you can give WFP a whirl at minimal expense (I still use my trolley for 90 % of my work) they fold down really small and will fit behind a seat

So you will need :

A sack truck

(I like the HEAVY DUTY foldable type, they are about £25 on ebay)

A 25 L barrel(s)

(more on these later)

A Battery

(I use an old recycled car battery from a back street garage, they are not good enough to start a car, but for us, they work great, using them are green and they are free) you can just go and buy a small car battery from a motor spares place though

A battery charger

A battery box

(£10 from ebay)

2 straps

(One for the pump box and the other to keep the barrel on)

Thats it, I place the battery on the sack truck plate and then the barrel on top of that

Now back to the barrels, you can find these for £5 if you go online. Many people online have reported success in getting them for free from car wash's, they just throw them away.



Window cleaner's call to stop commen

We at WCM came across this story

A concerned window cleaner is warning householders they could face expensive legal action if they pay uninsured workers to clean their windows. Matthew Softley, 39, who trades as the Window Man, says these cleaners can often be much cheaper but can leave residents with extra costs if they cause injury or damage. He wants to set up a scheme where residents can access the names and contact details of legitimate window cleaners.

He said, "If you have got any offers to clean your house for under £10, I would seriously question them and if they cannot give satisfactory answers or produce any paperwork, avoid them like the plague. The main thing I have been trying to tell people is with these guys there is no way on earth they are going to have any form of insurance. If you have got uninsured tradesman on your house and they injure a member of the public, the member of the public can sue the householder. Also, if an uninsured tradesman is on your house and he wants to put in a claim against you because he has injured himself and he isn't insured, he can sue the householder."

Mr Softley said people can ask to see an insurance document, which should state that the worker is insured to clean windows, including with the use of a ladder if that person has a ladder. He said residents can call the insurance provider to check that it is legitimate and still in date. He said people should be particularly wary of window cleaners who do not have contact details and will only be paid in cash.

Mr Softley, of Abbey Meads, said rogue window cleaners are rife across Swindon and often target vulnerable and elderly people on council estates. He said, "Some of these window cleaners have got whole areas sewn up and a lot of the people in these areas are just getting ripped off because the quality of the work is disgusting. A lot of the old dears who are having this work done think you are trying to poach them but they are absolutely terrified of change or confrontation with anyone. I have been window cleaning for about a year and a half and it is predominantly on council estates where this is going on."

Councillor Paul Baker (Labour, Penhill) is backing Mr Softley's plans for the scheme to protect residents. He said, "Then you know you have a recognised and respectable person doing the job and there's no fear of anybody, especially elderly people, getting ripped off."

The comments left on this story

Goocy says: *"In other words, he is saying let me clean your windows instead of the other cheaper options who are taking my potential customers."*

WCM says: *"But, Mr Softley does raise important issues."*

Could B says: *"I can see what you mean, it does seem a bit like an advert using an undertone of creating a level of fear in the marketplace. That said, the guy does have a point. Window cleaning, because anyone can do it, has long been a favoured means for benefit cheats and others to top up their income. All cash payments, establish a 'little sector' (often old people) and you have a steady, reliable income for a couple of days work per week. Problem is, no insurance, they're not paying tax and they will often not do a very good job. It is right that elderly and timid people have some level of protection from scam artists, although how that can actually be provided in reality is anyone's guess."*

WCM says: *"Well put Could B, but we do disagree with the comment that anyone can window clean. It does take a certain skill, hence that is why later in your comment you mention poor quality work."*

Chowmai says: *"To me the idea of having a register of reliable and HONEST tradesman has to be a bonus to householders and must help prevent the more vulnerable amongst us being ripped off by the less than honest who are out there."*

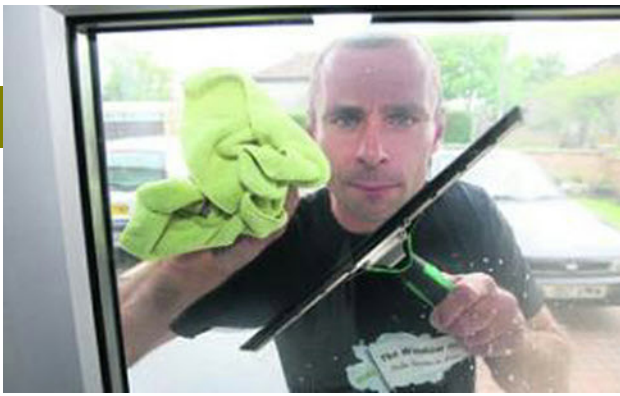
Brandy33 says: *"Well, I have one of the best window cleaners around and he is fully insured, pays his taxes etc., doesn't rip anyone off and does the windows for under £10. I have had knocks at my door asking if I have a window cleaner and do I know if he is insured and if he can possibly clean windows for under £10."*

WCM looks into this story some more

This subject is such a divided one amongst window cleaners. The licensing of Scottish window cleaners is a reality today and the responses as to whether it works are also divided. However, it is a real example of an order laid down to try and combat these issues.

