



## Choosing the right vacuum cleaner for different hotel needs

*Another great article from The Rooms Chronicle, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! \*\*\*Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.\*\*\* College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com*

*Notice: The ideas, opinions, recommendations, and interpretations presented herein are those of the author(s). The College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University/The Rooms Chronicle assume no responsibility for the validity of claims in items reported.*

The prudent housekeeping or engineering manager should perform an internal needs assessment survey to decide on the best vacuum cleaner for the hotel. The following issues should be addressed before purchasing a vacuum cleaning system for the property:

- The type of debris to be picked up by the vacuum cleaner.
- The type of floors being vacuumed.
- The type and availability of the attachments needed in the equipment under consideration for purchase.
- The importance of the maneuverability of the equipment.
- The weight of the equipment.
- The primary operators of the equipment.
- The ease of operation and maintenance.
- The traditional use life of the vacuum in relation to its acquisition costs.

In order for a vacuum to clean most effectively, it should be matched to the intended cleaning tasks and the person(s) who will be doing the cleaning. Keep in mind the challenges that the housekeeping staff have experienced with its present and past vacuuming systems and factor these into the decision equation.

The three key elements to consider before purchasing the right vacuum system are: the surfaces of the flooring, the areas being cleaned, and the employees who will be operating it.

### Types of commercial vacuums

The different types of vacuums that are used in commercial cleaning operations are:

- Hip-vac and back-pack vacuum cleaners with tool attachments, which include upholstery, round brush and a crevice tool.
- Upright single and dual motor vacuum cleaners. These vacuums should have a detachable hose and tools.
- Canister tank wet and dry vacuums. In order to increase the cleaning efficiency of these types of vacuums, there should also be attachment tools and a power nozzle available.
- Wide area walk-behind vacuums or sweepers that can be powered by battery, power cord, gasoline or propane motor.

### Types of surfaces to be cleaned

Additional factors to keep in mind before purchasing a vacuum cleaner are:

- What type of surfaces will be cleaned?
- Are these surfaces carpeted or hard floor?
- Are they interior or exterior surfaces?
- What is the size of the area(s) to be cleaned?

*Interior floors:* There are many different types of carpets. The critical issue to consider is the nap thickness. Long and short fiber carpeting need different height settings in order for the vacuum's brush head to clean most effectively. Therefore, the ideal vacuuming tool for indoor applications will come with an adjustable height-setting mechanism. Hard floors are vacuumed at the lowest height setting.

*Outside surfaces:* Typically, these would include concrete sidewalks as well as asphalt parking lots. These are usually large, very high profile areas and should be maintained at all times. They are often the first and last areas of a hotel that any guest sees, thus leaving lasting impressions about the hotel's image and its commitment to providing a clean and sanitary living environment.

### **Types of areas to be cleaned**

When choosing a vacuum cleaner the most important decision-making criteria should be the area and application where it will be used.

*Front entrances, hallways and corridors:* These are usually larger areas and need larger vacuum cleaners. There are vacuum cleaners that are designed to maintain large floor areas, but they are not always effective in picking up small pebbles or rock salt, which tend to accumulate in doorways. Small debris is best picked up with a powerful two-motor upright or a canister vacuum with a power nozzle. Hallways and corridors are cleaned most effectively with a large area walk behind vacuum. During the winter or wet season, the wet & dry vacuums are ideal for keeping the front entrance clean and dry.

*Banquet rooms:* Banquet rooms are usually larger rooms that may include hard to reach areas. As such, function room surfaces might call for both large and small vacuums. Hard to reach areas are best vacuumed with a commercial grade upright, canister or back-pack vacuum. The large area vacuum cleaners should be used to clean large opened areas. The vacuum should be equipped with a brush height adjustment in order to ideally operate on hard floors and different types of carpets.

*Guestrooms:* Guestrooms are areas that typically have many obstacles such as beds, credenzas, tables, and closets. Guestroom floors are cleaned most effectively with a commercial grade dual-motor upright vacuum. The upright vacuum should have a brush to agitate the carpet and the brush should be height-adjustable to allow the vacuum to effectively clean on both the carpet and hard floors. The attachments allow the cleaner to also use the upright vacuum for curtain and furniture vacuuming. An alternative could be a canister vacuum, which is operated with a vacuum hose and wand. They often stand out with excellent maneuverability and a variety of attachments. For guestrooms that only need light and quick vacuuming, a commercial grade single-motor upright vacuum can also be used.

*Stairways:* Stairways are best vacuumed with a back-pack or hip vacuum cleaner. These vacuums were designed to be carried on the operator's back and the attachments are carried on the belt. This set-up allows the operator to work with both hands free and get into hard-to-reach places without the need to pull or carry a vacuum up and down the stairs or around obstacles. The flexible hose and attachments allow for better cleaning in more restrictive and confined surfaces.

*Sidewalks and parking lots:* These typically large areas can be effectively maintained with a walk-behind sweeper or a large industrial vacuum designed for picking up large debris. These outside sweepers and vacuum cleaners are available with gasoline or propane engines or are battery powered. Outside vacuums should have large openings to pick up larger debris while outside sweepers are designed with large stiff brushes. Both types typically have large debris bags or recovery hoppers.

### **The cost of mismatched equipment**

Labor cost is a major factor to consider prior to purchasing vacuum equipment. If debris cannot be picked up quickly with a few passes of the vacuum, much time will be wasted going over the same area with the same poor results. For this reason it is very important that the correct vacuum cleaner be used in the right application.

Another factor is the human one. Who is the person responsible for the cleaning? If, for one reason or another, the housekeeper or houseman does not like to use the available vacuum cleaner (perhaps the vacuum is too heavy or cumbersome, it is always breaking down, the electrical cord is too short, the vacuum emits odors or dust, or otherwise performs poorly) the likely outcome will be poor cleaning results and discouraged cleaning personnel. If however, a well performing and appropriate vacuum cleaner is available for the job, the user will likely be more satisfied using the equipment and better cleaning results will be achieved in less time. ✧

*(Doug Scouten is the head of sales & product development for Cleanfix Cleaning Systems in Wyckoff, NJ. Cleanfix offers a full line of professional cleaning and maintenance equipment that meets the needs and demands of today's commercial cleaning industry. E-mail: dscouten@cleanfixcleaningsystems.com).*