

By Robert Kravitz

up the windows to begin ventilating the area, removed what was salvageable, and then looked for a wet/dry vacuum system to soak up the water.

However, like many gyms, this facility did not have a wet/dry vacuum or any equipment that could be used to remove the water. Although the manager knew a wet/dry vacuum was called for, he did not know specifically what type of machine was needed, where to turn for advice, whether the necessary equipment must be purchased or could be rented, how to rent a machine, or what to look for in the machine once located.

THE RENTING OPTION

As with most gym facilities, the managers of this gym had purchased its entire inventory of most frequently used cleaning tools and equipment—everything from cleaning cloths and chemicals to vacuum cleaners and a floor machine, used mainly to scrub tile floors. However, especially when emergencies arise, managers should also know what types of cleaning tools and equipment are available, where to get them, and whether it is best to purchase the equipment or simply rent it.

Managers should purchase equipment that is used on a regular basis. This does include vacuum cleaners and floorcare equipment—any tool or machine that is used from a couple of times per month to daily.

However, for equipment used less frequently than this, renting might prove to be a better and more cost-effective option. This is true for the following reasons:

- Renting allows users to test before they buy. Cleaning a gym can be demanding, and not all tools and equipment are up to the job. It is often a good idea to test different machines and models first to find those that are best up to the challenge, perform well, are ergonomically designed making them easy to use, and are most cost effective.

- Renting may allow for tax savings and tax simplification. In most cases, renting cleaning equipment can be treated as a simple business expense; rarely does depreciation, maintenance, or other tax-related issues come into play when renting equipment.



Equipment renting options for inside facility managers

A 24-HOUR GYM in the Chicago area decided to fudge a bit on its “always open” commitment and close at 10 pm on Saturday and Sunday. According to the manager, there simply were not enough late night users of the gym, located in a downtown business section of the city, to warrant the 24-hour weekend staffing.

However, if the change had been postponed just a couple of weeks, a serious problem likely could have been averted. On a Saturday night shortly after the cutback decision was made, a leak developed in the plumbing in the deserted men’s locker room. By Sunday morning when the gym reopened, the locker room was flooded

with several inches of water that was finding its way to the floor below.

The manager, who rushed to the scene, was not only astute at running a gym but also savvy about this kind of construction emergency. He and his staff turned off all water to the gym, located the source of the water damage, called the plumber, opened

- Renting is a solution when special cleaning tasks must be performed. Most facilities refinish hard-surface floors and clean carpets two or more times per year. Having in-house crews perform these tasks can offer a significant cost savings, as long as you have the proper cleaning equipment. Here again, high-performing scrubbers and carpet extractors can be rented, saving gym owners thousands of dollars.

- Renting is an option for those times when time is of the essence and extra equipment is necessary. In some cases, gym custodial crews may have the cleaning tools necessary to perform a particular cleaning task, but renting additional equipment for specific tasks can help get the job done faster.

- Those rare or onetime tasks such as cleanup after remodeling or new construction are also opportunities to save money by renting equipment. Although the final step in most construction projects typically is the cleanup phase by those doing the work, it is not unusual that gym custodial crews must perform what is termed a "final" cleanup. Once again, renting is often the most cost-effective way to acquire the equipment necessary for these tasks.

- Renting is great for handling emergencies. As in our example, renting wet/dry cleaning equipment, air movers, and even mops and buckets to handle emergencies such as water damage "gets the job done at a significantly reduced cost."

SELECTING RENTAL CLEANING EQUIPMENT

Although managers do not need to be as thorough when selecting cleaning equipment to rent as they are when purchasing such machines, they still should do their homework and spend some time analyzing machines before renting them off the floor. The goal is to select a machine that does the job [and] does it quickly, effectively, and safely.

Whether it is a floor machine, scrubber, or carpet extractor, you should select only equipment manufactured for the professional cleaning industry from well-known, established manufacturers. Cleaning a gym invariably calls for professional equipment. Tools designed for home or residential use will simply not do the job.

Some rental retailers purchase cleaning equipment made by lesser-known companies because the machines are often less expensive. However, these machines may not be up to the demanding needs of a gym facility, and their overall performance and durability may prove inadequate. Ask the rental retailer if the equipment meets professional standards and [if] the company is a well-established cleaning equipment manufacturer. Just because you are renting does not mean you should use inferior equipment. And remember, when it comes to cleaning, time is money. A more effective, professional machine will save money in the long run.

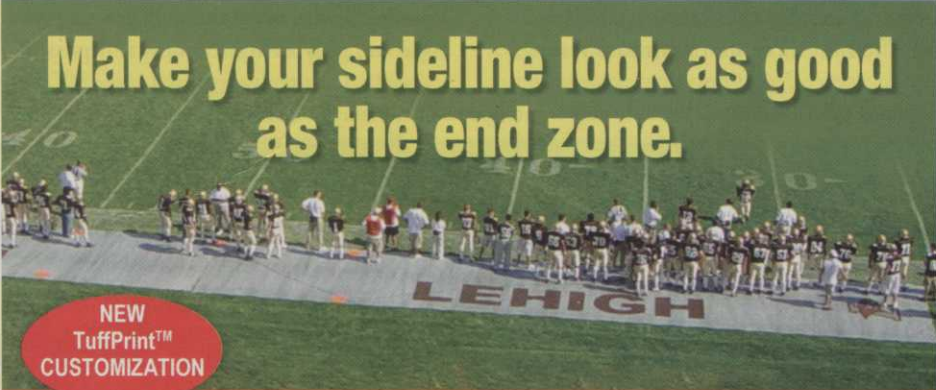
Selecting a rental retailer is similar to selecting a janitorial distributor or other vendor a gym manager works with regularly. You want to find someone who is knowledgeable about the equipment and cleaning tasks, [is] dependable, [is] helpful, and, possibly most important, will spend some time working with you.

Because of this, I suggest a "big-box" retailer may not necessarily be the best choice. In many cases, the cleaning equipment available for renting at a big-box store may be designed for residential and not commercial use. And of even greater importance, the store will likely not have the personnel available to help with any necessary training or if problems arise.

I would suggest instead working with a rental company specializing in renting all kinds of equipment. Along with having a more extensive product selection, usually these companies staff people who are educated as to how the equipment is to be used and can troubleshoot should problems arise. And most important, they will know what tools and equipment are necessary when an emergency, such as water damage or flood, strikes. ■

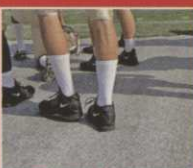
Robert Kravitz is a former building cleaning service contractor and now a writer for the professional cleaning industry.

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