

# UAE Oil Company Keeps on Truckin'

U.S. Big-Rig Wash Technology Shines Overseas

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It's a warm morning in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Down the street, a mud-caked oil truck makes a slow turn and rumbles into a tunnel-like building. A few minutes pass. Then out it comes, a shimmering-shiny rig that would make any driver keep on truckin'—and his oil company, too.

"Let's face it, if you're an oil company, you want to have the cleanest trucks in town because public perception is everything," says Les Gale, managing director of InterClean Equipment, Inc., a maker of automatic truck and car washers, based in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

So how many truck washes can a customer get for his money? Well, if you're a truck driver with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), as many as you want. That's because InterClean's soapy suds will soon be scrubbing the firm's trucks in the United Arab Emirates.

## A HIGH-TECH LATHER-UP

Gale is bubbling over a new agreement just reached with the ADNOC to supply truck-wash technology to a new facility being constructed at the oil company's maintenance service center

in Umm Al Nar, near Abu Dhabi. The total package including building construction is about \$250,000.

That might seem like a lot of money to lather up some trucks. Why not just wash them by hand?

"That's a good question, but I have an even better answer," Gale says. "Our state-of-the-art technology not only enables fleet owners to keep their trucks cleaner, but saves time, money, water, and labor in the process. It's environmentally friendly too."

Gale should know: his customers' vehicles are clean as a whistle. His company makes wash equipment for buses, tanks, trucks, cars, trains, and well, just about everything that moves or so it seems.

One advantage of InterClean's system is that it thoroughly washes up to 30 trucks an hour and requires no manual pre-wash preparation, as do other wash technologies. The system requires no employees to operate it.

The truck simply drives in, and then it begins: first a solution of chemicals and fresh water is applied and allowed to briefly soak; then a high-pressure wash of 600 gallons per minute at 300

pounds per inch; and finally a rinse. Total time is two and one-half minutes. It's called touchless washing.

"We are a very environmentally friendly company, and our systems operate continuously on recycled water," says Gale. "That's an important selling point."

About 90 percent of the water used in the truck wash is recycled back and reused again—so only 50 gallons out of the 600 used in each wash is fresh water.

"Water is becoming a scarcer commodity in the Mideast and is more regulated now than ever," explains Gale. "Also, hand washing requires more and stronger chemicals to do the same job, so higher concentrations of chemicals go into the ground."

Gale says that a good washing also keeps the corrosion off, as salt from the Persian Gulf can be hard on a truck's body and parts.

The United Arab Emirates is a prime market for pollution control and waste management equipment. It sits atop one-tenth of the world's proven oil reserves and accounts for nearly 10 percent of the world's oil production each

year. Abu Dhabi is devoting more of the government budget to cleaning and protecting its environment each year.

#### SOAPING THE WHEELS FOR A DEAL

So how did all these connections get made to seal the deal? Well, it wasn't at a truck stop, that's for sure. It was when Elias Sayah, a businessman-engineer who is executive vice-president of the American Business Group in Abu Dhabi, met with Nancy Charles-Parker, senior Commercial Service officer at the U.S. embassy in Abu Dhabi.

They worked closely with Paul Litton, director of the U.S. Export Assistance Center in Ypsilanti, where InterClean had received initial export counseling and other assistance like Gold Key, a service that provides pre-screened business appointments overseas.

Sayah, with his experience as a go-between in the wash business, was familiar with InterClean. For five years, he had been a tireless advocate, working to promote American know-how in the region in an environmentally enterprising way. He had been lobbying the oil company to install InterClean truck washers at its maintenance station for the last five years. In short, he wanted to see a good finish.

Shifting into overdrive, Charles-Parker and Sayah arranged for InterClean to conduct an on-site demonstration of its technology at one of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company's maintenance service stations. The wash system couldn't change the oil, but it sure could wash the trucks.

"I think the oil company became very familiar with the speed, effectiveness, and efficiency of the truck wash technology," says Sayah. "We couldn't have done this without the hands-on support of Nancy and the Commercial Service, including arrangement of the demonstration and assistance with financing, customs, and promotion."



Photo courtesy of InterClean.

InterClean now has 35 employees and exports that account for 20 percent of its total sales. InterClean exports to Singapore, Kuwait, Italy, the Far East, South Africa, and other places. The largest customers tend to be local governments, school districts, buses, salt trucks, and landfills.

InterClean is just one of the American-owned auto and truck wash companies assisted by the U.S. Commercial Service and Sayah in the UAE market.

Meanwhile, the ADNOC anxiously awaits the completion of its new maintenance-truck wash facility, which is expected to be operational any day now.

"We will be the first oil company to have such a great machine to wash its trucks in the Middle East," says an ADNOC official. "We have a fleet of 120 oil trucks in Abu Dhabi, and we expect to have about 3,600 washings each month in our new facility."

It wasn't InterClean's first foray into the United Arab Emirates, nor its

last. The firm had supplied a truck wash system for the city of Rasai Al Khaimah. The wash technology cleans the city's vehicles and its garbage trucks that service the first Western-style landfill in the United Arab Emirates. Whew. InterClean works closely with Ceres Associates, a firm that provides on-call technical support.

"We can wash one truck within two or three minutes, and the average cost of chemicals is only about three dirhams per vehicle," says Michel Sakkal, a manager with the Ras Al Khaimah Public Works and Services Department. "We are very happy with the performance."

Hey sir, nice truck, how about a wax? ■