

# The Bitimec SpeedyWash System

by Larry Plachno  
Photos courtesy of Bitimec

The history of Bitimec dates back to the late 1980s when several professionals began working together on the same project. In little more than a decade and a half, Bitimec has already outgrown two facilities as sales continue to climb. In 2004, the company moved into this new state-of-the-art, 320,000-square foot building which includes production, parts and offices.

How do you wash your buses? Some bus companies still wash buses by hand. This is terribly time consuming but has the advantage that it can be done almost anywhere and does not require a building or permanent equipment installation. Others prefer more elaborate bus washing equipment, usually installed in a garage bay. An increasing number of bus operators are using the Bitimec SpeedyWash system which has the advantages of both systems. They do not require a permanent building installation and can be used in many locations, both inside and out. In addition, the Bitimec SpeedyWash system has the advantage of larger and more expensive installations in that it will wash a coach in as little as seven minutes.

The Bitimec SpeedyWash system was not created overnight but took several years to develop. Several experts had come together in Italy in the 1980s in three groups in specialized but related fields. They began to network and cooperate, each bringing their own expertise to each project. One group was a mechanical workshop that specialized in fab-

ricating equipment for industrial automation. The other two groups consisted of industrial designers who had decades of experience in both electrical systems design and in mechanical systems design. Working together, the three groups were able to complete turnkey projects from inception to realization.

A major opportunity came in 1986 when these three groups were challenged to work together to develop an improved version of a train and railcar washing machine. The unit then popular dated from the 1960s and was a ride-on system with three wheels. The new partners were equal to the challenge. They developed a much more practical unit on four wheels which offered considerably more stability as well as double operator controls and bi-directional working capacity. This unit was well received and became the forerunner of the SpeedyWash line for washing buses and truck trailers.

This new washer was so successful that the partners decided to get together on a permanent basis. The following individuals were included in the original founders.

Bruno A. Tiesi is a mechanical engineer and became president of Bitimec Srl in Italy. Bruno worked 11 years in a major industrial plant as project director and established a project consulting service for the design of industrial equipment and vehicles.

Enzo Ghini is also a mechanical engineer who, with Maurizio Gori, started a small equipment manufacturing business, designing and producing vehicles and other specialty equipment. Enzo had been working eight years before joining Bitimec as one of the founding partners, and is in charge of production and planning.

Roberto Tanini is an electrical engineer and was production director for 10 years in a major industrial complex producing specialized electrical equipment. At Bitimec, Roberto is in charge of design, planning, purchasing, production and quality control for the electrical components.

Lido Bartalesi is also an electrical engineer and is in charge of quality control and technical assistance on electrical systems.

Maurizio Gori is a mechanical engineer who was Enzo Ghini's partner in their eight-year specialty equipment design and manufacturing business. Maurizio is in charge of design, planning, production and quality control for the mechanical components.

The initial Bitimec team also included Stefania Boscarino as administrative manager and Morando Moneti in charge of Italian sales.

With the success of this first washer, the group was required to start production

which in turn encouraged a unification of resources and staff in one location. What developed was a single company which was not only capable of designing advanced equipment but also of producing on an industrial scale. In 1988, Bitimec was formed in Florence and immediately began production while introducing innovations in the food, transportation, electronic controls and industrial washing sectors.

Over the following decade, Bitimec would move ahead in many areas, but two of these stood out. One was working with customers to improve their vehicle washing units. The second was in developing additional models to meet specific customer needs.

Bitimec engineered numerous important advances in the portable washing industry and was granted several patents. The original single brush washers were plagued by corrosion and by instability with the lean feature. Bitimec solves these problems by building all frames and bases with corrosion proof stainless steel, and with a patented brush only leaning mechanism. This replaced the typical earlier system which involved leaning the entire base, frame and brush shroud – which lifted the two rear corner wheels to the point of instability. This unique Bitimec advantage allows operators to wash sloped wind-

Although some of the parts for the Speedy Wash line are outsourced, all assembly takes place in the Bitimec facility. This photo shows the final assembly process on the battery-powered 626 model. The Speedy Wash line is sold in more than 40 countries.







