

# Dirty Gear

isn't 'Cool' it's  
Dangerous

by Haley Jorgensen, Public Image

**F**ighting fires in soiled gear used to be “cool,” according to Fire Chief Bob Carter of Hudson Fire Dept. in Hudson, Ohio. “Today we know it’s not,” he says, “because soiled gear can expose firefighters to biohazards and contaminants that can cause illness or even death.”

Safety is Carter’s number one concern as head of a department with 34 firefighters. By requiring his staff to launder their turnout gear in a Continental washer-extractor, he is helping to ensure their safety while extending the life of the gear. Since a set of quality turnout gear runs from \$1,000-\$1,500, and because professional laundry services are so costly, Carter says he couldn’t afford not to install an on-premise washer. Hosing down gear and scrubbing it with a long-handled brush wasn’t cutting it anymore.

Contaminants from a fire can expose firefighters to cancer-causing carcinogens, and eventually weaken the gear meant to protect them. That’s why the Fire and Emergency Manufacturers and Services Association, Inc., recommends washing soiled turnout gear immediately after exposure to fire or body fluids. “If there is fabric breakdown,” says Carter, “you have a potential for burns or death.” By cleaning the gear promptly and thoroughly in the Continental machine, Carter says the department will extend the life of the gear by 50 percent – a definite cost savings.

With the help of Continental distributor Advantage Equipment, Kent, Ohio, Carter chose a Continental Pro-Series™, high performance washer-extractor, because of its flexible microprocessor control and programmable extract speeds that reach 387-G force. The easy-to-operate control allows firemen to select extraction speeds and rinse cycles. Typically, contaminated garments are rinsed four times at the highest extraction speed in order to remove particulate matter and excess water. With only one set of gear per firefighter, Carter says it’s critical that the washer removes nearly all of the water from the fabric, reducing drying time. “Wet turn-out gear is dangerous because it can cause

terrible steam burns,” he says. “With only one set per person, we need to be sure it dries quickly.”

Another benefit of the Continental machine is that it is not necessary to bolt it to an expensive and permanent concrete foundation — saving time and money. Chief Carter had the washer-extractor installed in a spare space in the firehouse’s mechanical room, per the advice of Advantage Equipment. “It sits about 10 feet from my office on the other side of a wall and I can hardly hear it running,” he says.

Carter maintains that he’s pleased with the service provided by Advantage Equipment and with the performance of the Continental washer. Most of all, he feels good knowing that Hudson’s fire-protection gear is finally getting clean and doing its job to keep his firefighters safe.

Continental Girbau, Inc., is a world-renowned provider of commercial and industrial laundry equipment and laundry production systems. Continental’s Pro-Series washers featuring new G-Drive™ technology, are available in 18-, 30-, 55-, 90-, 130- and 255-pound capacities. All are backed by the company’s 5-Year/3-Year limited parts warranty.



Fire Chief Bob Carter of Hudson Fire Dept. in Hudson, Ohio is shown here with the department’s high performance washer extractor from Continental. The Pro-Series™ line extracts at speeds of up to 387 G’s, leaving gear drier and saving the department valuable time and money.