In the meantime we wanted to learn more about Mr Softley from the Swindon area and what ideas he had.

WCM: *Matthew, could you tell us what you would like to see happen?*



MS: What I am trying to push for in regards a scheme is quite simple really. I would like a database or register of all window cleaners run by local councils, where the public can access details of anyone knocking on their doors or dropping leaflets offering window/fascia/gutter cleaning etc.

WCM: What type of information would you like the council to hold?

MS: I would like these details to include and confirm that these people are in fact legal and have a right to the work (registered as self employed). More importantly for the public's protection, that they have a current public liability insurance policy (PL).

WCM: Did you know that licensing of window cleaners is a reality in Scotland today, which is kind of what you're driving at? But any such register will have a cost implication.

MS: Yes I have heard about licencing in Scotland. I guess like anything else in life it is only as good as the people enforcing it. But I would like all window cleaners licensed so that the benefit cheats, uninsured window cleaners and cowboys are a thing of the past.

WCM: There is no evidence that licensing works. The FWC does not support the licencing of window cleaners in Scotland on account of the fact that the licence can be unfair, whereas the Master Guild of Window Cleaners (MGWC) supports licensing in Scotland. Have you managed to get the scheme you want up and running?

MS: No scheme is currently in place. I was hoping the local council would help out. They just don't seem to be interested or have the resources, I am not sure which. The scheme I would like to have in place is only about people having the right to the work and customer protection. This is not about window cleaners with criminal pasts or any other agenda, just about legal window cleaners not getting undercut by people who don't pay their way; people that charge silly prices who have there dole money and housing benefit paid by the likes of you and me.

WCM: Would you not agree that rogue traders are in all trades that come into contact with the public and that perhaps in the example of the window cleaner working for cash, it would be a lot cheaper and less hassle all round to inform the local tax office?

MS: Yes I agree all trades have rouge traders. I am a window cleaner and that is my life and that is what concerns me and my livelihood. Yes it would be easier to contact the local tax office and D.W.P. I have been there and done that and a year down the road I still see some of them working and getting their benefits paid.

One even gets a car because he is too sick to work and on long term sick! Both these departments again don't seem to care or have the resources.

WCM: We will be contacting the FWC and Councillor Barker for their comments on this subject.

MS: I am not a member of the FWC as of yet, but it is something I am going to do next year.

WCM: When you mentioned that window cleaners cleaning windows for under £10, this was a generic nominal wasn't it, or did you actually mean £10? The reason I ask is because I know a few window cleaners who do charge very cheaply and are legal, honest people. You must have meant just anyone charging really silly prices. Is that correct?

MS: I meant well below a tenner, yes silly prices.

WCM: Tell us what the 'buy with confidence' scheme is?

MS: Yes. I intend to join it. When my story was released in the press my local council (trading standards) invited me to join a scheme called 'buy with confidence'. All local councils run the scheme as far as I know. Basically, your books are checked and how you practice and deal with customer complaints etc., and they speak to some of your customers. If you pass all the hoops that you must jump through, you go on a register of approved tradesman. There are no window cleaners in Swindon that have joined up to it yet. It only cost £100 per year.

We contacted both Councillor Barker and the FWC for comment. Whereas Councillor Barker offered no comment, the FWC went on to say:

"Executives refrain from making any comment on non-member Matthew Softley's call for a scheme as this would not necessarily represent membership views." Their suggestion was to run a piece in Window Talk (the FWC publication for members) on this to seek accurate member views on such a scheme.

Views on this subject are greatly divided and no doubt WCM will commit more column space to this subject in the future.

Interview with Terry 'Turbo' Burrows

Terry Burrows is the fastest window cleaner in the world. His picture is featured in the current Guinness Book of Records. Currently unchallenged and unbeaten, Terry is a very down to earth nice guy. But he does have a glint in his eyes! The kind of glint that makes you think, "this guy will never give up his title without a fight".

Terry is as hungry now as he was when he first started, and he claims he is getting faster than ever before with age.

WCM: Hi Terry, you are one of the most well-known window cleaners around with all of your TV and radio appearances, as well as presenting regularly at the FWC stand at Windex. Where did it all start?