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shields without loss of control or stability. The engineering staff also developed a fifth wheel hydrostatic traction drive system to safely propel their units on unusual surfaces as well as uneven ground.

Bitimec moved ahead rapidly in the area of single brush bus washing equipment. In 1993, Bitimec manufactured the very first completely autonomous bus washer. The SpeedyWash A225 was the first self-powered, self-contained walk-around bus washer capable of carrying its own water and detergent wherever needed. Water hoses and electrical cords were no longer required. This new unit revolutionized bus washing and provided a major jump in technology.

Three years later, in 1996, Bitimec took another step forward with their battery powered model 626. This took the advantages of the previous model A225 and added the extra features of noise-free and emission-free operation. It could be easily used both outside as well as in smaller, enclosed wash bays.

What might be considered the top of the SpeedyWash bus washer line came in 1999. This new Pony model was a battery-powered model that allowed the operator to ride along. In addition to the features of the previous models, the Pony provided a seat and comfort cab for the operator. Three years later, in 2002, the Pony took another step forward with the introduction of hybrid diesel/electric drive. It was equally comfortable washing coaches in an unpaved yard running on diesel power, or in an enclosed building running on 24-volt batteries without noise or pollution.

When Bitimec was born in 1988, the company operated in a 4,000-square foot facility. This lasted only eight years until 1996 when the 626 battery powered washer was introduced to the product line. In order to cope with sales, Bitimec increased their production area to 12,000 square feet and added 20,000 square feet of yard storage.

Continued expansion forced the company to move to a new state-of-the-art facility in 2004. This facility has 320,000 square feet under roof with more than 200,000 square feet dedicated to production. The next 100,000 square feet are used for parts storage, technical offices, and administrative office. The remaining area is in use as an infirmary and a kitchen-equipped mess hall. All of the components that go into the Speedy-Wash units are designed by the Bitimec staff, although certain items are subcontracted to specialty suppliers and fabricators.

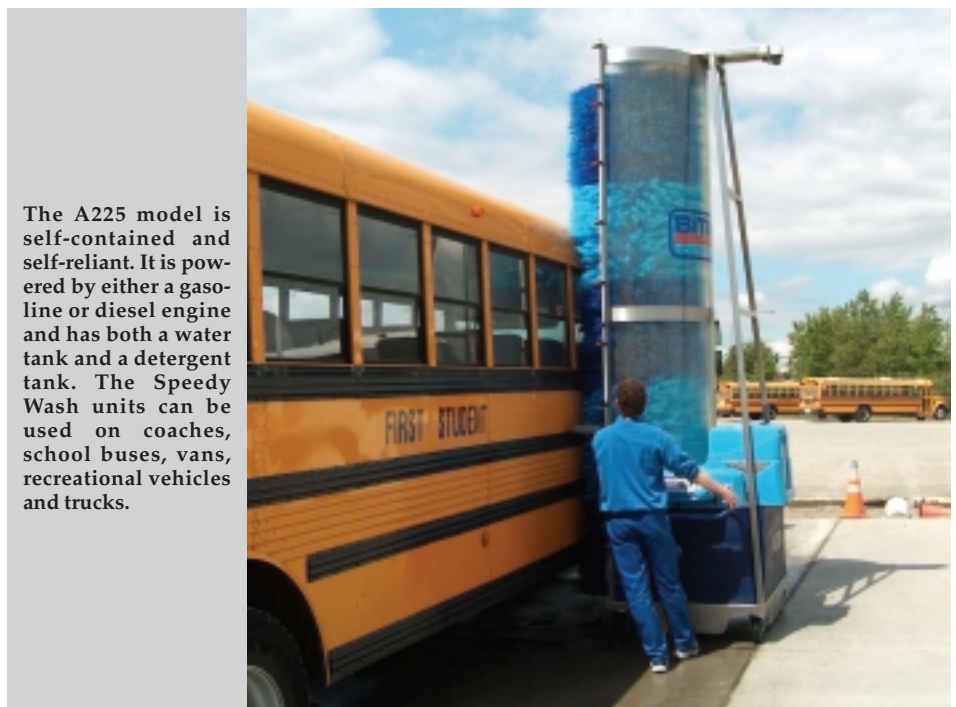
In addition to the SpeedyWash units, Bitimec produces several other products.



