

# The True Cost of Your Windshield Washer Fluid Stations

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Back when pay-at-the-pump and self-service gas stations were just ridiculous notions for gas stations, the local gas attendant would check your oil and wash your windows while pumping your gas. Then, convenient stores began to sell more than just Slurpees and cigarettes, they added self-serve gas to their offering, and an entire niche' was born.

Customers demanding lower prices were willing to pump their own gas and clean their own windshields. That's when stations and convenient stores all across America started putting up self-serve windshield washer fluid stations, but there are many costs and liabilities with installing such features at a gas station. Not only will a store spend \$100.00 or more per windshield washer unit, but if the units are neglected, the consumer will soon be frustrated resulting in the perception that the store has no customer service values. This is a great irony, since the whole concept was self-service, but self-service windshield washer stations do not equate to self-maintaining systems.

## Regular Attention is Key

Regular attention is required to properly maintain a windshield washer station. The regular use of windshield stations will result in a large collection of dirt and debris. In cleaning out the bucket inserts, we discover not only several inches of dirt in the bottom, but cans, paper towels, cigarette butts, and even food. Customers are in a hurry and will use the squeegee bucket as a trashcan. Even though we clean the buckets on a regular basis, we consistently find this to be true. We recommend cleaning the insert no less than bi-weekly—especially in the summertime when bugs will also collect causing a foul odor and very dirty water. Failing to keep your windshield stations clean will create a first impression of an un-kept station.

An average store with six pumps should use around 75 gallons of washer fluid per month (875 per year). If your station is using significantly less than this, pay close attention to see if the units are being neglected. When a bucket insert is less than half full, the ratio of dirt and debris to water is significant, and many consumers will not use the system to clean their windshield. This situation will only frustrate your customer who may choose to purchase at your competitors. Moreover, in cold climates the fluid will freeze faster in buckets that are less than half full due to evaporation and dilution from snow.

## Maintenance Costs

In order to properly maintain your windshield stations, store team members must regularly check on the system, get enough product to fill the system, fill the system, dispose used containers (empty trash as a result), account (properly expense) for the used product, and periodically clean the system. We recommend cleaning bi-weekly. The table below is a very conservative estimate and has been verified by an independent source.

Average gallons per location	875	Gallons	Annually
Fill the bucket inserts (not less than 2 min per gallon)	1,750	Minutes	Annually
Clean bucket inserts (not less than 30 min per month)	360	Minutes	Annually
Account (expense sheet) for supplies used at store	60	Minutes	Annually

Empty trash can (aprox. 8-9 gallons per can)	100	Minutes	Annually
Total service minutes per year	2,270	Minutes	Annually
Total service hours per year	37.83	Hours	Annually
Labor cost per hour (including tax and WC)	\$ 15.00		Hourly
Total labor cost for servicing windshield stations	<u>\$ 567.50</u>		Annually
Number of gallons discarded per year	875		Annually
Number of times trash dumpster is filled with jugs	3		Annually
Cost to empty trash dumpster	\$ 50.00		Per dump
Total allocated waste management cost to keep washer fluid in Windshield stations	\$ 150.00		Annually
Inventory carrying cost and shrinkage (2%)	\$ 32.16		Annually
Total allocated cost to service windshield stations	<u>\$ 749.66</u>		Annually
Total service cost per gallon	<u>\$ 0.86</u>		Per gallon

To properly analyze the actual cost of providing this to your customers, you must consider each activity as if it were not currently being done. In other words, what would it cost you if you were to start this feature today? The total service cost represents the allocated costs to provide washer fluid to your customers. **It does not include the cost of the product.** If your delivered price of product is \$ 1.40 per gallon, then your total cost would be **\$2.26 per gallon** (note this does not include shrinkage or other losses/expenses resulting from having this inventory at the store). If your station is an average sized station, your cost is approximately \$ 1975.00 per year. **Clean Shield can save you 25%.**

### Summer savings?

Some stations in the summer months choose to switch from packaged washer fluid to soapy water. This may reduce expenses, but not as much as you would think. There are a few things to consider. First, making your own water solution requires more time. Second, solution is clear until used and then appears dirtier than colored solutions. Third, additional time away from critical work may cost you in customer service. The table below outlines the additional service costs of changing over to a water solution for summer months (May through September). During this time, a typical store may use 300 to 500 gallons during this period.

May to Sept		400	Gallons
Time to clean bucket	0.5	200	Minutes
Time to fill 1 Gal	0.5	200	Minutes
Fill bucket	1.5	600	Minutes
Total additional hrs		10.0	Hours
Labor			
Cost	\$ 15.00	\$ 250.00	
Total additional labor cost per gal		\$ 0.62	

The additional 2 minutes per gallon (.5 to fill a large container, and 1.5 to fill the insert) is the result of filling a large container at the mop sink, carrying it out to the windshield station and filling. Because it will be larger, it will be heavy and bulky to carry. Most attendants will not fill the container much past 3

gallons, and thus, it will require additional trips. In addition to this cost is your cost for water and detergent. Dissolving tablets can cost up to \$ 1.00 each. Net cost can be as high as 1.62 for summer product that has no protection against temperatures below 32F.

Other key questions to ask when considering the total cost of providing this feature for your customers is:

1. Is maintenance of this feature neglected during critical periods (on cold winter nights)?
2. How much does it cost to overcome a bad impression created by neglected windshield stations?
3. Does this feature currently frustrate employees (or contribute to lower moral in cold periods)?
4. Does maintenance of this feature pull key personnel away from customers in the store?
5. Does maintenance of this feature pull key personnel away from other important tasks?

### **Automatic Keep-Fill Saves You and Your Community**

Smooth operations and happy, productive employees help to make a satisfied and delightful experience for customers, and improves store profits. Our patented Keep-Fill system automatically fills all windshield stations with product from a bulk tank. It is a self-maintaining system. By automating and streamlining the process, additional work for team members and team leaders is eliminated.

Because our system is automatic, there are no labor costs, no trash costs, and no equipment costs. We install the system at no charge, and each time we come to fill the system (usually monthly) we service the stations, clean them, and make sure the system is functioning properly.

Our product is guaranteed not to freeze and our goal is to delight your customers by making sure that they always find your stations full and clean. We consider it an honor to partner with you in bringing value to your customers and community.

Based upon your current estimated total cost per gallon of \$ 2.26, our system can currently save the average store location about \$ 0.57 cents per gallon. That is almost \$ 500.00 per location over the course of the year. One of our larger customers has 455 locations; that's an annual savings of over \$225,000.00.

The savings are attractive, the improved customer satisfaction is important, freeing up store attendants to serve customers is even more important, but the benefits don't stop there. A company with 455 locations using 875 gallons a year to fill windshield stations would discard almost 400,000 gallon jugs (which usually end up in the landfills). Companies using our ecologically responsible system are making our communities a better place to live.

Please contact us with questions about our system and how we may be able to help you accomplish your goals at your location. In Michigan, you can reach us at 616-799-5052 and you can find us on the web at [www.amazingblueinc.com](http://www.amazingblueinc.com). If your locations are outside Michigan, the national contacts are [www.CleanShieldUSA.com](http://www.CleanShieldUSA.com) or you can call us at 651-315-8219.