Terry: It started as a bit of fun in the beginning really. Me and a friend, John McClean, got on a show called 'You Bet' back in 1993.

WCM: McClean? Is that his real name? I smell a window cleaning franchise with a surname like that. What's John doing now?

Terry: John has not been with me for a while. He suffers a lot with his back. John was involved in the early TV stuff and was involved in the Squeegee song for BBC Record Breakers back in 1995. We liked to be known as the Squeegee's back then instead of the Bee Gee's. (Terry laughs)

WCM: What was the challenge on 'You Bet' that catapulted you into the limelight?

Terry: Well, 'You Bet' created an entire fake street with a shop and café. There were only roughly 14 windows in all and the challenge was to do it all in 90 seconds. It was easy to achieve. John would wet the windows and I would squeegee them off with a 14" blade.



WCM: What happened next?

Terry: After doing 'You Bet' I decided I wanted to be the most famous window cleaner and the fastest in the world. That was my goal. Focus is the key; my karate training was helpful in reaching my goals. It was after the Carlton TV commercial that I decided to contact the Guinness Book of Records on a program called 'Record Breakers' After that it went mad. I went on to take 9 world records at speed cleaning to become the fastest window cleaner in the world.

WCM: Wow! That must be a record in itself! You must have been really focused.

Terry: Yeah, you got to put in the days, hours and years. After 33 years of window cleaning I have always been fast, which helps too.

WCM: Technique is important, right?

Terry: It took me some time to find the right technique and the way I do it now is the only way to do it. That is what putting in the hours gets. There are 16 moves to the world record, 5 moves to each pane of glass. Your body will be ahead of you as you move across the windows and your left hand has to be quicker than your right hand.

WCM: What about the rules? I guess a set window size etc. was established. How were these agreed on?

Terry: There was already a world record set by a man called Gerald Folis. His technique was to attach a sponge to the back of his hands. I beat his record in 1995. The event needed to be brought up to speed by implementing a T – bar and wetter sleeve, which is how window cleaning is really done. In 1996 the FWC consulted with the Record Breakers programme and the Guinness Book of Records in formulating new rules in order to bring things up to date. This included changing the window size to the current 45x45 inches.

WCM: You're still world number one. Has anybody challenged you like you see in the Rocky movies?

Terry: You get challenged at every show, but it has to be validated by an official.

WCM: What is the worst place and best place you have raced?

Terry: Vegas was good but the officials were a bit put out because I had to mention that their window size was wrong and it had no sill, which is not the Guinness standard, and so I didn't make many friends. Texas was pretty much the same.

WCM: What is the current time to beat? And is anyone getting close?

Terry: 9.14 seconds. If anyone is getting close to 10 seconds, they're still miles away.

WCM: What are the rules with penalties on time?

Terry: It is half a second on top your time for every watermark left.

WCM: Why don't you compete at the Window Cleaning Competition stand anymore?

Terry: I'm too fast and nobody has beaten me. I decided after many years of taking the cash winnings home that I would give someone else a go. The prize money was £300 a time!

WCM: You used to be on the board at the FWC. Were there any changes to the industry you were involved in as part of the board?

Terry: There was a lot of stuff to do with risk assessments and health and safety at the time, and trying to work out ways how best to educate members. I was on the board for maybe 2 years. The FWC looked after me very well. In the end I had to leave the FWC. I live 250 miles away and so the travelling got too much. I miss it.

WCM: What do you miss most about the FWC?

Terry: The meetings and Beryl. I only get to see Beryl about once a year now. We always have a laugh. *(Beryl Murray is the General Secretary of the FWC and Managing Editor of Window Talk, the FWC publication)*

WCM: But you're still involved in the cleaning shows with FWC, right?

Terry: Of course. The FWC stand is next to the Window Cleaning Competition stand at the trade shows.



WCM: Are you going to hang up your web belt and kit any time soon?

Terry: No way. I will never retire. I get faster with age!

WCM: That sounds like fighting talk. We like that! Do you still keep in with the training?

Terry: Not at the moment. But it only takes me a few moments and it all comes back to me. Like a type of muscle memory.

WCM: Window cleaning is not the only work you do nowadays is it?

Terry: No. I got into carpet cleaning, which is what I do most of late. It makes a good add-on to a window cleaning business. I mainly started it because I got asked a lot if I knew any good carpet cleaners.

WCM: We are thrilled that you are going to write for us regularly about your thoughts on the industry and your experiences. What else does the future hold for Mr Burrows?

