Window Cleaning Business Setup Checklist

This WCA checklist walks you through the systems, tools and routines a window cleaning business needs to run smoothly, from first setup through to growth. Work through each section in order, tick off what is done, and revisit it at least once a year.

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1. Setup

- **Choose your business name and register as self-employed** with HMRC, and keep records from day one. Ask your accountant about your tax obligations.
- **Set up a separate business bank account** so income and expenses stay clear and simple to report.
- **Take out public liability insurance** and keep the certificate ready to show customers and clients.
- **Create a simple price list** for windows, conservatories, gutters, fascias, soffits and UPVC frames, and decide whether you charge per visit, per pane or per property.

2. Customers

- **Set up your customer database** in a CRM or scheduling tool such as Cleanround, Squeegee, Round Monster, Get Soapy, Cleaner Planner or Awoka. Record name, address, phone, email, service, frequency and access notes.
- **Follow up every new enquiry within 48 hours** with a quote, a booking date and a short thank-you message.
- **Use a quote template** that shows what is included, the frequency and the payment terms, and send it the same day you visit.
- **Group customers by round, frequency and value** so you can plan visits and spot your best regular clients.

3. Scheduling and Rounds

- **Plan rounds by postcode** to cut travel time and fuel costs. Keep a list of which day each round is cleaned.
- **Set your cleaning frequency** for each customer (for example every four weeks) and write it into the booking system.
- **Send reminders before each visit** and confirm any change of date or access arrangement in writing.
- **Write a weather and cancellation policy** so customers know what happens if rain or wind stops work.

4. Money

- **Invoice on completion or monthly** and set payment terms that customers can see on every invoice.
- **Offer easy ways to pay** such as bank transfer, card payment or Direct Debit for regular rounds.
- **Chase overdue invoices** with a polite reminder at 7 days, a firmer one at 14 days, and a call at 21 days.
- **Track income and expenses every week** including chemicals, ladders, vehicle costs and mileage. Ask your accountant about VAT registration once you approach the threshold.

5. Equipment and Supplies

- **List your equipment** including water-fed poles, ladders, squeegees, pads, buckets and vehicle fittings, with the date each item was bought.
- **Set reorder levels** for chemicals, pads and consumables, and keep a short list of suppliers with their contact details.
- **Inspect equipment regularly** and keep a simple record of checks, repairs and replacements.

6. Health, Safety and Insurance

This section is built on HSE guidance for window cleaners, including the HSE best practice guide for water-fed pole systems, GS6 (Avoiding danger from overhead power lines), and the main regulations listed at the end of each part. Keep a written record of each step.

6.1 Legal duties and risk assessment

- **Write a risk assessment** using the five steps: identify the hazards, decide who might be harmed and how, evaluate the risks and decide on controls, record your findings, and review and update the assessment. Cover every site type you work on, including houses, commercial premises, high-rise and roadside work. Review it after any incident, near miss, change of equipment or change of method.
- **Assess each site before you start** for access, building design, obstacles, pole angle, ground conditions, weather, traffic and overhead power sources. Check what is above and around the property as well as the glass.
- **Keep the records** for at least three years where they show your controls, training, inspections and any accidents or near misses.
- **Keep employers' liability insurance in place** if you employ anyone (it is a legal requirement), and keep public liability insurance in place for customers and the public.

Regulations: Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999; Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

6.2 Avoid working at height and choose the safest access

- **Avoid working at height where reasonably practicable.** Check first whether the glass can be cleaned from inside, from the ground or from a safe position. Water-fed poles let you clean windows up to 80 ft (24 m) from ground level.
- **Use ladders only for low-risk, short-duration jobs.** Use them only where a safer method is not practical, and keep each ladder use short. Set the ladder at the correct angle, secure it and never overreach.
- **Use a MEWP, scaffold or other access where needed.** Use a platform or access system for jobs that cannot be reached safely from the ground or a ladder. Make sure any operator is trained and competent.
- **Work from a safe stance.** Never stand on window ledges, sills, wheelie bins, bonnets or roofs to reach a window.

Regulations: Work at Height Regulations 2005.

6.3 Overhead power lines (GS6)

- **Assume every overhead line is live.** A line that looks dead may not be. Water conducts electricity, and arcing can happen without contact, so stay well clear.
- **Look up before you raise a pole or ladder.** Identify the lines, the safe stand-off distance and the exclusion zone before any equipment is raised. Use GS6 to set the distances. Check the lines on every elevation before you start.
- **Do not work near overhead lines in rain, mist or drizzle,** or during an electrical storm or thunder and lightning.

- **Stop work if a pole or ladder comes close to a line,** and do not continue until the risk is controlled. If contact is made, stay in the vehicle if you are in it, warn others to stay away, call 999 and ask the electricity network operator to disconnect the supply.
- **Use insulated or glass-fibre poles near overhead lines,** and require a certificate of conformity for any insulation claim.
- **Train everyone** to recognise and avoid overhead hazards. Use the Look Up, Look Out guidance and the WCA Toolbox Talk on overhead power lines.

