

Ozone Laundry Systems Offer Multiple Ways to Reduce Costs Quickly - By Glenn Hasek

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Faced with water restrictions and rising propane costs at its lodging operations in Alaska's Denali National Park & Preserve, Denali Park Resorts had to do something to reduce laundry-related expenses. It was taking a lot of hot water to clean the sheets, towels and kitchen rags from 986 guestrooms and nine restaurants.

Thanks to the installation of a \$45,000 ozone laundry system in May, the savings have been significant. In fact, as of early September, the system had already generated \$75,000 in utility savings. The savings came quick thanks to the company's 97 percent occupancy during its busy May through September season.

'I had been looking at ozone for a long time,' says Craig Pester, general manager at the property level for Denali Park Resorts. 'The technology has been improving. We worked with a local supplier to get the system we needed. We wanted to get a lot of water savings out of it.'

Prior to installing the ozone system, the company used two gallons of hot water per one pound of linen. That is now down to 1.25 gallons of cold water. It previously took four boilers to supply the hot water needed for the laundry, it now takes just one boiler. A water reclamation system purchased four years ago has also helped Denali Park Resorts save water.

'We are using half the amount of propane that we used a year ago,' Pester says. 'We went to a different type of chemical and chemical consumption decreased by 33 percent. Twenty percent of the decline was due to the ozone system itself. We are also saving on the drying end. The wash is coming out with a lot less water. Drying time has been reduced by 50 percent. With ozone, we are finding a lot less lint in our dryers. That means less maintenance is needed.'

Pester says he was concerned that the ozone, which does a great job killing bad bacteria and viruses, would also kill good bacteria in the septic system. That has not been the case, however.

'We found that the oxygenated water actually increased the effectiveness of the septic system,' Pester says.

Pester has become a fast believer in ozone, adding that it has helped reduce his company's environmental footprint, eliminated labor costs thanks to greater equipment productivity, and improved towel and linen quality. 'The terry smells cleaner and is softer,' he says.

Denali Park Resorts is just one example of a company that is benefiting from an ozone laundry system-in its case, a system from ArtiClean Ozone Laundry Systems. There are many suppliers throughout North America that are making it easy for hotels, lodges and resorts to save big time on energy, water, chemicals and other related laundry costs.

Friendly to Good Bacteria

According to Jim Gross, president of Ozone Water Technologies, ozone systems at one time had a negative reputation because some suppliers were not as service oriented as they should be. A concentration on service and product reliability, however, has made ozone laundry technology a frequent choice in the lodging industry-especially by larger ownership and management groups.

'The smaller management companies are just starting to look at it,' says Don Effgen, sales manager for Edro Corp., which sells the DynOzone-DynaWash Ozone System, a washer-extractor that combines a built-in, on-board ozone generator with a high-speed machine.

'Increased interest is also being driven by the energy crisis and concern about the environment,' says Gross, whose company produces the LaundrOzone system that uses direct ozone injection technology.

'The more natural gas prices go up, the more people are looking for energy savings,' adds Brett Daniels, vice president of Aquawing Ozone Injection Systems (AWOIS), LLC, maker of the Aqua-Fusion System.

Payback Time Can Be Less Than Year

Gross says a hotel with from 200 to 300 rooms can expect to recover its investment in the type of equipment his company sells in six to 12 months. Jack Reiff, president of Wet-Tech, whose company sells the EnviroSaver II Ozone system that uses an ozone infusion process, agreed that payback time can easily be less than a year.

About 30 to 40 percent of ozone systems use a direct injection process with the main components outside of the washing machine. These systems are growing in popularity and can even be used with machines as small as 17-pound in size. Other systems use a venturi on the incoming water or hold ozone in a water tank outside of the washing machine until ready for use. The downside to a tank type of system is that the ozone can dissipate in just a minute or two if left to sit. Edro Corp.'s DynOzone-DynaWash Ozone System is unique in that the ozone generator is within the washer-extractor machine itself.

Ozone is one of the most powerful oxidants available. It works 3,000 times faster than chlorine. According to AWOIS, it is also a powerful biocide-destroying bacterium, deactivating viruses and controlling odors. Ozone laundry systems provide numerous environmental and operational benefits. In addition to the ones already cited, here are some examples:

Seventy to 80 percent or more of the need for hot water is eliminated.

There is an average water savings of 25 percent.

Linen replacement costs can be reduced by a factor of two to three.

Ozone opens up textile fibers to allow chemicals to do a better job.

They extend the life of laundry equipment because fewer wash cycles are needed.

Water quality and chemistry is more consistent.

Chemical consumption can be reduced by 20 to 25 percent.

Ozone improves sewage water quality by 30 to 50 percent.

Working conditions are better for employees because the use of steam and hot water is reduced. Cooler laundry facilities require less air-conditioning to cool.

While ozone can be harmful in large concentrations, most ozone laundry systems generate too little ozone to warrant safety concerns. Dissolved in water, ozone is not as hazardous as it is in a gaseous state. Some vendors offer alarm systems that shut down the ozone equipment if too much ozone is detected in the air.

'Ozone is an excellent catalyst for chemicals,' AWOIS' Daniels says. 'It uses water more efficiently and allows the soil to be released earlier. You will still need some bleach and some hot water to get your whites white.'

Ozone System Purchasing Advice

What should you look for when purchasing a system? Ozone Water Technologies' Gross says to ask for references and proven results. From a maintenance standpoint, ozone laundry systems are easy to maintain. Because the ozone is produced in the system itself, there is never a need to purchase ozone. Only minor filter cleaning is required.

You should also be prepared for some possible resistance from your chemical supplier. The prospect of selling less chemical to your property may not sit well.

'Some chemical companies fight [ozone laundry systems] because they can lose 20 to 30 percent of their sales,' Wet-Tech's Reiff says. 'But it will depend on the individual sales person in regard to the reaction. The chemical company representative may try to convince the customer that ozone will not work.'

Bob Beddingfield, president of Water Energy Technologies, whose company offers ozone laundry machines, laundry water reuse equipment and related services, says it is imperative that the chemical company and the hotel representative work together as a team to ensure that the ozone system works efficiently. There need not be any turmoil, he says, adding that at least one company is already selling a laundry chemical specifically for ozone systems.

Finally, when considering an ozone system, be sure to ask vendors about rebate programs. There may be funds available to make your ROI time even shorter.

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