Terry: *(Laughs)* I'm the window cleaner that telly and radio was made for. I just done an ad with Cadbury's but can't say much as it is not out yet.

I guess more TV work.



Heat Trace. What is it?

With temperatures dropping like a stone, window cleaners face the annual problem of how to protect their water purification equipment. From RO membranes to booster pumps, from pre-filter housings to pipe work, all are at risk of damage from ice forming and breaking housings, as well as bursting pipes. The flooding is one thing, but the working days lost from not being able to produce pure water can easily run into the hundreds of pounds.

There are two main places to protect the window cleaner's kit. First is the garage or shed, where many keep their ROs and filters, and sometimes also a holding tank. In some cases, the WFP window cleaner has the water producing kit in their van with the tank and has nothing at their base.

Tim Rowe, from Cedaronics in Bristol, is producing items that help window cleaners with these problems. The main weapon in the fight against frost is Tim's heat trace cable. It is fixed along pipe work and other pieces of equipment and then insulation is applied to the correct thickness for the diameter of pipe.

This hi-tech heating cable is known as self-regulating. This means it is intelligent and can react to the temperature it detects around itself, reducing or increasing its demand accordingly. It is effectively its own thermostat. It runs at a maximum of 10w per metre and is supplied with a cold lead that plugs into 230v mains voltage.

When buying the cable, it is best to buy somewhat more than the lengths of pipe you have. This is to allow for bends and wrapping around valves and so on. It is perfectly safe to cross the cable over itself - unlike the cheaper constant wattage cable that is on the market. Tim advises potential customers to ask what length would be appropriate for the window cleaner's needs, as each case is different. Standard lengths may be bought from the Cedaronics website.



When dealing with plastic pipes, it is necessary to apply aluminium foil tape over the cable and pipe before applying insulation. This is to ensure the transference of heat around the entire pipe. This foil tape is also available from the Cedaronics website.

Heat tracing needs to be seen as a weapon in the window cleaner's armoury against the cold. Other measures that can also be employed include removal of poles and reels overnight.

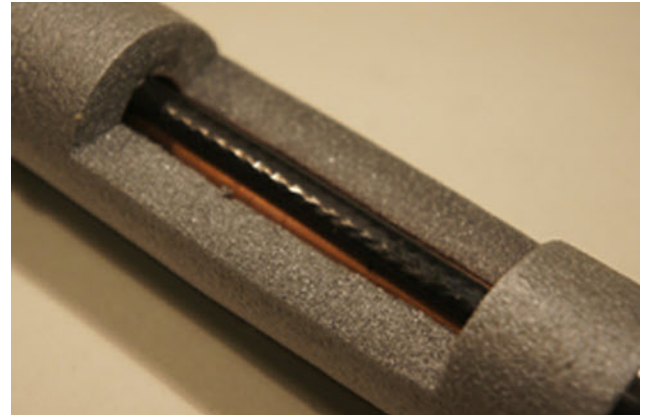
Be aware that the heat tracing must be unplugged before driving away each morning, and that once the power is switched off, temperatures will start to fall once more; although that is the case with oil-filled radiators too. Some van-mounted systems may be difficult to protect where pipes have been fed under the floor - retrofitting in these cases is not recommended. For the average window cleaner that has built their setup and has all pipe work above the floor, there should be no trouble installing the cabling.



Many window cleaners use a variety of heating methods to keep their van warm at night. Unfortunately, what they are doing is heating the air outside of the pipe and any insulation. It is a very wasteful way of going about things.

Also, what many fail to realize is that just because the temperature in the back of the van is above freezing, the temperature inside the pipe could well be only just above freezing. The heat tracing that Cedaronics supply gets the heat where it's needed - at the pipe itself.

For those who wish to be environmentally green, Cedaronics supply a single output thermostatic controller. This easy-to-program device comes pre-set to switch on the live circuit to whatever heating device you have - it could even be an oil heater if that's what



you choose. However, it is ideal for use with the heat tracing, and supplements the self-regulation feature of the cable by ensuring that once the temperature rises above freezing by, for example, 4 degrees, the power supply is cut off. The controller can also be used in the summer for switching on cooling fans anywhere around the home or office.

Heat tracing has been in use for around 40 years, in hospitals, factories, offices and homes. Many people use it to protect the outlet pipe on their combination boilers to prevent the outflow freezing and stopping the appliance working. It is ideal for use in sheds, or indeed anywhere window cleaners keep their equipment. It will protect the pipe work down to minus 20°C with the correct thickness of insulation. We're sure that the only person to be disappointed is Jack Frost.



