

Sevier County's New Laundry Ups Production; Cuts Inventory Expense in Half



By Haley Jorgensen

A newly equipped on-premise laundry at Sevier County Sheriff's Department in Sevierville, Tenn., will likely cut the 250-bed correctional facility's yearly inventory and detergent expenditures in half, according to Paul Lintner, the sheriff department's manager of food service and laundry. "We didn't realize our new laundry equipment would save us money," says Lintner, "but the new machines have made us so much more efficient, we are."

Sevier County, which typically spends \$20,000 per year re-supplying inventory such as inmate uniforms, towels, sheets and blankets, expects to spend only \$10,000 this year. That, coupled with a 50 percent savings in cleaning chemicals, is a direct result of the facility's new high-efficiency, soft-mount Continental laundry equipment, according to Lintner.

A plan to add a 22-bed juvenile detention facility to the jail spurred Sevier County to seek a more efficient way to do laundry, according to Continental distributor Jeff Large of East Tennessee Laundry in Sevierville. The jail relied on four topload washers and two home-style dryers to keep pace with more than 400 pounds of soiled laundry each day. "We were always behind," says Lintner. "The topload washers were always breaking down and we just couldn't keep up."

Equipping the laundry to increase production

At the time, inmates' clothes, blankets, towels and sheets were washed only once a week. That was all the jail could handle. Now, with the new Continental equipment, inmates send out laundry three times per week. Everything in the laundry room is more organized and efficient, according to Lintner.

"There was no more room to put in additional toploads," says Large of the laundry facility. "We had to go to commercial equipment in order to up the production." That's why Large installed two 55-pound, soft-mount Continental Pro-Series™ washer-extractors and two 75-pound dryers.

The soft-mount design of Continental's Pro-Series washer-extractors make for easy installations, says Large. Unlike traditional hard-mount washers, soft mounts don't require new concrete foundations or bolting down. This enabled East Tennessee Laundry to have the new equipment up and running in a day's time, without unnecessary installation costs.

But ease of installation was not the only reason Sevier County opted for soft mounts over hard mounts. Soft-mount washer-extractors reach extract speeds up to 380 G-force – almost four times greater than many standard hard-mount



From left: Paul Lintner, Sevier County's manager of food service and laundry and Jeff Large of East Tennessee Laundry

machines. This means soft mounts remove considerably more water during extraction than hard mounts, says Large.

New equipment cuts gas use; Laundry lasts longer

"The clothes come out of the washer-extractors nearly dry," adds Lintner. As a result, Sevier County has cut dry time in half – boosting production and slashing utilities. "Now it takes 20 minutes to dry a big, huge load," says Lintner. "It used to take an hour." Less time in the dryer reduces gas consumption and minimizes wear and tear on new equipment. More importantly, says Lintner, towels, sheets, uniforms and blankets experience less abuse – saving the jail drastically on replacement inventory.

The washer-extractors are not only gentler on the laundry, they get it cleaner, maintains Lintner. "Our wool blankets used to tangle and tear in the topload washer," he says. "Now they come out undamaged. As a result, we're saving all kinds of money on uniform and blanket replacements."

Equipment is easy to operate

Also key to Sevier County's new laundry operation is the ability to program equipment for easy operation. The machines were programmed by a local chemical company to automatically inject the appropriate amount of cleaning chemicals, at the right cycle time, water temperature,

and level, based on the type of load. "The automatic injection saves time by shortening the wash cycle, makes for accurate washes and allows the jail to budget detergent expense," says Large.

Before, Sevier County had no control over chemical usage, resulting in considerable waste. "The computerized injection of chemicals takes the guesswork out," says Lintner. "I can't imagine how much we've saved on chemicals – we're using a lot less."

Making the process simple for inmates is critical for a smooth laundry operation, according to Lintner. That's why the washer-extractors are also programmed for various types of loads – blankets, sheets, towels, undergarments or uniforms. The dryers, which also have programmable controls, feature sensors that alert inmates when the load is dry.

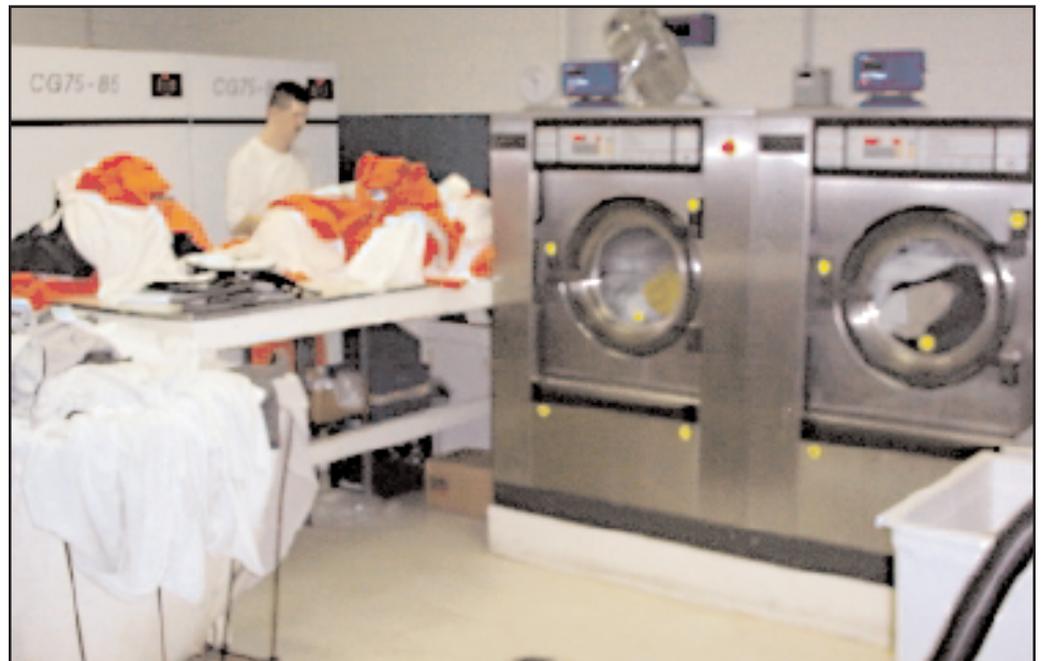
Inmates "simply hit the button and let it go," Lintner says. "When our laundry man is scheduled for release, I have the new attendant work with him for a day," says Lintner.

"It's really simple."

Thanks to careful planning and the right equipment mix, Sevier County's on-premise laundry is more efficient and cost effective than ever before. The new equipment has bolstered productivity so much, says Lintner, inmates have clothes washed three times more often each week. There's even time enough to organize and clean the laundry room. "We always had dirty clothes waiting to be washed," he says. "They had an odor. Now, we don't have those and the place even smells better."

More critical, however, is the savings experienced by Sevier County. By installing highly efficient Continental laundry equipment, the jail is expected to slash inventory and chemical expenditures in half, despite doing inmates' laundry more frequently. That, according to Lintner, is a welcome surprise! ▀

Haley Jorgensen is president of Public Image, a public relations firm in Ripon, Wis.



Sevier County's two 55-pound, soft-mount Continental Pro-Series™ washer-extractors and two 75-pound dryers have boosted the facility's production and slashed utilities.