



The Myth of Energy Efficiency Laundromat Equipment

What often is put into the heads of many potential Buyers, current owners and investors is the myth that new models of washers and dryers will produce outstanding savings of utility costs without any loss of washing quality and the customer satisfaction that entails. What could be done to make a washer more efficient in the use of water without impacting the quality of the wash?

The only way to make a washer more water efficient is to reduce the cycles (2 washers, 3 rinses was standard on frontloads for years), lower the water levels in the tub (customers can't see the water level showing through the glass door), or by reducing the use of hot water on hot water cycles.

Washers are shipped from most factories with such low water level settings that most owners must increase water levels to overcome customer complaints because of the reduced quality of the wash. The claims of decreased water use in washers is a marketing tactic by factories advertisers induce Laundromat owners into believing they can deliver a good quality wash while reducing water levels and agitation.

Home models of washers used in Laundromats overcome some of the quality of reduced washes by greatly increasing the times of agitation, spin and total wash cycles. Often these increases can exceed an hour for a complete wash cycle. It is impractical to double or triple the length of wash cycles in a self-serve setting. All factories know that reducing the number of wash and rinse cycles and lowering levels of water used during each cycle reduces the quality of the wash. This is not an efficiency improvement but a marketing ploy.

Super high extract washer models result in cleaner washes by removing more water from the clothes being washed during the high extract spin cycles. Keep in mind that all the water you feel and see when removing clothes from a washer is dirty water. If you doubt this, squeeze out a little from your next wash into a clear glass and hold it up to the sun. You won't want to drink this dirty water as it's full of suspended dirt and soap chemicals.

The process of cleaning clothes requires the use of adequate water, agitation, agitation time and final water extraction provided by the washing machine. The heat of water, added soaps and other inserted chemicals assist these four washing machine necessities, but cannot overcome the basic elements needed for washing clothes.

The reality is that no real improvement in water efficiency technology has been introduced to Laundromat owners in about 30 years and cannot be developed. Manufactures are reduced to adding a new payment system on a washer that does not maintain cleaning quality but can increase convenience and may increase profits by providing options by charging extra for extra charges for hot water and addition cycles.

The inverter installed on many new washers is new but has a limited electrical savings over traditional washers. The increased inverter failure rate is much higher than the previous method so the transfer from a utility bill to an increase in maintenance makes this a small savings to a Laundromat owner.

The enemy of all electronics, including those being placed on washers and dryers, is heat, agitation, moisture and dust. These four items are found in abundance in all equipment used in Laundromats. Computer board repairs and board failures are excessive compared to prior mechanical coin collection methods and mechanical timers.

Dryers face the same problem. More time is spent on advertising blurbs than actual innovation on laundry equipment. Laundromat owners have rejected one actual energy saving feature by the failure of widespread use of double glass doors because customers determine when a dryer is heating by touching the glass door. Microwave dryers, and waterless methods of washing clothes are likely in the distant future.

This is a positive to existing owners, since no expensive new technology can capture a market away from a well run existing Laundromat that actually washes in a reasonable time with a quality of cleanliness unobtainable by new "energy efficient" washers.

There is no need to replace existing equipment because of the notion that huge energy savings will be achieved. You should replace equipment when the cost to keep your equipment running exceeds the cost of an equipment payment or when the high failure breakdown rate causes customers to seek other Laundromats.

A well maintained and well operated Laundromat with older equipment is still competitive; more repairs than brand new equipment, but still competitive in delivering clean clothes to happy customers. Energy efficiency is not a reason to purchase.