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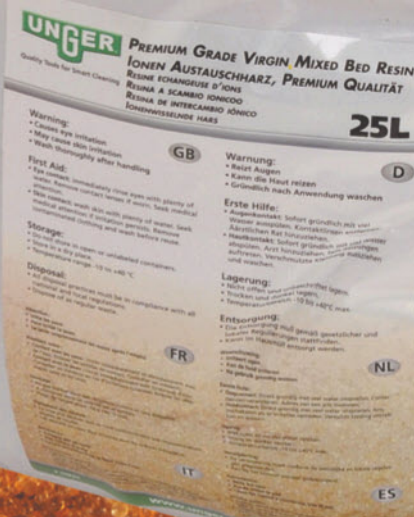
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37

New features and improvements with Unger's Neoprene glove range

Just in time for winter, Unger has announced the re-launch of its protective Neoprene gloves range, with an impressive line-up of new features and improvements.

To begin with solid reinforced stitching, as well as a glue seal, have been added along the seams to achieve extra durability and protection against water ingress. Yet the gloves feel soft and comfortable on the inside with the thread on the seams virtually undetectable due to the "blind" stitching technique.

The standard Neoprene version will keep your hands warm and dry, whatever the weather, with added protection against the wind due to adjustable Velcro straps around the wrist. Made of 3mm thick 100% rubber Neoprene, just like the former versions, the new gloves feel more flexible due to the material enhancements.

The premium ErgoTec® version is now loaded with more features than ever. In addition to the Velcro wrist straps and great insulation against cold, the screened-on silicone patch on the palms offer exceptional grip on all tools.

New knuckle inserts and pre-curved fingers enable the gloves to follow the shape of the individual's hand. Combined with the ultra smooth feel of the 95% Neoprene and 5% Nylon material on the inside, the ErgoTec® gloves provide a natural skin-like feel and fit. Both standard Neoprene and ErgoTec® gloves

now come in four sizes - Small, Large, XL and XXL and are available from Unger dealers nationwide.



Robinson-Solutions Professional Window Cleaning

Window cleaning & water fed pole information from around the World.
Your window cleaner from Mallorca

The Ladder Blog

Lee invited me to write a window cleaning news column for you all, so that you would have the ever expanding news at your fingertips. As this magazine is digital it makes it even easier to catch up with what's going on in the window cleaning world. What is window cleaning news? For some, it's the newest product that comes on the market. For others, it could be ladder safety or maybe a funny video that can be relayed to their colleagues at work. I try to encompass a wide spectrum of news, from window cleaning add-ons to even household window cleaning products. Why, you ask? Well, the more you know, the more you realise the spectrum of the window cleaning world as a whole, which may give you a lead in the game. That newest product aimed at the house holder to clean their windows is as important as the the latest gutter scoop. Once you know what the home owner uses on his windows, the more you realise the intimidating experience they have trying to clean their own windows, and hence the more reasons they need to hire a pro like you and me.

I make no excuse for the fatalities that I publish either – my reasons are to give you that added reality when trying to stand on that final rung or leaning just that little too far. If the information saves just one life, then it will be worth it. It's sad to know that still, even today, window cleaners are falling from heights of just a few feet and killing themselves. Even seasoned pros, when on a busy day trying to rush, do not get a second chance.

As this edition is related to ladder accidents, I'll kick off with the extreme case of window cleaner Norman Johnson of Sunderland, who fell from his ladder and was impaled on a 4ft metal bar hidden inside a bush. The bar went in under one arm, through his chest and neck and came out through his jaw – missing his vital organs by millimetres. Firefighters took more than an hour to release the 45-year-old, with two of his friends taking the weight as rescue crews worked to cut him free. It is 10 years this month since Norman cheated death.

'How about a ladder climbing robot? A Japanese company has developed a humanoid robot that can climb up and down ladders. It's called Dream Robo', stands 1.4m high, weighs about 30kg and moves using five motors that are built into its body. Watching the video had me thinking that grass growing may be more up my street. Just call me when they develop it to be 10 times faster and when it knows how to use a squeegee. But seriously, if they did manage to get Dream Robo on turbo, just think of having a team of metal clunk cleaners at your disposal? What sort of insurance would you need when Dream Robo becomes 'Flying Robo' and lands on someone's head?

[Read article](#)

If you want to see how ladders are really misused – just to take a look at this extreme article with photos. The main photo shows four people in Piccadilly, London, aiding and abetting an amateur window cleaner. Working at height means nothing to them and even less to the public walking by.