The 101 is the basic Speedy Wash model and does require both electrical and water connections. This unit is being used in a bus garage in Flushing, New York. The connections are overhead.

These include electric traction utility vehicles that can be equipped for various uses. At the very top of the washer line are railcar washers which can wash high two-floor railcars, the high speed (200 mph) TGV trains

in France, and the special ETR trains in Austria and Italy. Bitimec also provides modular merchandise transportation systems that are exported worldwide, including to the new Kohls stores in the United States.



The A225 model is self-contained and self-reliant. It is powered by either a gasoline or diesel engine and has both a water tank and a detergent tank. The Speedy Wash units can be used on coaches, school buses, vans, recreational vehicles and trucks.



Bitimec's SpeedyWash system for buses has now developed into four distinct models that provide a wide range of different advantages and capabilities. Here are some of the differences and advantages of each model.

**101** – The 101 is the basic model of the SpeedyWash line. Unlike the autonomous models, the 101 does require electrical and water connections and so its operational area is somewhat limited. However, it can be used both indoors and outdoors. The 101 features dual controls and can easily wash in both directions, thereby handling even the most difficult of surfaces. Even this basic model, however, is made totally in stainless steel and has the safe brush only lean feature.

**A225** – The A225 is impressively self-contained and self-reliant. An electric start is standard and you can choose between a gasoline or diesel engine for power. Standard equipment includes a 112-gallon water tank (enough for about five coaches) and the centrally located hydrostatic traction wheel which keeps it maneuverable in uneven outdoor parking areas. A 13-gallon detergent application system is optional. The A225 goes anywhere to wash a coach, even to a corner of your parking yard.

**626** – The SpeedyWash 626 is effectively the electric and ecological version of the A225. It carries 112 gallons of water and 13 gallons of detergent. However, the 626 is

The Pony model is considered the top of the line for bus washing. In addition to a water tank and detergent tank it also has a cab to give the operator some comfort and protection. You can order the Pony with 24-volt battery power or as a hybrid with both a diesel engine and battery power. Note that the Bitimec Speedy Wash units are also very suitable to washing vans and smaller buses.



powered by 24-volt batteries instead of an engine. It can still go outside to the corner of the parking yard to wash a bus, but it can also work inside to wash a bus in a bay, noiselessly and emission free.

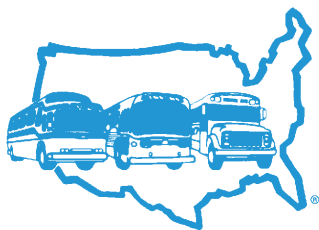
**Pony** – Although Bitimec makes more sophisticated units for railcars, the Pony is usually considered the top of the line for bus companies. Like the A225 and 626, it carries 112 gallons of water and 13 gallons of detergent. However, it also has a cab to give the operator some comfort and protection, and a steering wheel with power steering to make washing easier and more exacting. The Pony can be purchased with 24-volt battery power only, or as a hybrid diesel/battery workhorse. Again, it is equally at home in a corner of the parking lot as well as in a bus bay.

Bruno Albanesi is president of Bitimec in the USA and is in charge of Bitimec's international sales. Bruno has a B.S. in Finance from Belmont Hall College in England, and an Executive MBA Degree from Pace University in New York. He has headed Bitimec's expansion into more than 20 countries. Sales in the United States and Canada have been increasing as bus owners and operators become aware of the Bitimec SpeedyWash system. Five Bitimec SpeedyWash units were recently sold to Motor Coach Industries for use at their service centers to wash customer buses coming in for service and repairs. ABC has also become a fan with an order for their first 626 Battery machine in Garden Grove, California.

Information on the Bitimec SpeedyWash units is available by phoning Bitimec in Connecticut at (877) 637-1900, by sending an e-mail to [info@bitimec.com](mailto:info@bitimec.com), or visiting the Web site at [www.bitimec.com](http://www.bitimec.com). □

The Speedy Wash 626 is effectively the electric and ecological version of the A225. It is powered by 24 volt batteries but still has both a water tank and detergent tank. It is equally at home inside a building or in your bus yard.





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