



Hello Visitor! | [Log In](#) or [Register](#)

OPL 101: Expanding Technology Enables On-Premise Laundries to Go Green



Photo: [iStockphoto.com/Karl Dolenc](#)

BILL BROOKS | June 19, 2013

RIPON, Wis. — When the opportunity presents itself to make laundry operations more “green,” management may be wary of the costs associated with environmental sustainability. The good news is that recent technological advances in equipment and control systems provide on-premise laundries a way to help preserve the environment and keep operating budgets healthy by reducing utilities consumption.

Bath vs. Spray Rinse — Even during the days when clothes were washed in the most primitive of ways, the soaps and chemicals chosen to clean the laundry typically utilized a bath rinse to clean dirt and soil in the fabric. In today’s world of technology, shouldn’t there be a better solution?

The use of bath rinses alone is time-consuming and somewhat ineffective in the rinsing method, as it dilutes the soap and dirt in the linens rather than completely carrying or showering them away. The residue left on the fabric affects both wash quality and the life of the linens and other items washed in the machine.

New spray-rinsing technology takes a different approach. Unique spray hardware is managed by innovative software to minimize the water needed to rinse a load, reducing cycle rinse time and more effectively carrying chemicals away from the laundry. Studies show this new process uses up to 39% less water than traditional bath rinsing alone while still providing superior wash quality by reducing residual chemicals left in the load.

Naturally, the use of less water correlates to using less hot water, ultimately saving water-heating costs. By optimizing the water used, the spray rinse has the opportunity to save more than an estimated \$2,000 a year in utility costs. Additionally, the shorter cycle times will enable operations to be more productive.

Giving Sustainability a Good Spin — Drying linens demands a high amount of energy to generate heat and to drive the rotating dryer drum. Low-G-force washer-extractors can leave significant amounts of water in the fabric, which means the dryer must work harder and longer. When fabrics such as all-cotton terry cloth are run through such a washer, water retention could be as high as 90%.

Dramatically increasing the drum’s rotating speed puts centrifugal force to work, maximizing water removal and minimizing energy consumption. Washer-extractors with high G-force extraction speeds reduce the amount of moisture left in linens, decreasing drying times and gas usage by as much as 35%. The lighter dryer load also puts less strain on the machine’s drive parts for longer equipment life.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER FOR SAVING POWER — AND WATER

Electronic monitoring and control has found its way into almost all phases of manufacturing, processing and even service industries. These systems help operations run more efficiently and further their sustainability. Now it is the laundry room’s turn to put technology to work. Using approaches such as these, OPLs can get more out of their equipment and decrease their monthly utilities use.

Environmentally Conscious Cycles — Thanks to new monitoring and control systems, laundry equipment can deliver a superior wash through programs designed to minimize water and energy use. These systems provide the ability to select a cycle based on the kinds of fabrics passing through the laundry room for the most economical water levels, temperature requirements, and wash times, all with the touch of a button. Some systems have as many as 41 cycles to choose from.

Minding the Maintenance — In order to provide the water- and power-savings performance an operation demands, the equipment should be working as efficiently as possible. Machines featuring electronic monitoring systems make it possible to diagnose and troubleshoot problems remotely. If a manager were thousands of miles away from his/her facility, but had Internet access, the system would send an e-mail alert regarding a potential issue in real time. One can also receive reminders for preventative maintenance, ensuring equipment is always in working order.

These capabilities include automatic leak detection. Typically, the small debris that comes along with the wash can obstruct proper operation of the drain valves. This could go undetected for months, resulting in increased water usage which equals higher water and sewer bills. The early notification provided by a monitoring system prevents this little problem from becoming a big issue.

As with many up-to-date systems, OPL equipment can be wirelessly networked for remote monitoring of multiple machines and locations. Based on a chosen interval, the system generates reports on equipment performance, enabling management to better audit both machines and employees. Managers can receive snapshot reports or a comprehensive account of a machine’s operational and service history. This data can help one optimize the OPL operation by, for example, alerting principals when poor loading practices are causing a machine to be out of balance.

When contemplating the costs associated with going green, remember that choosing equipment with innovative technology and advanced controls systems can increase an operation’s environmental sustainability, as well as the sustainability of its bottom line.

About the author

Bill Brooks

UNIMAC
National Sales Manager

Bill Brooks is the national sales manager for UniMac, a leading provider of on-premise laundry equipment. He can be reached at bill.brooks@alliancels.com or 920-748-4437.

