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QPL 101

Outfitting an on-premises laundry room

BY BILL BROOKS

RIPON, Wis. — Laundry equipment is a large but necessary investment for various industries, including hospitality, healthcare and corrections. Choosing the right equipment mix for an on-premises laundry can improve a facility's operating efficiency, guest satisfaction and its bottom line.

Prior to determining the proper equipment for a pre-existing laundry room, it is vital to measure and analyze the facility's infrastructure to avoid any unnecessary difficulties. Doorways, hallways, electrical wiring and plumbing may inhibit the use of some larger laundry equipment. Only after closely examining these factors can the right equipment mix be determined.

The Laundry Formula

Several factors go into determining the appropriate equipment mix in an on-premises laundry. While each industry type has a slightly different formula, the most accurate method for determining equipment size and mix is to weigh the soiled linens typically handled by that facility.



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When installing new washer-extractors, there are four general rules of thumb:

1. Small loads of laundry accumulate faster than larger ones.
2. Two smaller washer-extractors are generally better than a single larger machine.
3. Size alike when installing multiple washers. Purchasing same-size washers helps simplify the training process for employees. This same logic holds true when purchasing dryers. To streamline operator use and training, purchase a washer and dryer with the same control system.
4. Work with a local distributor to determine equipment sizing. Local distributors have facts and figures, including

accurate measurements for weight of soiled linens. This data is used in various markets to assist with laundry equipment sizing.

Studies are continually done by manufacturers that work intimately with the industries being served to determine average laundry usage. A select service hotel

can have as much as 30 pounds of laundry in every room. However, new housekeeping policies, including not changing the linens of extended-stay guests daily, and only laundering towels on the floor, are now considered to better provide real-world laundry equipment sizing.

The "pounds of laundry per

room" is largely determined by the service level of the hotel, ranging from an economy motel to a resort. An economy motel accumulates less laundry because it only has to wash bed linens and towels, whereas a resort must process linens from a variety of amenities offered to guests, including food service, meeting rooms/ban-

quet halls, health clubs and hotel rooms. Additional pounds of laundry also will be added for special bedding, or for hotels using extra pillows, duvets and triple sheeting.

In contrast to a hotel, which calculates linen weight by service level, a correctional facility's total

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linen weight is determined by the number of times per week that all items—including bedding, clothing, miscellaneous items and terry goods—may need to be washed.

Unlike the number of factors that should be considered when purchasing a washer-extractor, determining the number of tumble dryers needed for an on-premises laundry is fairly simple. The one thing to remember is most workflow problems are related to undersized tumble-dryer capacity.

To determine the number of tumble dryers, most experts consider the washer-extractor's G-force extraction speed. The dryer-to-washer capacity ratio for a washer with only 100 G-force

can be beneficial to both a worldwide manager who controls multiple properties, or an on-site laundry operator. Advanced control systems help managers measure all aspects of their laundry; wireless networking enables them to access those measurements as easily as possible.

Some wirelessly networked control systems offer service-related audit data that helps to manage equipment costs and ensure equipment longevity. Automatic warning e-mails provide maintenance alerts and system troubleshooting, which help to quickly self-diagnose prob-

lems, thereby helping OPL operators avoid equipment breakdowns and expensive repairs.

In addition to reducing downtime, wireless networking allows operators to easily monitor and better manage their laundry staff while away from their laundry facility. Some systems record start, stop and idle time between cycles, and report when a cycle may have been cut short. Labor is the most costly expense of operating a laundry room, and measuring idle time between cycles can help identify areas where simple training can help increase laundry room productivity.

Additionally, start- and stop-time reporting is particularly important in some on-premises laundry settings, such as hospitals, where a specific wash temperature must be met and sustained to effectively sanitize linens.

Finally, a wirelessly networked system allows both on-site and remote managers to view when a machine is out of balance, which indicates poor loading practices that cause wasted labor, unnecessary chemical use and higher utility costs.

Perhaps most impor-

tantly, correctly outfitting an on-premises laundry gives peace of mind to operators and makes their lives easier. When starting this process, consider a distributor backed by a sophisticated and reliable manufacturer that can determine the appropriate equipment mix for any on-premises laundry.



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is 2-to-1, or 2 pounds of drying capacity to 1 pound of washing capacity. Alternately, because of the increased water extraction on a 300-plus G-force washer-extractor, the ratio is 1.25 pounds of dryer capacity to 1 pound of washer capacity.

While it may be more expensive up front, it pays to invest in a 400 G-force washer-extractor as, over time, a high-speed washer-extractor will decrease drying costs. Ultimately, the goal of every laundry professional is to reach similar cycle times on both the washer and the dryer to produce the most efficient throughput in the laundry.

Wireless Networking

After determining the number of washers and dryers needed to outfit the on-premises laundry, the next step is to determine whether or not to install wireless networking, which allows a manager to access and control his or her laundry equipment worldwide from any Internet-connected computer.

Wireless networking features