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**PROFESSIONAL CARWASHING
AND DETAILING**

Soap solutions:

Does the glass house fit?

Summary: This month, **Professional Carwashing & Detailing®** asked Amanda Kinslow of Lighthouse Carwash Systems to answer a question submitted by an anonymous reader wondering if he should use a glass building for his next carwash.

Question: What are the benefits and problems associated with operating a glass-enclosed carwash?

Amanda Kinslow: The glass carwash building debuted in 1998 and has since been shown to be a solid innovation in carwash technology.

There are a myriad of benefits to housing a carwash in a glass enclosure, along with a few perceived problems that are either common misconceptions or easy to prevent and fix.



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Benefits

The most obvious benefit of a glass

carwash is the attention it receives from passing motorists. The building showcases the carwash at work, letting consumers watch the action. At night, the brightly-lit building glows like a beacon, creating a safe and fun atmosphere.

A glass carwash building creates an impression of a carwash that is inviting, fun and easy to understand, unlike conventional buildings that are dark and somewhat mysterious for the consumer. Today's consumers want to understand what they are buying. With the glass building, they can watch cars being washed.

Consumers can also see out of the building while their cars are being washed. Instead of a claustrophobic tunnel or vision-restricting self-serve bay, consumers feel safe in the open environment.

The glass carwash is also fun! A well-marketed glass carwash will have bright neon lights and colorful soaps and waxes. Kids especially love the experience of going through a fun and glowing carwash.

Along with consumer benefits, there are numerous benefits for the carwash owner as well.

- The buildings are versatile, able to house conveyor, automatic, self-serve and truck washes, with specially-designed buildings for each type.

- A properly engineered glass building can be built in days, while a conventional carwash building can take months to construct. Make sure to ask the manufacturer about construction time for the building.

- The building can be depreciated as equipment, thus much more quickly than a conventional structure.

- That the glass building can be leased along with the carwash equipment.

- A study by John Wasson of Quantitative Market Research showed that in the same location with the same equipment, a properly marketed carwash in a glass building can produce up to 20 percent more revenue than a carwash in a conventional building.

Problems and solutions

But what about the problems with glass carwashes? There are several common concerns expressed by those who are investigating glass carwash build-

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ings. The remainder of this article will provide solutions to these issues, which are:

- Vandalism;
- Cleaning the glass;
- Dealing with replacing glass; and
- The structural integrity of the building.

Vandalism is a frequent concern in the carwash industry. However, it actually highlights another benefit of the glass carwash. Since the carwash glows at night, and there are no walls to hide behind, vandalism is rare in glass carwashes. There are no places for vandals to hide and nowhere to display graffiti.

A real concern with the glass carwash is keeping it clean. A carwash is a place where consumers bring their dirt, and that dirt is sure to end up on the carwash windows, right?

Certainly. This is why a glass carwash should have a window rinse system that automatically rinses the glass.

Such a system can be configured to rinse the windows at predetermined times; for example, every 15 minutes. A system like this will keep the windows clean.

However, the cleanliness of the carwash tells consumers how important cleaning their car is to the carwash owner. Like any other carwash, the owner should keep the entire operation clean and inviting. A monthly cleaning process may add an extra shine to a glass carwash, but is not necessary.

To keep the carwash looking its best, take the following steps once a month:

1. Apply a mild foaming glass cleaner to the glass walls of the carwash. The building manufacturer should sell a solution you can use.
2. Allow the solution to sit on the glass for the recommended period of time.
3. Spray off the solution with clean, clear water.

Now you know how to clean the glass. But what if the glass gets broken or needs to be replaced? In most cases, this issue is easily resolved. The glass panes should be made of shatter-proof safety glass — the same kind of glass used in windshields. The panes should be a standard size, so they can be replaced by a visit to the local glass store. Check with the building manufacturer to ensure the company uses standard-sized safety glass.

Mother Nature and the glass building

With all the glass in the building, some are concerned about the carwash building's structural integrity. However, when properly engineered, a glass carwash will be able to withstand the cold temperatures and heavy snows of the north; the heavy rains and hurricane winds of the south; or the seismic conditions of the west.

Hurricane Katrina devastated coastal Louisiana, but a glass carwash building in Slidell, near New Orleans, came through the storm undamaged. Glass carwashes have also been extensively tested in northern climates and are able to carry heavy snow loads.

When researching glass carwash buildings, always request the manufacturer provide a list of locations similar to your geography to ensure the building is able to withstand extreme weather conditions in your area.

This overview of glass carwash buildings has shown the many benefits of owning a carwash with a glass building and solutions to problems with the buildings. Overall, owning a glass carwash building is a solid business decision to improve the profitability of an existing carwash or the earnings potential of a new carwash. □

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