

## Micro-Abrasive Blasting An Effective and Economical Way to Clean Plastic and Rubber Molds

Injection molds used to produce molded parts develop a buildup of residue from lubricating compounds, burnt polymers, and cooling liquids. To maintain cosmetic and dimensional quality, the build up of residue needs to be cleaned from the cavity periodically. The job can be accomplished by using chemicals to soak the molds clean or by hand or mechanical scrubbing. Soaking can take hours and scrubbing by hand can be labor intensive for cleaning complex molds and can cause damage to the mold if unskilled employees are used.

Micro-Abrasive Blasters are ideal for cleaning molds because they are effective at removing surface build up without damaging or changing the mold base structure. In addition, these blasters allow the operator to clean areas of very intricate molds better and more quickly than by hand or chemicals. The blasting operation can be performed in an enclosed lighted work chamber where the blasting pen and media tanks are fully integrated or with a mobile blasting system that can be taken to the cleaning site. Micro – Abrasive Blasters allow a multitude of different media to be used as well as different nozzle configurations and air pressure settings to achieve the desired results. Industrial quality Mobile blasters can cost around \$500.00 compared to an entry level, fully integrated blasting system costing \$1000.00. The choice of which media to use depends on the make up of the residue on the mold, removal time, and at the same time, protect the mold from dimensional changes as a result of the cleaning.

Most commonly used abrasive media:

Plastic media is typically used to clean a mold when a polymer layer needs to be removed. It is aggressive enough to remove these stubborn deposits without damaging the mold surface.

Sodium Bicarbonate is very soft but has sharp features that allow it to cut through the deposits without compromising the mold structure.