

Mass. nursing home looks to new equipment to cut costs, retain quality



By Haley Jorgensen

SOUTH DARTMOUTH, Mass. —“My laundry is running so smoothly, I can’t believe it,” exclaims Kevin Svedine, director of housekeeping and laundry at **Brandon Woods of Dartmouth** nursing home.

Svedine says that since replacing the home’s laundry equipment last year with **Continental Girbau** soft-mount washers and dryers, Brandon Woods has not only significantly cut its labor, gas and utility costs, but its residents’ clothes, towels and linens are also getting clean in one washing. It used to take two.

And that’s what it’s all about, according to Ray Belle, construction manager for

Essex Group, a corporation that operates six Massachusetts nursing homes, including Brandon Woods.

Essex’s properties operate on-premise laundries because it’s more economical than using a commercial service. Plus, Belle says that by having a facility in-house, Essex has more control and can provide higher-quality services to residents.

In bad weather, vendors may not pick-up and deliver laundry, he says. “We’ve tried outside vendors and we’ve had infection control issues and lost items.”

In the healthcare industry, OPL managers are continually looking for ways to streamline operations and lower costs, while offering better services. And, since labor accounts for nearly half the total

expenditure for on-premise laundries, choosing the right equipment is critical. That’s why the decision to revamp Brandon Woods’ laundry came after careful consideration by Belle and Svedine.

High-extract space savers

A 130-bed property, Brandon Woods generates around 3,000 pounds of laundry each day. To handle the workload, Belle installed three 55-pound Pro-Series washer-extractors and three 75-pound dryers. The washer-extractors have internal suspension systems that extract at speeds of 380 G-force thereby “removing nearly all of the water from fabric,” according to Svedine.

One of the reasons Belle found the Pro-Series machines appealing is that they are simple to install. Trying to fit



Kevin Svedine, director of housekeeping and laundry, has been pleased with the results since replacing Brandon Woods' laundry equipment with Continental Girbau washer-extractors and dryers. "We're not double-washing, because clothes come out clean the first time," he says.

new machines into an old laundry facility often presents problems, according to Belle, especially if concrete pads are required. But, unlike hard-mount machines that must be bolted down, Continental soft-mounts are free-standing and designed to absorb vibration. They fit into existing spaces, saving the money it would take to adapt to larger models.

"The soft mounts don't require a frame footing," Belle explains. "So, we were able to put them right onto the existing concrete floor."

He installed the equipment with assistance from distributor **Automatic Laundry** of West Newton, Mass., which had previously helped Belle revamp three other Essex laundries. Sales representative Doug Jones installed the Continental equipment in Belle's first laundry for a 30-day trial.

"Automatic said they'd pull the machines out and give us

our money back if we weren't satisfied," Belle recalls, "but they've performed just as promised – they've performed beyond our wildest dreams."

The new equipment mix has simplified the process of doing laundry at Brandon Woods, Svedine says, making it more efficient and less costly. It's no longer necessary to re-wash items such as reusable diapers and pads, or to pre-soak incontinent pads to help remove fecal matter, he says.

"We're not double washing because clothes come out clean the first time," Svedine maintains. Plus, through proper sorting and cleaning, Brandon Woods has extended the life of its incontinent pads from two months to six months.

Since the installation, the laundry has also cut drying time. "The washers are saving us money because laundry basically comes out dry," says Svedine. "We used to have to run our dryers double time and they were burning out.

Now, our drying time is cut in half because the extraction cycle takes everything right out."

The laundry's improved productivity is also due to proper control programming, according to Continental Vice President Mike Floyd, who adds, "Fabric won't get clean without proper mechanical action, water temperature and mix of chemicals."

Continental washer-extractors feature microprocessor controls equipped with 20 preset factory programs and 59 programmable cycles. When machines are installed, chemical representatives program them to ensure the right amount of cleaning chemical is released at the correct water level, temperature and time of cycle. This also ensures Brandon Woods' laundry is meeting all health regulations, Svedine says.

He says operating the controls is "very simple." Employees select cycles based on what they are washing, whether it is towels, sheets, tablecloths, pads or personal items.

Good equipment and careful planning have resulted in a more cost-effective approach to quality laundry service for Brandon Woods. That's why Belle says he plans to install Continental equipment in three more Essex laundries this year.

"There's a quick pay-back with Continental soft-mount machines," Svedine says, "plus, I don't get called on my day off about broken equipment anymore."

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