

Smarter Laundry

Hotel laundry hardware hasn't changed all that much over the past decade or so. What *has* changed is control systems that help save on labour, energy, water and linen costs.

By Colleen Isherwood, Editor

Commercial hotel laundry machines haven't made radical changes to their appearance or mechanics over the past several years, but they are getting a lot smarter and more efficient.

And hotel operators are changing their tune too. "They are understanding the benefits of more efficient machines," says Steve Hietpas, senior sales manager, Maytag & Whirlpool Commercial Laundry.

Washers: all about G-force

Many of the new soft-mounted washing machines boast a high extraction or final spin speed measuring 350 to 450 G-force. "This means you can spin out more water, that linens spend less time in the dryer," says Hietpas, "and it saves time because the wash cycle is just 25 minutes, not 40 to 45 minutes. It also saves natural gas because the washer is not running as long."

Less dead water

Electrolux and Wascomat say their

washers use 97 per cent less dead water, says Dan Goldman of Electrolux/Laundrylux.

"It is amazing how a simple thing such as a drain could make so much of a difference in water consumption," explains Goldman. "All front load washers come with a normally opened drain valve trap which traps the water when powered to close and subsequently fills the washer. By engineering a drain valve that does not have a neck and allows it to be mounted flush with the cylinder all water is put into play.

"The water that is trapped in the lines of other machines and in the neck of the valve adds up to pints of water with every fill. The standard OPL wash formula will have a number of fills and with every fill, more dead water is produced that never touches the linen that needs to be washed."

A shower instead of a bath

Unimac washers save water using OPTISpray, says North American sales manager Bill Brooks, who likens the feature to giving the laundry a

shower rinse instead of a bath rinse on part of the laundry cycle.

"Most washers do three rinses per cycle, while we do a combination of two. We reduce water by 39 per cent, speed cycle time by 12 per cent and improve residuals by 22 per cent." This means there is a 22 per cent cleaner rinse, with fewer chemicals left in there.

"After a bath, you have a bath ring around the tub. Similarly, residuals resettle on a spinning basket, while spraying sends them down the drain."

He adds the utility savings in a busy laundry doing 10 loads a day can be \$2,100 per year.

Dryers: controlling moisture

In the dryer, the name of the game is residual moisture control (RMC). The dryer senses the amount of moisture left in sheets or towels and knows when to shut down. This avoids overdrying.

If the dryer is smart, then you don't overdry, which saves on labour, wear and tear on linens, and energy.

The sensors that measure the mois-

ture in the load save energy and save the linen. "That's the lint you see going out of the linens," says Malcolm Caldwell, vice-president of sales and Harco. "Sensors can reduce linen replacement by up to 30 per cent."

Unimac's Brooks says the costs and damage toll of overdrying is way understated. "You're harming linens and reducing their life, making them brittle and stiff," not to mention utility and labour costs.

Ozone and FOG

Mike Pilolli, vice-president of operations and commercial laundry at Coinamatic, says his company is seeing ozone system growth of 12 per cent each year since 2009. In Ontario, both Union Gas and Enbridge continue to support ozone programs.

"We're still growing. As we introduce the product to the field, we are getting more and more attention from mid-size hotels. We recently signed a portfolio of 22 hotels," he says, adding that the system is suitable for hotels with 120-160 rooms, as the economics are not as appealing for smaller hotels.

"You need a minimum of one eight-hour shift with 9 to 10 cycles per day" for ozone to make sense.

One of the keys to success with the ozone system is careful management of soiled linen. "Before we go in, we train representatives to understand where the opportunities for savings are in the laundry room," says Pilolli.

"Highly soiled linens such as kitchen towels, staff uniforms and table laundry, usually a small percentage of the total, should be washed in hot water. These have what we call FOG — fats, oils and greases.

"Cold water and the ozone system can be used for the bulk of laundry, including lightly soiled linens and bath towels. You can optimize — say 20 per cent hot water [washes] and 80 per cent cold," Pilolli says.

