



What to Look for When Purchasing a Commercial Vacuum Cleaner

There are three types of vacuum cleaners used in most commercial cleaning situations:

1. Upright vacuum cleaners, by far the most commonly purchased machines
2. Backpack vacuum cleaners, worn over the shoulders
3. Canister vacuum cleaners, commonly used in Europe

The type of vacuum cleaner to purchase depends on where it will be used. For hard-surface floors or stairs, a canister or backpack machine may be best. For mostly carpeted facilities, an upright is probably the best option.

These are some of the items to look for when purchasing a vacuum cleaner:

Ergonomics. “Choose an ergonomically designed vacuum cleaner that, among other things, is lightweight, has easy-access controls and accessories, and has an ultra-lightweight handle conforming to the user’s hands,” says James Hlavin, with Tacony Corporation, a manufacturer of all three types of vacuum cleaners.

Height adjustment. Different carpets have different piles and heights. Hlavin recommends upright vacuum cleaners with manually adjustable height to best tackle the variety of carpets encountered in commercial settings.

Injection molded bumpers. A protective, soft-rubber bumper surrounding the base of an upright vacuum cleaner guards against damage to walls and furniture, states Hlavin.

True-HEPA air filtration. “Choose vacuum cleaners with a ‘true’ HEPA [high-efficiency particulate air] filtration system,” says Hlavin. This means the machine is properly sealed, with the ability to trap 99.97 percent of particles 0.3 microns in size, preventing them from becoming airborne.

Built-in wand and stretch hose. “When vacuuming, there are often a variety of surfaces and areas to be cleaned. Upright vacuum cleaners that can ‘multitask’ facilitate cleaning,” says Hlavin. “Choose upright vacuum cleaners with built-in—extra-strong—hose wands for quick detail vacuuming.

Performance. Select a machine that has been tested and proved to be powerful and effective. The Carpet and Rug Institutes’ (CRI) Green Label program evaluates vacuum cleaners on performance, air filtration, and carpet appearance. “And testing programs developed by Tandus, the parent company of such well-known and respected flooring companies as Collins & Aikman, Monterey, and Crossley, are even more stringent when it comes to performance,” says Hlavin. “Look for machines that have both the CRI Green Label and Tandus’ ‘Approved Equipment’ designation.”

Machines that fit the job requirements. Evaluate the application and job requirements before investing in any vacuum cleaner, and select the machine that best fits your needs. For instance, larger or wide-area vacuums are effective in cleaning carpets in hotel corridors and large meeting rooms, but they aren’t easy to maneuver in small offices or facilities that have many permanent obstacles.

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