

# **Carpet Cleaning Methods**

## **Hot Water Extraction or 'Steam' Cleaning:**

The term "steam cleaning" is misleading since true steam is never used to clean carpets (the high temperature would do serious damage to carpet fibre and backing). Portable or truck-mounted equipment is used to spray hot water and detergent solution into the carpet pile at a high pressure and then is immediately extracted (vacuumed out) along with the suspended soil particles. Some machines may have rotary brushes or another agitating device to work the solution into the pile and loosen soil.

Factors that affect the results of this method are:

- operator skill and knowledge
- solution temperature
- spray pressure
- vacuum power
- pre-spray: spraying solution on the carpet (particularly very soiled areas) some time before extracting

Notes: Some "truck-mounted" units are merely portable units bolted onto the truck. The best truck-mount machine would be powered by the truck's engine and not your residential electric supply. These units tend to have stronger vacuums and remove more moisture than portable units. Anytime a rotary brush is used the potential for carpet fibre damage exists if the type or use of the brush is incorrect.

## **Shampoo:**

In this method, detergent solution is released onto the carpet through openings in a rotary brush, whose rotary action converts the solution into foam and works it into the carpet. Once dry, vacuuming removes the residue containing loose, encapsulated soil. At times, chemicals may be added to the detergent solution to reduce odors, retard soiling, brighten colors and/or speed drying.

Notes: If the vacuuming is not done thoroughly and effectively, the residue left in the fibres can act as a soil magnet causing re-soiling very quickly.

## **Combination of Hot Water Extraction and Shampoo:**

As the name implies, this method uses both Hot Water Extraction and Shampoo. This process is particularly effective for cleaning highly soiled carpets, with heavy oil/soil build-up, the process has two steps:

- Shampoo using rotary brush to loosen soil
- Hot Water Extraction using water rather than detergent solution to remove shampoo Some units may combine both steps. It is usually more expensive because of added labor costs.

Notes: For residential cleaning, Hot Water Extraction on its own is usually enough to clean most carpets and rugs with pre-spotting of highly soiled areas as required.

## **Foams:**

A variation of 'Shampoo', Foam is generally applied onto the carpet, usually from aerosol containers, and worked into the carpet with a dry sponge. Once dry, the residue containing suspended soil is simply vacuumed away. Since foam uses little water, there is no danger of over-wetting and the connected

complications. For the same reason, this method is not as effective as the "wetter" methods!

Notes: Some foams may leave a residue that is difficult to remove, acts as a soil magnet and may cause problems with subsequent wet cleaning.



## Spin Bonnet Cleaning:

Similar to 'Shampoo', Bonnet cleaning employs an absorbent pad ('bonnet') attached to the bottom of a rotary machine. Detergent solution is sprayed onto the carpet then the rotary pad is used to agitate and remove the soil suspended in the solution from the carpet. Once one side of the pad gets soiled, the sides can be reversed. Some pads have special "scrubbing strips on them. When both sides get soiled, the pad can be replaced and later cleaned.

Spin Bonnet cleaning is often the preferred method in maintaining large commercial office buildings.

## Absorbent Dry Compound:

A dry compound containing detergent/ solvent is sprinkled onto the carpet and worked into the pile using machines. The soil particles get encapsulated in the absorbent dry compound and are removed by vacuuming. Since this method does not use any "wet" process, there is no danger of over-wetting.

## In-Plant Cleaning:

This type of cleaning is ideal for specialized cleaning of loose or valuable rugs. The rugs are sent through a duster that extracts soil more effectively than routine vacuuming. They are then washed and hung to dry in a controlled air environment. The cleaning company may also offer a special service for repair of valuable rugs, using special equipment.

Notes: Generally in-plant cleaning is more expensive than other methods. One possible way to reduce the cost would be to deliver and pick up your carpet. If you have a valuable rug, as many oriental rugs are, check the reputation and credentials of the cleaning company before entrusting them with your treasure.