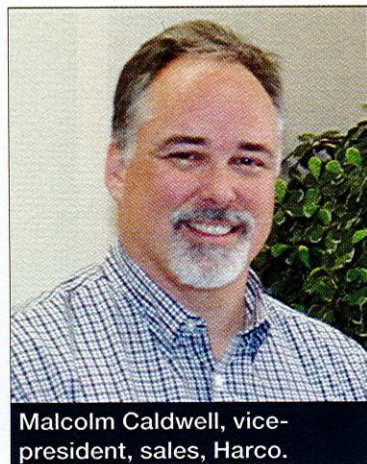
For the 80 per cent that is washed using ozone and cold water, operators can achieve 40 per cent savings in linen life, electricity, hot water and labour, he notes.

Tide's Coldwater System

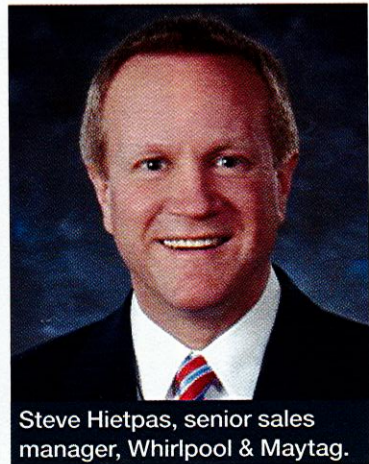
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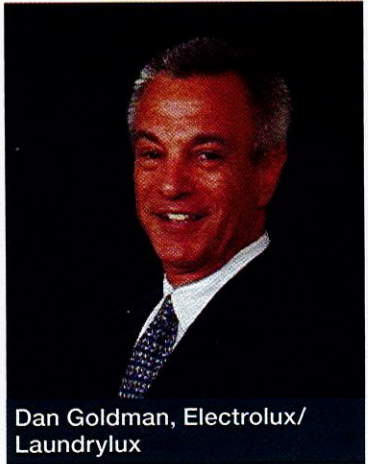
Mike Pilolli, VP ops./commercial laundry, Coinamatic.



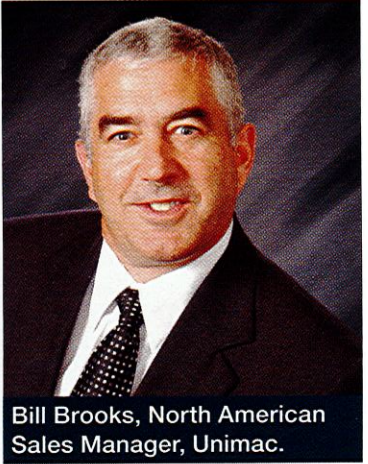
Malcolm Caldwell, vice-president, sales, Harco.



Steve Hietpas, senior sales manager, Whirlpool & Maytag.



Dan Goldman, Electrolux/Laundrylux



Bill Brooks, North American Sales Manager, Unimac.

Tide Professional Coldwater Laundry System, which includes four products – a near-neutral pH detergent, fabric softener, bleach and whiteness enhancer.

“Tide Professional Coldwater features an advanced system using unique enzymes that are specially designed for wash temperatures as low as 32°C, which help effectively break down stains without the need for higher water temperatures,” explains Chad Isackson, marketing and operations manager at Procter and Gamble Professional Canada.

“The new wash process reduces the number of fills and water used per wash to help cut washing machine energy costs by up to 75 per cent and washing machine water costs by up to 40 per cent when you switch from the standard hot water systems.”

P&G calculates that the Tide Professional Coldwater System helps save as much as \$6,300 per year (for a 150-room hotel) based on water, energy and linen replacement cost savings. This breaks down as follows: \$3,696 in linen replacement (based on an annual linen replacement budget of \$24,638); \$3,401 in water cost (based on water cost per cubic metre of \$2.112); and \$1,664 in energy cost (based on energy cost per gigajoule of \$3.5077).

