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 mobile training visits. The 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 begins by introducing this group to the machines and control systems 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.

See OPL 101 on Page 11

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 infectious 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, cleaning 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 insights 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.

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