



Advances in laundry room technology: Smarter, more energy-efficient and user-friendly

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Many big changes are happening in the world of laundry. Technology advances have enabled laundry machines to become smarter, more energy-efficient, and more user-friendly.

GREEN Laundry Machines

Recently introduced commercial washers from LG and Speed Queen use less than 15 gallons of water per cycle. These front-load washers are 50-60% more efficient than models produced as recently as last year. Not only do they save money on water and sewerage, but also use less hot water, significantly lowering gas and electric costs. The washers have a higher extract speed and there is less moisture in the clothes at the end of a wash cycle. As a result less drying time and energy is needed during the dry cycle.

The Department of Energy (DOE) uses two measurements in determining how energy-efficient a washer is: Modified Energy Factor (MEF) and Water Factor (WF). The MEF is the most complicated to calculate. It not only accounts for the energy that a washer uses, but also how much water is removed and the resulting energy necessary to dry a load of clothes (the higher the MEF number, the more energy efficient the washer is). The WF calculation is very simple: it is the ratio of the size of the wash tub to the number of gallons of water used (the lower the number, the more energy efficient the washer is). A customer should look for a washer with an MEF of at least 2.20 and a WF of less than 4.5.

The LG commercial washer is currently the most energy-efficient washer available on the market, with an MEF of 2.84 and a WF of 3.86. It has also had the highest customer satisfaction rankings from JD Power for each of the past three years.

Switching to a new Speed Queen or LG front-load washing machine from a standard top-load or front-load machine will save an average 100-unit building over \$8,000 in energy costs and reduce water consumption by over 120,000 gallons of water per year based on current energy and water costs.

Smart Card Technology

Smart-card technology has been available for a number of years. Smart cards are used to activate the laundry machines instead of quarters, making washing clothes a much simpler chore. Customers can use cash or a credit card to add value to these smart cards. Recent advances now provide even greater convenience by allowing value to be added through the Internet or through an automated phone call. These systems, such as www.Coinmachcard.com operate 24/7 and not just when a management office is open.

In addition, on-site refunds can be made to smart cards when money is lost. A resident does not have to wait for a refund check to be delivered, but can receive an immediate credit to their smart card 7 days a week.

Laundry Room Monitoring Systems

Residents no longer have to walk down to a laundry room only to find all of the laundry machines in use and not available. Web Sites such as Coinmach's www.Checkmywash.com allow them to log in and check the status of a laundry room. These systems will show which machines are in use and how much time remains on the cycle. The system can also send a text message or e-mail when a machine has completed its cycle and becomes available.

While laundry may still be considered a chore, these advances are making the process of doing laundry easier, more convenient and certainly more environmentally friendly.

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