

OPL 101:

Training on-premise laundry employees on new equipment

BY MIKE HAND

On-premise laundry managers may not consider the training process until equipment buying decisions have already been made, but discussing training needs with a distributor before purchasing equipment can help ensure a smooth transition to new machines.

In addition to recommending durable machines that are easy to use, a knowledgeable distributor should offer training resources that empower customers to operate an efficient and safe laundry facility.

Two-Part Process

To best address these elements, deploy a two-part training process. The first part should involve

a group meeting of managers, operators and technicians during which a distributor provides high-level introductory information about the machine's features and benefits.

After this initial meeting, the group can be split into two sections for more specialized individual training. The front office, which can include the general manager, an assistant or a facilities maintenance person or engineer, requires much more extensive training programs than the actual laundry operators do.

Whether it is a hospital, hotel or nursing home, all managers are looking for the best way to maximize throughput, decrease utility and labor costs, and extend the life of their linens. The management

training process starts by introducing this group to the machines and control system so they have a complete understanding of all the features available to help meet their goals.

The distributor also works with the back-of-house employees, including the head of the laundry facility and other laundry personnel. This group is trained specifically on the operational side of the machine, such as selecting laundry cycles and responding to maintenance error codes.

Easy-to-Use Control System

Training is simplest for all involved when machines feature an upgraded, easy-to-use control

system. A distributor can help customers choose a control system that is consistent across both washers and dryers so employees do not need to learn to operate two different machine control panels. A dual-capability control system provides ease of use across all machines and can ultimately help employees achieve maximum efficiency.

One obstacle some distributors and managers may face when training laundry employees is a language difference. The solution is to train non-English-speaking employees on a control system that is intuitive and easy to understand. The newest control systems offer customizable language settings to create multilingual operation options that can eliminate the language barrier altogether.

Managers can also simplify training by locking in certain wash and dry cycles so laundry personnel choose only from a select group of options. By doing so, managers can decrease the risk for potential mistakes and make the training of employees for different linen wash cycles as easy as possible.

Managers should also be trained on the importance of cycle modification. Managers understandably want their most efficient work crew to handle heavier and more important linen loads. Once managers understand the control system and how to modify cycles, they can give

each shift the appropriate setting and linen type to wash and dry.

A control system can provide vital data about how machines are functioning and being used. However, if a manager isn't properly trained, he or she could fail to make the best use of this information, either because they were unaware it existed, or didn't know how to pull it up.

It is vital that the management staff is trained to understand and analyze all of the data alerts and diagnostics available with an advanced control system. By understanding recorded cycle times, managers can monitor labor and utility usage. Perhaps even more important is that a control system provides such data; you can't improve what you can't measure.

To maintain maximum throughput, it's essential to avoid machine breakdown. This is why it is critical that managers and laundry staff are trained to recognize and appropriately respond to service warnings provided by the control system. Understanding the data reports will help on-site technicians troubleshoot and quickly diagnose and correct problems. Distributors should provide free service training for technicians that will help cut down an operator's long-term maintenance costs.

Finally, in some settings, managers are required to provide proof

the water temperatures are high enough to kill bacteria, germs or anything else that may be present on linens and could cause infection. It is important managers are well-versed in control system reports and understand the data so they can ensure each cycle meets code standards.

Possible Risk Factors

Training should also ensure that laundry operators follow standard safety precautions and procedures. Best practice states that employees should wear gloves to protect them from bacteria and other infec-

tious agents that can contaminate unwashed laundry. Employees should also be trained on how to properly handle laundry chemicals, which can be caustic. In addition, there are certain industries that require employees to be more thoroughly prepared for potential risks involved when working with linens.

For example, when not properly treated, linens that contain gasoline, cooking oils, cleaning waxes, drycleaning solvents or other flammable substances have the potential to ignite when being dried. This makes the training of OPL

personnel at long-term care, fire, drycleaning, restaurant and food processing establishments incredibly important since they must be able to identify these substances. As a laundry expert, a distributor will be able to provide insight to potential risk factors of a customer's specific OPL.

All of these common oversights and errors, including under-loading machines, wasted labor and wasted utility, can be prevented when OPL employees are properly trained. When paired

with the most productive equipment, proper training can lead to a safer work environment, longer machine life and increased throughput. **ALN**



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