Many people who used to clean their cars with water, sponge, and shammy now have this time-consuming task carried out in a fully automatic carwash. In millions of cases around the world, cleaning and care additives from Evonik Industries help drivers keep their paintwork clean and shiny. But here is a fact that perhaps only a few people know: the first carwash opened 100 years ago. A look at the technology, trends, and tips for car cleaning uncovers some surprises.
Everyone knows the feeling: as soon as you have reached your eagerly awaited vacation location, time seems to fly, your days of lazing around in the sun are quickly over, and it’s time to pack your bags again. Fortunately, the several hundred photos on your digital camera are an almost perfect reminder of all the fun times you had – but there is still the pile of dirty laundry to deal with. And of course you also have to find time for a quick visit to the carwash to get rid of the traces that road pollution, bugs, birds, and pollen have left behind on the windows, body, and license plate. Something that you more or less take for granted. But it’s not that long ago that you needed a lot of time and effort to wash, dry, and polish your car to ensure that the paintwork kept its shine.

**The first carwash opened one hundred years ago**

Automobile Laundry was the name of the first carwash that Frank McCormick and J.W. Hinkle opened in Detroit (USA) in 1914. The International Carwash Association celebrated this centenary during the annual Car Wash Show in Chicago at the start of April 2014. In the beginning, the vehicles were pushed in a circle between different washing stations where workers performed the individual washing steps, such as applying soap, rinsing, and drying. Initially, there were only 32 carwashes of this type in the US until 1951, when the Anderson brothers developed the first fully automatic carwash in which the soap was applied to the cars before they were rinsed and dried with a 50 HP fan. Over the years, a flourishing industry developed from these humble beginnings – about 150,000 automatic carwashes around the world offer care-conscious car owners a wide range of programs – and in almost every one of these carwash systems you will find a little bit of Evonik Industries.

Where exactly? “Our concept is called one-stop shop,” says Dr. Jörg Figura, who is responsible for key accounts in Evonik’s Household Care Business Line. „That means manufacturers of car care products can get all the components they need for the four usual steps of car cleaning from one source.“ It’s worth having a look at these four steps: pre-wash (high-pressure cleaner), shampooing with heavy duty foam (brush wash), waxing, and drying. The chemical effect of the pre-wash loosens stubborn dirt – espe-
With its one-stop shop concept, Evonik offers a complete range of care products for cars. Especiallly the high protein, fatty bugs on the hood. The second stage is the brush wash: the heavy duty foam contains amine oxides and betaines. They are responsible for the following tasks: amine oxides and betaines are surface-active ingredients – they loosen and absorb the dirt. The third step on the road from a dirty car to a shiny clean vehicle is wax-ing. During the waxing process, silicone products seal the paintwork and protect it against dirt, UV radiation, and other external influences. Gloss driers are needed in the fourth and last step: they ensure outstanding drying results on the paint finish and clear, streak-free windows. They also give the surface a long-lasting deep gloss. As a specialty chemicals company, Evonik has suitable products for every one of these steps in its portfolio. One of these is REWO CARE DOC, a specialty ester-oil which provides for a quick displacement of the water film of the varnish surface. Although it has only been on the market for three years it is “already a top seller”, says Figura – and it stabilizes Evonik’s strong market position in terms of products for the drying step. Requirements in the market are constantly changing;
this includes the wishes of the customers, who are now increas-
singly concerned about the biodegradability of the products. As an
important producer of raw materials and additives for modern car
care, Evonik continuously develops new, efficient, and environ-
mentally friendly formulations.

Environmentally friendly carwash
Automatic carwashes offer clear benefits for the owners of the
roughly one billion cars throughout the world: apart from saving
time compared to hand washing in the front yard, modern car-
wash systems are generally deemed to be better for the environ-
ment. „The cleaning and care products pass through the washing
cycle in a closed system. This ensures that wastewater does not
pollute the environment. In addition to this, a similar hand wash
uses four times more fresh water than an automatic carwash,“
emphasizes Sigrid Pook, Managing Director of the German Asso-
ciation of Service Stations and Commercial Carwashes, referring
to the situation in the country where automobiles were invented.
Depending on the chosen program, water consumption is bet-
ween 120 and 300 liters per wash cycle. The proportion of fresh
water in this is between 30 and 80 liters per wash. The expert
estimates that you would need more than 400 liters of clean
water for a hand wash with a high pressure cleaner to achieve the
same result.

As a producer of raw materials and additives, Evonik develops
environmentally friendly formulations based on renewable raw
materials, also in collaboration with producers of cleaning and
care products for carwash systems. This ensures that the trip to
the carwash remains a natural environmentally friendly process
not only after you have returned from your vacation.

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Carwash Q&A*

1. In USA, can I wash my car on Sundays and statutory holidays? There are no uniform regulations which say about washing your car on Sundays and statutory holidays.

2. In USA, can I wash my car in my own yard? There are no uniform regulations in this regard.

3. Is a self-service carwash to be recommended? A self-service carwash allows car owners to coordinate the wash exactly to how dirty the car is, for example with no use of mechanical brushes. A self-service carwash may be a good alternative especially for classic cars.

4. Is it advisable to wash my car when it is raining? Since the effect of the care products is diminished by severe weather conditions, a carwash during rainy weather is not ideal.

5. Is a pre-wash necessary? The chemical effect of a pre-wash is the only way to get rid of stubborn dirt, such as dried bugs on the hood or dirt on the paintwork and rims.