

## Keep Your Air Humid Automatically

- by Ramón Bannister



Figure 1: Humidifier by Bonaire®

**Product:** A humidifier: Bonaire® with Microban® filter, Model #BCM658

**Retail Price:** \$59.99

**Rating:** Good

Now that winter is upon us, Kena Cubed™, Inc. decided to do a review of a humidifier. Winter in the northeast can be quite dry, especially when you use a forced hot air heater. It was my job to choose a humidifier and get an overall impression of how well it works.

### Brief Product Description

The product is described by the instruction manual as a digital cool mist humidifier with a permanent filter. When powered on, it draws air through a rear intake. The air goes through a wick-type filter to remove deposits and other impure elements. It finally gets directed through the top of the unit where the moist air is dispersed into the room. The box highlights that it has a digital humidistat and that the unit features a “space-saving tower design.” I bought the unit because I grew frustrated with having to buy filters for my other humidifier, making an otherwise cheap humidifier very expensive. The Bonaire® humidifier has a reusable filter that you clean periodically, thus saving a bundle of cash.

### Review

The box is fairly large, but I was honestly expecting a smaller unit. It’s actually quite tall and skinny at 23 7/8” high X 8 ¼” wide. Its black and gray colors and its aerodynamic look give it a high-tech appearance. The bright, back-lit digital display is also well-designed, giving ample room for the information it provides to the user: under what mode it’s operating, the room humidity level it senses, and the target humidity the consumer chooses. The manufacturer gave plenty of electrical cord

length which measures about 6 feet.

Though confusing at first, it is easy to learn how to operate the unit. The digital humidistat has three basic functions (two modes): continuous, automatic and timer operation. The first time you press the power button, it is in continuous mode set to “HI.” If you want it on medium or low, you push the power

button again. In other words, to get it on low-continuous, you push the power button 3 times (Hi-med-low). If you push it a fourth time, you put the unit into automatic mode. This is my favorite mode, because the unit will automatically turn on or off depending on the humidity level you want. This mode also has a hi-med-low setting, which you choose by pushing the power button repeatedly. There are two buttons with up and down arrows that you use to set the humidity level anywhere between 30% to 65% humidity.

The last function is timer operation. This allows you to either have the unit turn itself on or off after a preset amount of time. So, if you go to work and you want the humidifier to automatically turn on 1 hr. before you come home, just set the timer (when the unit is off) for 7 or 8 hours, and it will come on at a preset level of 45% humidity for 2 hours. Or, if the unit is on, you push the timer button and set it to turn itself off after however many hours you set.

I tested all modes and functions and they all worked as stated in the instruction manual. I like setting the automatic mode at night. The unit is much quieter than I expected even when on “hi,” and yet it is still quite effective in adjusting the humidity level of the room. It was also effective when I moved it to the large living room even though it is designed for medium-sized rooms. I had a nice, hot fire in the fireplace, but that always dries up the air especially when the fireplace is going for 4 hours or more. A little smoke also comes into the room. When I brought the humidifier to the living room I set it on “hi” in continuous mode to increase the low 30% or so humidity level. Within about 15-30 minutes, the unit had brought that level up to about 42%. Probably the height of the unit helps the user to notice the humidity faster as well.

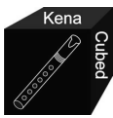
But then I noticed a few disadvantages of the unit. The humidifier was obviously not designed to be moved often. It was a bit awkward to carry downstairs when moving it to the living room. Thankfully it doesn't take much space. Moreover, the digital display is bright, and with no option to lessen the brightness, I had to rotate the unit so that it wouldn't bother me at night. Probably the most frustrating part of the unit is the water reservoir. It holds 1.3 gallons of water. That doesn't sound like much, but consider that one gallon of water weighs roughly eight pounds. Though not as heavy as the 5 gallons of water I have to carry when I do a water change in my aquarium, 1.3 gallons of water weighs about 10.4 pounds.

That wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't for the shape and length (15 ½”) of the reservoir. The instructions say to fill it up with a faucet. Only the kitchen sink and the bathtub are high enough to fill up the reservoir to its maximum 1.3 gallons. If your bedroom is upstairs and you use the humidifier at night to help you sleep, it would be very inconvenient to have to go downstairs every time you want to fill up the reservoir. So I have to fill it up in the bathtub where I can get the reservoir fully underneath the faucet.



Figure 2: Humidifier Reservoir

The handle at the top of the reservoir feels strong, and the box advertises the handle's strength. It is at a slight angle, making it easier for the user to carry. But I wonder how long it will last. I have to turn it



upside down and rest it in the bathtub as I fill it with water. That handle eventually has to withstand 9-10 pounds of downward force on just a little edge (since it's not flat). Because of that edge, the water has not only gravity to rely on but a little extra leverage, all of which pulls and tugs on those two little screws at the top. And the only thing holding those screws in is plastic.

Sure enough, at one point I was thinking about this serious disadvantage and the power of gravity pulling at the nine pounds of water when the reservoir slipped out of my hands. I was even supporting the other side of it anticipating this could happen, and it still happened. I had just filled up the reservoir and rested it on the side of the bathtub. I was screwing the cap back on and noticing the weight of the container, when it suddenly gave way. CRASH! was the sound it made when it reached the bottom of the bathtub. Remember, this is ten pounds, and when ten pounds falls it has a lot of force.

Thankfully the unit is plastic, not glass. Otherwise it would have shattered. After one or two seconds of realizing what had happened, I picked up the reservoir and inspected it. It was still in one piece. But an edge near the top (close to the handle) was clearly cracked (a small fragment had almost fallen off). That wouldn't have been the end for the unit. I was ready to say "PHEW!" But I also noticed a small leak near the bottom edge, meaning I couldn't use it without risking having a lot of water on the floor. I began to think about my options. Should I call the manufacturer since it's still under warranty? I had decided it was easier to take it back to the retailer, as most consumers do.

I happily walked up to the returns desk at my local Home Depot. I explained the situation about the humidifier and the cashier had me do a "direct swap." I returned the unit for a new unit of the same model. That says a lot about Home Depot that it's willing to take back the product and give me a new one. The fact that I got a new one of the same model also says a lot about the actual humidifier. I had a good experience with it and want to continue using it.

In retrospect, the reservoir may have been designed to be rested at an angle when filling. That would explain the angled top of the reservoir. Subsequent testing revealed it is much easier to fill it in the kitchen sink. The sink faucet had plenty of height and the sink walls prevented the reservoir from moving and slipping. I still had problems supporting it while it was being filled, and still had to carry ten pounds (with one arm, since there's only one handle) up the stairs.

Some characteristics of the product, as discussed above, reduce its usability. You can't move it easily from one room to the next. The reservoir could have been designed with a handle on the bottom to prevent it from slipping out of someone's hands. The top of the reservoir could have been more flat (at an 85-90 degree angle) so that the person filling it with water could let it rest comfortably on a flat surface.

Despite its problems, I give this product a Good rating because it performed as expected. The automatic feature that turns the unit on and off is my favorite part about the humidifier. There is less filling of the reservoir, and the period of time I use it in one filling is extended. I also like the aesthetics and shape of the unit.