

Saving the environment and your bottom line

LAUNDRY SUSTAINABILITY

By C. Elliott Mest
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Environmental sustainability is a term one hears frequently in the hospitality industry. Guests want hotels that are conscious of their impact on the environment, and hotels want to streamline their processes and save money. Part of this may mean upgrading to newer laundry equipment in properties that may need it.



G-force washers cut down on the water needed during a wash, as well as dryer time afterward.

during a wash while simultaneously cutting down on dryer time. “Hotels without G-force washers are making a poor choice,” Brooks said. “The savings they provide are huge, and pay for themselves many times over.”

Brooks also recommends dryers with moisture sensors, which determine when a load is dry and finishes the cycle without running unnecessarily. Brooks said that dryers running longer than they should is one of the largest problems in the industry energy-wise, and is easily solved.

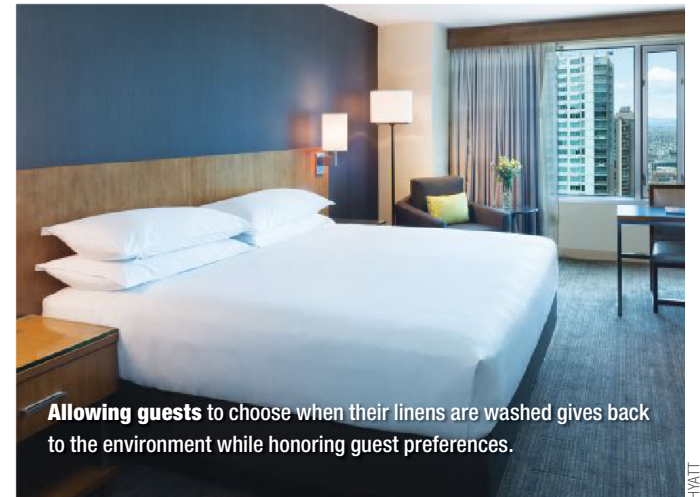
“The concept of green is not defined consistently; everyone sees it differently,” Brooks said. “Efficiency is defined.” **HM**

Craig Mustard, head of domestic brand management for Choice Hotels International, said these upgrades are now standard parts of the Econo Lodge brand’s green program, adding that high-efficiency laundry equipment is a good fodder for product improvement plans. “We are also changing out bedding in [Econo Lodge hotels] to make it easier to wash,” Mustard said. “We’re using less water and seeing shorter dryer times, and it helps to mandate these things as we go.”

But how can hotels know how to best save water and energy costs? According to David Carter, VP of strategic accounts for commercial laundry machine manufacturer Pellerin Milnor, the process is difficult for hotels due to how properties are built. Carter said he frequently has to pull historical records on the buildings occupied by hotels to get a full grasp on a hotel’s utility cost, as these utilities are often grouped together in one bill.

“The way many hotels are built, [laundry] services are not often directly metered, so costs can’t be easily tracked,” Carter said. “This trend hasn’t changed much in new builds. Operators just know that laundry uses lots of gas and water, they don’t know just how much they can save, and hotels can run a very efficient laundry operation on property.”

According to Bill Brooks, national sales manager for laundry machine manufacturer Unimac, investing in washers with high-speed extraction capabilities reduces the amount of water needed



Allowing guests to choose when their linens are washed gives back to the environment while honoring guest preferences.

Leaving it to the guest

Since a hotel can’t avoid washing linens, there are ways to lower the number of linens it will have to wash overall. Many hotels, such as the Hyatt Regency Denver at Colorado Convention Center, are allowing guests to opt out of daily bed linen and towel washes unless requested. If there is no request, the property will step in to wash the linens on a three-day rotation.

“I think everybody is onboard with sustainability,” said Brandi Brooks, laundry manager at the hotel. “The average person is recycling more in their daily life and we see that in how they recycle in the guestroom compared to in the past. Guests are doing a great job and that comes back to help us.”

“Our consumer target [at Econo Lodge] is changing with millennials,” said Craig Mustard, head of domestic brand management at Choice Hotels International. “They are looking for programs to participate in. A lot of our millennial guests are paying the bill themselves, and when they have a water bottle or aluminum can, they want to throw it away in the right place.”

Mustard also said that water re-use from washes is also an option, though hotels have to be careful due to the chemicals used in the wash process. However, this water is easily used for exterior irrigation. “As an economy hotel, it was all about starting somewhere,” Mustard said. “We aren’t a green brand, but we wanted to do more than say ‘no’ to sustainable practices and do nothing. By getting franchisees involved, you can look above the basics for efficiency and savings.”

In terms of linen re-use, Brooks’ property red-flags stained linens during inventory, separating them from the remaining linens for spot treatment and re-washes. If the washes are not effective, or linen becomes torn, they are given to engineering for use as rags or to be recycled. **RM**



33 percent longer

The length of time added to a linen’s life cycle through proper drying cycles.

Source: Unimac

emest@questex.com