



Founder of Brown Bear Car Washes regains operation of regional chain; improvements and expansion planned

SEATTLE, Washington—The original owner of Brown Bear Car Washes, the largest car wash chain in the Northwest, has regained management and operation of 28 car wash locations in King and other counties and has announced plans for extensive improvements and a regional expansion.

Seattle-based Car Wash Enterprises, Inc. (CWE) will once again operate the 18 automatic and 10 self-service Brown Bear Car Washes it leased in 1995 to Tosco, now ConocoPhillips. CWE President Vic Odermat said his company would embark on an aggressive program of site improvements, service upgrades and expansion over the next several months.

Odermat established the first Brown Bear Car Wash in 1962 on 15th Ave. West in Seattle.

Odermat said the Brown Bear management team would initially focus on enhancing the customer experience at each site. Brown Bear employees will soon be dressed in white shirts and ties and there will be a concentrated effort to reduce customer wait times at the automatic car washes. Customers can also anticipate a revised pricing structure with reduced car wash prices.

He said the 14 locations that sell gasoline will continue to carry the "76" brand.

"We're evaluating each location, top to bottom," said Odermat. "The locations are slated for extensive cleaning and new color schemes, with many locations undergoing significant equipment upgrades during 2004."

Odermat said the expanded company would continue to be a "family affair," backed by a veteran car wash management team. He said the decision to again operate the extensive number of car washes was made easier with addition of his son, Lance, to the executive team. A practicing attorney, he has been named vice-president and general counsel of CWE. Daughter Susan Odermat serves as advertising consultant and spearheads the company's charitable endeavors. The founder's wife, Mary, has been active in the company and civic affairs for a number of years.

Tom North has been named Brown Bear's general manager and will oversee the day-to-day operations. He formerly held the same position at the car wash chain between 1975 and 1995. Also rejoining the Brown Bear upper management team will be Jeff Knutson, George Hobson, Steve Palmer, Darren Bruno, and Omar Molinari. The Brown Bear Car Wash operations are again based at corporate offices located at 3977 Leary Way.

Since 1995, CWE has acquired three self-service car wash locations in Spokane, and one self-service location in Cheney that operate under the name of The Bubble Machine. CWE also operates an automatic car wash in Tacoma, Washington under The Bubble Machine name. Odermat said the Bubble Machine sites would eventually be rebranded as Brown Bear Car Washes.

In November 1995, Odermat signed a long-term lease that transferred all the Brown Bear Car Wash sites and operations to Tosco Refining and Marketing Company. At the time CWE entered into the lease with Tosco, Tosco was the Seattle based operator of the British Petroleum retailing network in the Northwest. Tosco had originally planned that Brown Bear Car Wash would be expanded within Washington and to other Western states. However, Tosco ultimately chose to focus on expanding its gasoline retail and convenience store network. Phillips Petroleum acquired Tosco in 2001.

Prior to the 1995 Tosco lease agreement, CWE, through Brown Bear, contributed to over 200 charities and community causes each year and sponsored the Brown Bear exhibit in the award winning Northern Trail section of the Woodland Park Zoo. CWE, through Brown Bear, intends to once again become highly active in charitable endeavors.