

BY SPFA'S CONSULTANT COMMITTEE, MASON KNOWLES, ROGER MORRISON, PHIL ROBARGE, JOHN HATFIELD, ROB SMITH

SPFA gets calls regularly from customers, designers, architects and others looking for straight answers to their questions on SPF. Here is a question received recently that our panel of experts addressed:



Is purchasing used equipment ever a good idea?

Mostly no, but sometimes yes.

Too often we have seen contractors purchase used sprayfoam rigs for about half the cost of new ones and then drop enough money on repairs the following year that they could have purchased new rigs.

It is our opinion that the newer contractors whose crews have less than two years experience in spraying, maintaining and troubleshooting sprayfoam equipment should avoid purchasing used equipment. A new contractor has enough of a learning curve with the basics of sprayfoam and should not add the inherent problems that older equipment might bring to the table. For example, a used proportioner might have a heater that has defective heating rods which cannot provide the heat input ("delta T") required in colder weather. If the equipment is purchased in the summer, that problem might not be recognized until winter hits when the heaters can't keep up with the proportioner.

Additionally, there may be good reasons for even an experienced contractor with good mechanical and troubleshooting skills to stay away from used equipment.

A key question: Why is the equipment up for sale? If the seller is in financial trouble or can't keep the equipment running, then you may be buying someone else's problems. If the equipment has not been used recently, the entire A-side of the proportioner, hoses, transfer pumps, heaters, etc. may need replacing. Electrical components may be shot or just about to fail.

Here are a few of the deal killers:

- The equipment hasn't been maintained or used recently.
- The equipment is outdated or doesn't match your needs.

- Spare parts and manufacturer technical service are not easily obtained.
- The equipment has been mothballed without a proper flush out.
- The equipment is priced too high for the value.

So based on these factors, is there ever a good reason to buy used equipment? Possibly.

Reasons that you might buy used equipment:

- The equipment has been completely refurbished by a reputable equipment distributor who offers a warranty on it and is priced no more than 50% of the cost of new equipment.
- If not refurbished, the equipment is deeply discounted (5-10% of original costs).
- You or your employees have good mechanical ability and experience with sprayfoam equipment troubleshooting, maintenance and repair.
- You don't need the equipment immediately and can take the time to carefully evaluate it piece by piece and make the necessary repairs and parts replacements.
- Your distributor carries plenty of spare parts for the equipment and can assist with technical customer service on that particular rig.
- The equipment is geared toward your application and business.
- The equipment can be cannibalized for parts on your other rig.

Remember that used equipment that is apparently working well and has apparently been maintained properly can develop problems. Electrical components, such as circuit boards or the heated hose assemblies, can go out without warning and are expensive to replace. Without a manufacturer's or rebuilder's warranty, you are stuck.



Does it matter if the foam equipment is part of a sprayfoam rig including trailer, compressor, generator and other supplies? The same assessment needs to be used to evaluate and value every component of the foam rig. Each piece of equipment has the potential to cost the buyer thousands of dollars in repairs and replacement parts.

If you decide to buy used equipment plan on re-conditioning it just like an equipment distributor would. Dismantle the mechanical elements of the proportioner and transfer pumps, replace seals, screens, o-rings and any parts that are worn. Check for broken or bent parts and replace as needed. Check out the electrical continuity, breakers, circuit boards, heating elements, etc. Tear down the spray guns and clean and replace parts as needed, particularly o-rings, slide seals, mixing chambers, trigger assemblies, bent frames, etc.

The final word: With used equipment, be skeptical, diligent and cautious. Know your limitations and those of the equipment. ○



Above: This used equipment might be a good buy, but still would need to be checked out. Below: These proportioners are only good for parts.