[Read article](#)

There is absolutely nothing fun about being 30 feet off the ground standing on top of a ladder that feels like a metronome. But what if it was the other way round? How about a rope ladder hanging downwards from a higher floor? Raymond Manzano, a Filipino contract window cleaner working in the United Arab Emirates died after falling from the rope ladder he was standing on that was hung from above and held by another worker while cleaning the front glass panels of the 42 floored Citadel Tower in Dubai. Due to the lack of coordination, the worker standing on the rooftop released the rope and the victim fell to his death.

[Read article](#)

The argument for waterfed poles: the risk of serious injury in a fall increases, of course, as the height off the ground increases. Falls can be catastrophic, disabling people for life, or even ending lives. Here are some sobering statistics to encourage you to think twice before making that climb up your ladder. The Home Safety Council of America says that falls are "by far the leading cause of home injury deaths." Accidental falls killed 20,823 people in 2006. The U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission states that approximately 165,000 Americans go to clinics and emergency rooms every year to receive treatment for ladder-related injuries. Falls from heights constitute a top-10 health threat for males and are one of the leading causes of death for men in the USA. In 2009 and 2010 there were 127 and 129 deaths in each year respectively due to ladders alone.

The UK fairs no better in terms of its accident ratio. Falls from height remain the most common cause of workplace fatality. In 2008/09 there were 35 fatalities, 4654 major

injuries and a further 7065 injuries that caused the injured person to be off work for over 3 days or more due to a fall from height. There are plenty of articles on the internet that help you choose the right ladder, use it safely and apply risk assessments when using your equipment. Please read them! The HSE says on average 12 people a year die at work falling from ladders and over 1200 suffer major injuries. Ladders remain the most common agent involved and account for more than a quarter of all falls from height.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/ladders.htm>

If you've enjoyed reading this article, please stop by the blog and take in some of the news. It could save your life. One snippet of information could change your outlook or one product could change the way you work, making it more ergonomic or perhaps safer.

<http://robinson-solutions.blogspot.com>

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Lone Ranger

By Matt Perry

The only WFP user in his area

We liked Matthew Perry from Ohio so much, we invited him back to tell us about his journey from ladders to wfp. Matthew finds himself in a unique position as he is the first and (currently) the only window cleaner in his area that operates with a wfp system.

I'm the only one in my area with a water fed pole system, why I changed from traditional ladder work, and how others are reacting!

Hi, I'm Matt Perry, owner of Perry Window Cleaning in Springfield, Ohio in the USA. My business started in early 2003 after I lost my job. I had a friend named Gene who taught me how to clean windows in his city while I started looking for customers in my local area. I was taught traditional methods and climbed ladders to do two and three story houses.

Why would I want to change to WFP?

Almost three years ago, I began hearing and learning about pure water cleaning. I was interested in anything that would give me less ladder climbing, as I have a left knee that randomly gives me sharp pains without warning. I have to admit that I was sceptical at first, but I kept hearing good things about WFP on the WindowCleaningResource.com forum, and I especially liked the responses of those who said it meant less ladder climbing!

In my local area we had no window cleaners who had a water fed pole system. As my interest began to grow, I saw that the price of poles and pure water systems could easily cost more than I paid for my work van! When I put that with my 'not so sure it will work' skepticism, I thought it would be unlikely that I would invest.

The perfect timing that got me into pure water cleaning!

It happened that I was asked to bid on a large job for the city of Springfield. It was a four-story job but we could work it from a three-foot ledge. While there, I met and got talking with a new window cleaner that I helped to train. He told me that years ago he knew a man that had a system here in town. This guy cleaned a fifty foot tall building with it and said it made such a mess that he had kept it in storage for the last 4 or 5 years, quit window cleaning, and just does offices and floors now.

I talked to this guy and he had nearly fifty feet of Tucker pole, and a $\frac{3}{4}$ cubic foot resin tank. It also had a little glass dispenser with soap pellets. This guy told me he used pure water mixed with these soap pellets. The fifty foot building was the first WFP job they had ever done, as well as the last because it left a mess when it dried.

I bought the whole set from him for \$200.00 (200 US Dollar = 126.453 British Pounds). I took the soap dispenser out of the lines and we had a basic pure water system! We had to get a new gooseneck for the brush head, as this was lost in storage. We were amazed that the resin was still working after at least 4 years in a warehouse. In fact, we practiced on my house first and then cleaned three average houses before the resin went bad.

I was shocked when the replacement resin cost slightly more than I had just paid for my whole set up! Not knowing what we were doing we had to touch up maybe one in every five windows at first, but I had heard about a learning curve from others.

