

# Why use PVC wall and ceiling panels?



The car wash industry is an innovative environment that is vigilant in its observation as to what is going to give operators the most efficient and competitive edge. New products and ideas are introduced and exhibited at car wash trade shows every year. Some of these perform so well that they become industry standards, which is exactly why we are going to answer the question, “Why use PVC wall and ceiling panels?” right now.

By Scott Charles

## LOOK AT THESE PICTURES: WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?

In addition to the wall and ceiling panels, there are currently manufacturers producing PVC pre-hung doors and door jambs. These products end all of the hassle associated with rusting, rotting, corroding, disappearing, steel doors and jambs. Stop replacing rotten doors and do it right next time with a PVC door as well.

PVC wall and ceiling panels were introduced to the car wash industry in the late 1990's. By 2000, manufacturers were exhibiting not only at major international car wash association expos, but also expos in The United States, and Canada as well. North America became exposed to these products, while experienced car wash owners took notice and installations of PVC wall and ceiling panels boomed across the continent.

Why would there be interest in PVC wall and ceiling panels? Prior to the introduction of PVC panels, paint and fiberglass reinforced (FRP) panels were the industry standards. Operators from all over experienced the

same problems and this was no big secret. Peeling paint is not a good thing. Customers are never happy when their freshly-washed car has paint chips covering it because drying blowers blew paint chips off the walls and ceiling onto their cars. People got tired of their walls looking like dungeons. Sometimes there would be three or four coats of decaying paint on the walls. It was just plain ugly and uninviting, not to mention the fact that water degrades concrete block in climates with freeze/thaw cycles. A lot of car washes had these paint problems.

FRP is a step-above paint, available in sheets of varying sizes. The

product features exposed fasteners. Lengthy installation labour hours, and a few unfavourable characteristics made people take notice.. Operators complained it was difficult to clean. The sheets have a tendency to yellow. Moisture penetrates the panels through the fasteners. The panels roll, buckle and wave. Enough, already!

This was what was occurring on car wash walls and ceilings throughout North America. One high-maintenance, time consuming eye-sore that only looked worse the harder people tried to make it look better. With the building boom earlier this decade, competition grew more intense. Appearance and cost savings became more important than ever. Creative innovation answered the demands for a new industry standard. The new standard of our current decade are the PVC wall and ceiling panels.

### Why?

The car wash environment has a lot of soap, water, dirt, and chemicals. As discussed, not all materials perform well under these conditions. PVC does. Today's manufacturers produce rigid hollow panels featuring tongue and groove designs. Fasteners are typically installed on a flange on the groove side of the panel. As the tongue of the next panel is inserted into the groove, the fastener is covered, creating a pleasant effect.

### Other key benefits include:

- No exposed fasteners. Some custom PVC panel manufacturers products are up to 20 feet long to the inch for customers, virtually eliminating waste.
- Custom lengths
- PVC does not absorb moisture
- No rotting, no yellowing
- The typical PVC panel has a smooth glossy surface, making it cleanable with a pressure washer and a soft cloth or brush
- Operators have reported that due to light reflectivity, they can decrease the wattage of their light fixtures and pay for their panels with their electric bill savings
- Today's PVC wall and ceiling panels are most commonly dual walled with multiple interior support ribs. They bring some insulating properties when installed and operators have reported less ice build up as a result
- Panels may be used in new constructions as well as remodels. Some manufacturers provide their materials in a kit form for the do-it-yourselfers out there
- Meets ASTM E 84-05 and CAN/ULC S102.2-03 Class A rating for smoke and fire
- Save on labour costs with easy installation and clean up.

### Thousands of contractors throughout North America agree on these three points:

- PVC wall and ceiling panels are a user-friendly building material.
- They can install a lot of it in a day, over wood, steel, concrete block and virtually any other surface.
- It looks great when complete.

The pictures accompanying this article demonstrate the versatility of the PVC panels in that they can be installed both horizontally and vertically.

Today, the smart car wash owner/operator installs PVC wall and ceiling panels in their washes. You can't go anywhere anymore and not see these types of panels in carwashes. Colour stripes, both horizontal and vertical, also add some flair.

Like everything else, know what you're buying. Some manufactures spray a shiny coating onto their surfaces. Look at samples, if one side is shiny and the other dull ask how long that coating will last. Check warranties and customer lists. Even in today's tough economy, buying from the manufacturer that sells on price alone will lead to remorse later. Today's top PVC wall and ceiling panel manufacturers should have happy customers everywhere. Ask around: word-of-mouth is strong.

Happy operators know the benefits of PVC wall and ceiling panels. Get onboard.

Scott Charles has provided PVC wall and ceiling panels to the car wash industry for almost a decade. Contact him at [scharles@epibp.com](mailto:scharles@epibp.com)

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- Bright white surface quickly sheds water
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- Panels can be custom cut to lengths up to 20 feet
- Easy to clean, durable, and will not rot or rust
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- 10-year warranty



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