

CASE STUDY: FROM DOWNTIME TO DEPENDABLE

How Hydro-Chem Systems Repaired and Optimized Automated Wash Operations for Major Supercenter Fleet



The Challenge

With hundreds of trucks and thousands of trailers traveling more than a million miles a week throughout multiple states, a large Midwest Supercenter was looking for a “better way to wash [their] vehicles”.

With automated wash systems already installed at their major distribution centers, controlling their brand image and managing corrosion should have been simple — with nearly 400 drivers frequently on-site for pickups, incorporating a routine wash into their logistics seemed like a seamless solution.

However, the reality proved more challenging. Reliability emerged as the biggest problem, with the automated wash system frequently failing. Over time, the wash downtime was preventing clean trucks. With an inconsistent wash, their fleet was going to suffer dirty trucks — not only impacting their brand image, but also increasing corrosion, rusting out their vehicles.

Without sufficient support from the original manufacturer, they tried multiple outside service vendors in an attempt to resolve the reliability issues without success.

Enter Hydro-Chem Systems (HCS). The Supercenter wanted a company that was not only capable of fixing their automated wash systems but also giving them ongoing support — a long-term partner.



“Everyone can fix something, it’s not hard.

***But it’s the customer service and support you get in-between all that
— and being aware of what the company needs.”***

Brand Image: Grime & Corrosion

In any retail business, where brand awareness and perception are crucial, the significance of a well-maintained fleet cannot be overstated. Like many other businesses, this Midwest Supercenter has invested significantly, transforming its fleet’s trailers into rolling billboards through vibrant vinyl graphics — a common practice across the industry.

Without regular cleaning, that investment can quickly become covered in dirt and road film, presenting a poor appearance. When the trailers are covered in brightly colored images of fresh produce, ensuring the longevity and visibility of the graphics is essential.



Adding to this challenge, the Supercenter has units across the spectrum from brand new to near the end of their life span. Some trailers, having weathered more than a decade navigating salt-covered winter roads, bear the visible scars of rust. The Fleet Maintenance Manager said, “Often, people recognize our graphics, which gives us a lot of visibility, so we need to make sure our fleet is presentable. Since we are up in salt country, we also needed something to make sure we prevented corrosion.”

The problem of corrosion and grime-covered graphics extend beyond aesthetics; they can influence a fleet’s image across different audiences — from the general public to regulatory bodies like the Department of Transportation (DOT). A straightforward solution exists: wash the fleet more often! This Midwest Supercenter already had their automated wash system, they just needed it to work consistently.

The Solution

Even though the existing system was from a competitor, not Hydro-Chem Systems, we still wanted to find a lasting solution to their problem. We knew the best way to get to the bottom of the issue was to visit the site and take a look at the system in person. We sent our cross-departmental team to the site to troubleshoot the wash system comprehensively, knowing that multiple factors could contribute to the problem.

With the advantage of knowledge from multiple departments, we discovered some unique problems; loose wiring and problems in the program's coding were causing the automated wash to shut down.

During our on-site evaluation, we also noticed other issues and made adjustments to optimize the current equipment. We replaced chemical injectors, changed nozzle sizes and angles, repiped certain sections, and fine-tuned the program's timing. In addition, to deliver a higher level of cleanliness, we shifted them from their previous vendor to our Hydro-Chem Systems' soaps, specifically formulated for truck washing applications.

As part of our standard practice, we assigned an account manager to their account, an essential role for sufficient, long-term support. This personalized approach allows us to ensure optimal performance of their equipment and a higher level of communication for continued success.

"Having the group of knowledge - from service to sales to managers - addressed our need to rebuild our wash to make it more efficient."



The Results

From start to finish, the entire project took multiple visits. Our commitment extended beyond resolving major issues and will continue into the future — encompassing every detail, from significant modifications to the tiniest tweaks. This comprehensive approach not only fixed their immediate problems but also set the foundation for a lasting partnership.

Now, this Midwest Supercenter's fleet wash system is not just operational; it's also dependable. As a result, their fleet is able to wash consistently, contributing not only to increased vehicle lifespan but also elevated brand visibility.