What a great feeling it was to do second story windows without climbing a ladder. It was exciting.

Now my eyes are seeing new potential business; 30 and 40 foot buildings that I would not even solicit before. Why, you may ask. My 32 foot ladder is still heavy and my knee still gives me pain on ladders. I now look forward to those residential homes where the trees or landscaping blocks a good safe ladder set up. These are not a problem with the WFP!

I now find myself the first and (so far) only window cleaner in my area to have a pure water fed window cleaning system.

How are my repeat residential customers reacting?

My repeat customers are seeing the WFP for the first time ever! Some say that it's interesting, that I'm an expert, and as long as they don't have to clean them then it's fine with them. Some say "I don't see how it could work without soap." I assure them that my work is guaranteed; if it does not dry spotless, I will come back and fix it. Many of such customers will do extra inspection of the windows as we work. I have had passers-by ask how it works as they have never seen anyone clean glass that way.



Cleaning building before using Water fed pole



Cleaning building with Water fed pole

We also now have a four stage filtration system with a 125 gallon (125 gallon = 473.176 473 litre) tank on board and dual pumps for two poles. This one job alone has already paid for my upgraded set up plus profit on top. Even without this one big job, I can see how it will give a good ROI in terms of time saved, leading to more profits.

Do many window cleaners stick with traditional ladder work in the USA?

Here in the USA we still have some window cleaners who will not give in to pure water technology and they prefer to climb ladders and do traditional cleaning. Below are three window cleaners who made statements on the forum at WindowCleaningResource.com.

This is a typical mix of opinions from window cleaners here in the USA:

Window cleaner (A) - prefers ladder

"Lately on residential with less than 30 windows I have just been using ladder and traditional methods. I have been choosing this over WFP'ing as a lot of my customers are clueless to WFP and have doubts right away as to how clean their windows will be. I then have to explain what pure water is etc., whereas if I use a ladder and squeegee they are instantly impressed with how clean it is. I think people have a general respect for a guy with ladders."

Window cleaner (B) - prefers ladder

"I always rock with ladders on residential."

Window cleaner (C) - prefers water fed pole

"I have been using the WFP for 3.5 years or so. There have been maybe 5 homes that I have not been able to

Is there a return on the investment?

Around 5 months ago we landed a big job because we had pure water cleaning, as they were into anything green. The company uses solar tubes to run the building, they capture rainwater from their roof to run the plumbing, and they have acres of natural prairie, woods, water, and natural habitat for wildlife. From this one job we have already earned over \$6,400.00 (6,400 US Dollar = 4,046.51 British Pounds) in the past five months. This job alone has enabled me to upgrade to two better poles, including a 40 foot carbon fiber Gardiner SLX with a flip fast and an Aqua-dapter.

clean because of old wooden frames, otherwise they are all done with the SLX pole. I carry water on board and all I have to do is flip a switch and I am cleaning. I don't have to hook up hoses, find water or get my ladder out. Fall off a ladder once and you will appreciate the safety aspect of a water fed pole. My hospital bill was \$10,000. I don't need my customers to respect me for carrying a ladder, at the end of the day I want to go home in one piece. I can provide superior cleaning and be completely safe."

"After all this time I am still amazed at how clean DI water gets the glass. Honestly, it cleans better than I do. With the right technique there is no reason not to take advantage of the technology out there."

My observation is that many who invest in WFP have not taken the time to learn how to consistently get spotless windows, and tend to give up easily saying they were sorry to invest in the system. I have found that anything you can clean with a soap mit and squeegee, you can clean with a water fed pole. If you have to scrape with the traditional method, then you need to scrape with the water fed method. Having now used WFP for just over one full season, I have noticed it is safer due to no ladders and it is faster on cut ups and anything higher that would normally call for ladder work.



Will pure water set me apart from my competition?

Even though I am alone in my pure water cleaning in my area, I believe it will set me apart and over time give me an advantage over my competition, who hesitate or can't afford to get WFP into their business. Just like selling the idea of the first horseless carriage (automobile) to those who had never thought of getting off their horse and buggy, I believe that in time new pure water technology will become the norm.

*To discuss this topic
press this button*



Matt Perry of Perry Window Cleaning, Springfield, Ohio, gives us his winter tips

A few winters ago, we started using the Wagtail squeegee, which we like very much for many applications. However, we did notice that the reddish orange rubber that comes with it began to leave streaks on the glass as the temperature began to drop. We checked the rubber for debris and made sure that our angle and pressure were correct. The problem persisted.

