



Oshkosh Fire Dept. Invests in Continental Girbau Gear Washers

By Haley Jorgensen

The Oshkosh Fire Dept., in Oshkosh, Wis., takes the health of their firefighters seriously. That's why, in 2023, the department completed the installation of Continental Girbau turnout gear washers in five of six stations.

The Oshkosh Fire Dept. operates six fire stations, employs 107 firefighter/paramedics and provides a host of services, including firefighting, water/vehicle/trench/aircraft rescue, hazardous material response and emergency medical services to the city of Oshkosh and nearby townships. For years, it relied on just one front-load washer to clean bunker gear. Thankfully that's changed.

"Firefighters have a higher incidence of several types of cancer," said Battalion Chief Andrew Jaeger. "We clean the gear to reduce that risk and to extend the life of the gear."

Highly Programmable Continental Gear Washers

Today, after active firefighting, or in the case of exposure to biohazards, Oshkosh firefighters have quick access to Continental Girbau gear washers for removing dangerous contaminants from protective gear. The washers are programmed to clean gear according to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1851 guidelines.

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Simple Operation and Extended Gear Life

The process is straightforward. While still at the fire site, contaminated gear is rinsed with a hose, bagged and transported back to the station in a separate vehicle. Once there, firefighters wash their gear liners and shells separately. They load the washer, enter a program number and press start.

The Continental Girbau gear washers automatically handle the rest — combining the right cleaning chemicals, water temperatures and levels, baths and rinses, spin speeds and cycle times to properly clean the gear. The washers also feature a sanitize setting for anything contaminated with body fluids.

Once washed, turnout gear dries in about 3 hours using station gear dryers. In the interim, firefighters rely on backup gear.

By keeping gear clean, it should last longer, according to Jaeger, because fire contaminants are removed that can breakdown the integrity of the gear's protective fabrics. "Extending gear life is important because each set costs about \$3,500," he said.

Peace of Mind

At the end of the day, Jaeger says he feels good knowing Oshkosh firefighters can clean and service bunker gear much more quickly than before. The new equipment and procedures for handling dirty gear also mean fire trucks and apparatuses don't smell like smoke anymore. "Having the Continental washers is a huge advantage for us in terms of safety and minimizing risk to firefighters," said Jaeger. "The machines are super reliable, quick, efficient and effective."



For more information about Continental Girbau turnout gear washers and dryers, visit gnalaundry.com or call 800-256-1073.