The impact of our solutions extends beyond an operational wash or more effective soaps. Their clean fleet has even caught the eye of a major vinyl graphic manufacturer. On a chance visit, they were so impressed with the condition of the fleet's vinyl they asked about the fleet's washing process and chemicals.

The Fleet Maintenance Manager stated, "it looks like we're doing the right thing, [the vinyl graphic manufacturer] said the chemicals that Hydro-Chem Systems is using are not affecting the quality of the vinyl we use."

With such successful results and ongoing support, their Fleet Maintenance Manager expressed confidence in Hydro-Chem Systems: "All of our [current] systems are non-HCS systems. I feel comfortable with HCS updating or taking over [from other vendors]."

Building on this success, Hydro-Chem Systems has already optimized another wash system for this Midwest Supercenter, with a third project on the horizon. Looking forward, the Supercenter envisions a continued partnership with Hydro-Chem Systems, relying on our expertise for consultation and support, whether it's existing systems or the installation of new ones. "When we think of what would be a better way to wash our fleet, we would look to Hydro-Chem to do that."

About Hydro-Chem Systems

From large-scale fleets to independent mobile washers, Hydro-Chem Systems is more than just a manufacturer of fleet washing solutions; we are your dedicated partner.

With more than 50 years in the industry, Hydro-Chem Systems has evolved to cater to the varied needs of businesses of all sizes. Our mission is to provide you with top-tier equipment and specialized detergents that not only get the job done but stand the test of time.

What sets us apart? It's our unwavering dedication to building long-term partnerships. We understand that your success is our success. We are the partner you can rely on, no matter the challenges in your fleet washing journey. We're here for the long haul, helping you achieve clean, well-maintained vehicles, optimized efficiency, and, most importantly, peace of mind.

Our Full Range of Solutions

Automated Wash Design and Manufacturing: We take pride in crafting automated wash systems that are tailored to your fleet's unique needs. Our approach starts with a comprehensive assessment of your requirements and operational challenges. We design our systems to make washing efficient and cost-effective by optimizing every aspect of the wash process, from water usage to detergent application. Our engineering ensures that the equipment is built for customer satisfaction, promising a long-lasting and dependable solution.

Manual Wash Bays and Mobile Washing Solutions: Elevate your operations with our expertise in optimizing manual wash bays and mobile pressure washing. Whether you do in-house manual washing or work with an independent mobile wash contractor, our chemical and equipment solutions deliver consistent, reliable results.

Comprehensive Fleet Detergent Product Line: Choosing the right detergents is important for maintaining your fleet's appearance, protecting graphics, and extending equipment life. We work closely with you to find the best product fit for your situation. Whether it's gentle, polish-safe solutions, heavy-duty degreasers, or specialized products like EPA-registered sanitizers, we have the right detergent for every application, ensuring the prolonged life and pristine appearance of your fleet.

Dedicated Post-Sale Support: We care about your long-term success. We assign dedicated account managers who are responsible for your account. Through regular site visits and proactive communication, they conduct routine 30-point system checks, adjust, troubleshoot, and continuously monitor your fleet washing system. This provides a trusted point of contact who understands your fleet, your wash setup, and can address any potential questions or concerns.

Expert Technical Support & Maintenance: With a responsive team offering reliable assistance and conducting regular maintenance, you can count on us for technical expertise and service. With us, you can be confident your equipment operates at peak performance, minimizing downtime, and extending its service life.

Distribution and Partner Network: Our partnerships enable us to offer top-quality products and services with local and regional support. We leverage our growing distribution network to provide exceptional solutions, allowing you to benefit from a collaborative and efficient approach to meet your needs.

Diagnosing and Troubleshooting Poor Results: Dealing with unreliable washing results can be a significant challenge. Our experienced team can diagnose and troubleshoot poor cleaning performance – even if the equipment is from another manufacturer. Whether it's an automated wash system, a pressure washer, or even inconsistent chemicals, our goal is to solve your problems, saving you time and resources to keep your fleet washing operation at its best.