It was new rubber and so our first thought was that it had to be a bad batch of the Wagtail rubber. We then found out, after talking to other window cleaners at WindowCleaningResource.com, that it was hard rubber. Hard rubber, we were told, does not work well on colder glass surfaces. In the heat, hard rubber is great and outlasts soft rubber. We have therefore now changed our rubber to soft rubber in the winter months and solved the problem. This might not seem like a big tip, but if you do not know about it, then you could be frustrated by the problem.

The other tip we have for you people is that during the winter season our hands are freezing and ache with pain! Even though we wear gloves and dress properly in the winter, we find that the cold Ettore extension pole that we use on the taller storefront windows still makes our hands ache with pain. The cold seems to come right through the gloves and paralyze your hands.

Tony Evans, a friend and fellow window cleaner, shared this tip on a video he posted on the forum. Tony takes baseball or tennis racket handle wrap and applies it to his pole! This simple tip is easy to do. It will not warm up your pole but it will lessen the bone chilling cold down to bearable.

We have made a 'How to Apply It' video for these two winter tips and you can find it at the following link:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azYK0GclXWg>

We hope you find this helpful!

Matt Perry

'How to start a window cleaning business' for rookies

A quick heads up on marketing your business.

Any one running a business will tell you that in order to establish any growth, even in these hard economic times, you are going to have to get a grip and understanding of marketing YOU and your company.

Throughout your life, you have been marketing yourself and you probably did not even know it. From your first job interview to your first date to meeting people for the first time at a meal, you are selling YOU.

Marketing yourself or selling your business to a facilities manager should be seen as no different to having a normal job interview. In a job interview, we tell the 'prospect boss' about our training courses attended and our experiences. We talk about the high profile companies we have worked for and the tasks we had to carry out. In addition, we demonstrate issues that we had to tackle in order to show how we came to positive solutions.

Lets start with the need for marketing:

Marketing is a process whereby you advertise your company to your prospected target market. Marketing can be carried out in many forms, some of which we will explore.

Once you have mastered the art of marketing, it does not stop there.

Marketing and selling your service is an on going project. The process has to stand as a main supporting pillar of your business. Getting yourself conditioned and in the right mind set is key. At the very least, getting marketing onto your radar is necessary.

Imagine your business is like a 'bath tub'. You worked so long and hard with marketing and selling techniques that you have filled your 'bath' with business.

However, there is a problem with this 'bath tub'! You see your bathtub has no plug. No matter how good your business retention is, you will loose business through default and need to replace it. Do nothing and over time, you will see your turnover dwindle.

Your 'bath tub' leaks and so marketing and selling your business are important when it comes to 'topping up the bath water'.

Therefore, we have established marketing as a very important tool. How do we apply this to our window cleaning business?

Where do you want to be?

The first thing to consider is where do you want to be with this business. Are you happy earning £120 per day for 6 hours work, 4 to 5 days per week and sticking just with residential?

Do you want ten vans, 20 employees and concentrate on multi regional commercial work?

Alternatively, maybe you are happy somewhere in between the two examples.

The good thing about residential window cleaning is that its retention rate is very high. Moreover, residential work is a lot easier to build up. This is because you are talking directly with the decision maker and in fact, in most cases, it is not a lot of money and most people will agree to a fair price.

This type of work is very good in a recession too!

The good thing about commercial work is that although it is more involving the rewards are far greater. You do not get decisions instantly many of the times, as your quotation may have to be discussed within the prospect company.

Retention rates can be high depending on the commercial customer. The more branches or nationalised the commercial prospect is the less loyal they can be.

One example of high retention commercial work would be a fish and chip shop, launderette or other small family business. An example of a low retention commercial work would be a brand name business.

Buy or build?

You can buy window cleaning work both commercial and domestic on any forum or in the local newspaper. You may come across rounds for sale by word of mouth.

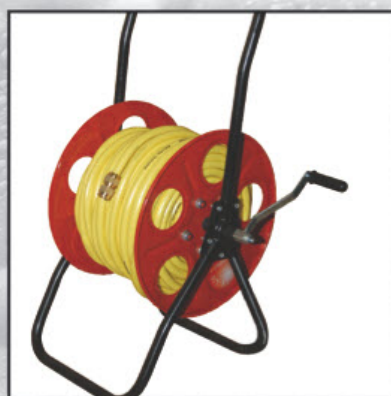
Therefore, the next decision is to work out if you would like to build a business up from scratch or buy one. The far cheapest is to start your own and we will come back to this. However, what if you want to buy? What do you pay? How do you handle the deal? What do you need to look for?

Make sure you catch the next issue of WCM to learn more on Buy or Build.

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