Regulations: Electricity at Work Regulations 1989; HSE GS6 (fourth edition, 2013).

6.4 Water-fed pole equipment

- **Do a pre-use check every time.** Look for worn, cracked, dented or bent sections, loose clamps, fittings and butt rings, and leaks. Do not use a defective pole.
- **Do not use the pole in high winds,** near overhead lines, or during thunder and lightning.
- **Never leave a pole unattended in an elevated position,** regardless of the wind.
- **Keep the water system clean.** Clean all pole sections weekly, replace filters at the manufacturer's intervals, and sterilise the system annually.
- **Protect the water from bacteria.** Water above 20°C allows bacteria to multiply. Store the system cool, and drain the tank and filters if the system is idle for more than three days in warm weather. Assess the Legionella risk.
- **Carry out management inspections** at least every three months, and keep a record of them. Repair or replace defective equipment before use.
- **Choose the lightest pole** that reaches the top of the window without overreaching.

Regulations: Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER); Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH).

6.5 Vehicles, tanks and loads

- **Secure the tank and equipment** so the load cannot shift in normal driving, emergency braking or a collision.
- **Keep to the payload limit.** A full tank puts the vehicle close to its maximum payload. Allow for equipment and passengers.
- **Have the in-vehicle installation inspected annually** by a competent person, and complete any remedial work.
- **Risk-assess your journeys** and allow for braking distances when the tank is full.

Regulations: Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; Road Traffic Act 1988; Road Vehicle (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986.

6.6 Working in public and around the property

- **Cordon off an area** at least as wide as the pole is high, and display warning signs in public areas.
- **Keep hoses away from walkways and roads.** Use a trolley or backpack system in pedestrian areas. Never run hoses across roads or vehicle areas unless barriers and warning signs are in place.
- **Raise and lower the pole only in verified safe areas,** and keep it in contact with the building while doing so.
- **Take care in cold weather.** Remove excess water from walkways with a floor squeegee, and apply sodium grit to prevent ice.
- **Stop if you cannot keep control** of the pole or the work.

Regulations: Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

6.7 Chemicals and cleaning products

- **Keep a COSHH assessment** for every product you use, with the safety data sheet, and store products in their original containers.
- **Train staff** on how to handle, store, dilute and dispose of products, and what to do after a spill or splash.
- **Keep a first-aid and spill kit** and make sure everyone knows where it is.

Regulations: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH).

6.8 Manual handling and fatigue

- **Use arm-only operation for poles up to 10 m.** Use leg and whole-body movement for longer poles to reduce strain on the upper body.
- **New staff should master poles up to 10 m** before using longer ones.
- **Manage fatigue** by taking regular breaks, sharing poles, switching sides and changing position. Watch for musculoskeletal pain and report it early.

Regulations: Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992.

6.9 Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- **Include PPE in your risk assessment.** Wear safety footwear, hi-vis clothing (especially near traffic and pedestrians), and gloves suited to the task.
- **Use electrically rated gloves and footwear** where there is an electrical hazard, such as near overhead cables, rail routes or substations.
- **Wear a hard hat** where poles could dislodge building fabric or on construction sites.

Regulations: Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992.

6.10 Training, competence and supervision

- **Train and assess every operator** at the start and then on an ongoing basis, covering daily pre-use checks, manual handling, ground conditions, weather, cordoning off, common hazards and the dos and don’ts.
- **Close any gaps** with training or supervision until the person is competent.
- **Choose a competent person** who can spot defects, judge their effect on the day’s work, refuse unsafe work and ask for help.
- **Brief your team regularly** using WCA Toolbox Talks, and keep a record of each briefing.

Regulations: Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

6.11 Lone working

- **Risk-assess lone working** for yourself and for any employee, and add help where one person cannot control the risks.
- **Keep in contact** at intervals of no more than one hour, by phone or radio, and agree what happens if contact is missed.

Regulations: Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

6.12 First aid, accidents and reporting

- **Assess your first-aid needs** and keep a suitable first-aid kit on every vehicle and site. Make sure at least one person knows how to use it.
- **Keep an accident and near-miss book** and record every incident, including near misses.
- **Report under RIDDOR** when required. Report deaths and specified injuries without delay. Report an over-seven-day injury (where the worker cannot do normal work for more than seven days) within 15 days, using the HSE online form.

Regulations: Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981; Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR).

7. Growth

- **Set up a Google Business Profile** with your service area, photos and opening hours, and keep it up to date.
- **Ask happy customers for a Google review** with a short message and a direct link. Reply to every review.
- **Use referrals and local marketing** such as a referral offer, flyers in your area and before-and-after photos (with permission).
- **Review your numbers each month** including rounds, income, costs and new customers, and plan one improvement at a time.

Disclaimer

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