Total Care for customers

Coinamatic has received a lot of uptake on its Total Care rental program, available for all machines. “We absorb the full capital costs including service, maintenance and parts at a monthly rate. Hotels see the impact of savings immediately by renting. If they buy the machines, there is generally a seven- to 12-month return on investment,” says Pilolli.

Wild about wet cleaning

Brian Hatt, dry cleaning specialist with Harco, is looking at wet cleaning as an environmentally friendly way to enhance revenue, provide faster turnaround for onsite dry cleaning, and prolong fabric life. In the future, it will enable hotels to achieve the dry cleaning status required for a five-star rating at a much lower entry cost.

“A new dry cleaning machine costs \$75,000, and with the other equipment, etc., can cost up to \$150,000, while a small press and a wet cleaning machine costs just \$35,000. Wet cleaning will certainly enhance the industry, especially for premium or long-term stay hotels.”

Governments are also pushing for wet cleaning. The Muskoka area of Ontario has gone solvent free, and the City of Toronto is looking at banning dry cleaning. California and New Jersey are phasing out the use of per chloroethylene (PERC), a chemical used in dry cleaning, by 2023.

Wascomat also offers wet cleaning, says Goldman, from Laundrylux. “Many hotels provide uniforms for their complete staff. In the past a small dry cleaning machine would be used as well as self contained finishing equipment such as a lay down press and small shirt unit.

“The beauty of Wascomat Wetcleaning machines is that water will never be banned and the smell and finish is superior to anything immersed or sprayed with a dry solvent,” says Goldman, adding that major universities such as Notre Dame and some larger hotels have also made the switch.

Xeros polymer beads

One of the newer systems on the market is Xeros bead cleaning using special polymer beads that enhance the washing process by reducing water consumption by 80 per cent. The beads increase the surface area of the agitation.

“The Xeros package includes specialty detergents, service and parts, and custom programming,” says Caldwell, adding that Harco is a Xeros distributor.

“It’s most suitable for high-water-cost areas such as California, Arizona and New York,” he adds.

“It’s still a new technology, but hotels that have installations in the U.S. have added or expanded. There are plenty of U.S. success stories,” Caldwell says.

Sophisticated reporting

Brooks calls Unimac’s TotalVue cloud-based reporting system “the biggest most exciting new development. It goes with our Unilinc control and captures 100 different measurements on each load.”

It’s on the network, reports to the cloud, to the manager of the hotel or the manager of the laundry. It can help identify problems with water usage, gas, running time — everything that can cost owners money in a laundry, says Brooks.

Hietpas says Maytag has a system called Connect 360, geared for commercial or multi-unit housing. They are looking at application of some of that system’s sophisticated

controls to help hotel laundry operators be more efficient.

It’s all about eliminating the possibility of human error.

Guest laundry in demand

Both Hietpas and Malcolm Caldwell of Harco have noticed an uptick in demand for guest-facing laundry facilities as new extended stay properties are built in Canada or older hotels add guest laundries to their establishments.

“Traditionally, these consisted of top loading machines, but more and more hotel laundries are switching to front loading, giving the guest a little larger capacity machine,” notes

Whirlpool and Maytag’s Hietpas.

Stacked machines are also an option, especially for older hotels with a limited amount of space that were not designed to include guest laundries.

New-construction hotels, with their emphasis on minimal footprints, often take advantage of stacked units.

Operators are changing

“We really have noticed over the last five years that there is so much wider acceptance of more efficient machines. Operators are now asking manufacturers and distributors for the most efficient laundry machines, not just the lowest cost,” Hietpas says.



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- Ideal for secondary downtown and urban markets, business parks and highway locations
- Flexible construction for various sites

Prototype

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- Guestrooms – streamlined design maximizes space
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