

Suite Savings

Hotel saves water & preserves linen quality with ozone system

By Marc Debrum

Overall utility savings and disinfection benefits of cold water ozone-laundered linens are the prime factors behind the installation of ozone systems at many hotel operations, including the Holiday Inn Express & Suites in Atascadero, Calif. General Manager Amar Sohi was quick to add another reason.

"I'm a stickler about the quality and integrity of our linens," he said. "It's not only a big expense, it's critical to retaining clientele. Guests have high expectations for

impeccable linens, and with EcoTex ozone, we are further assured those expectations will be met."

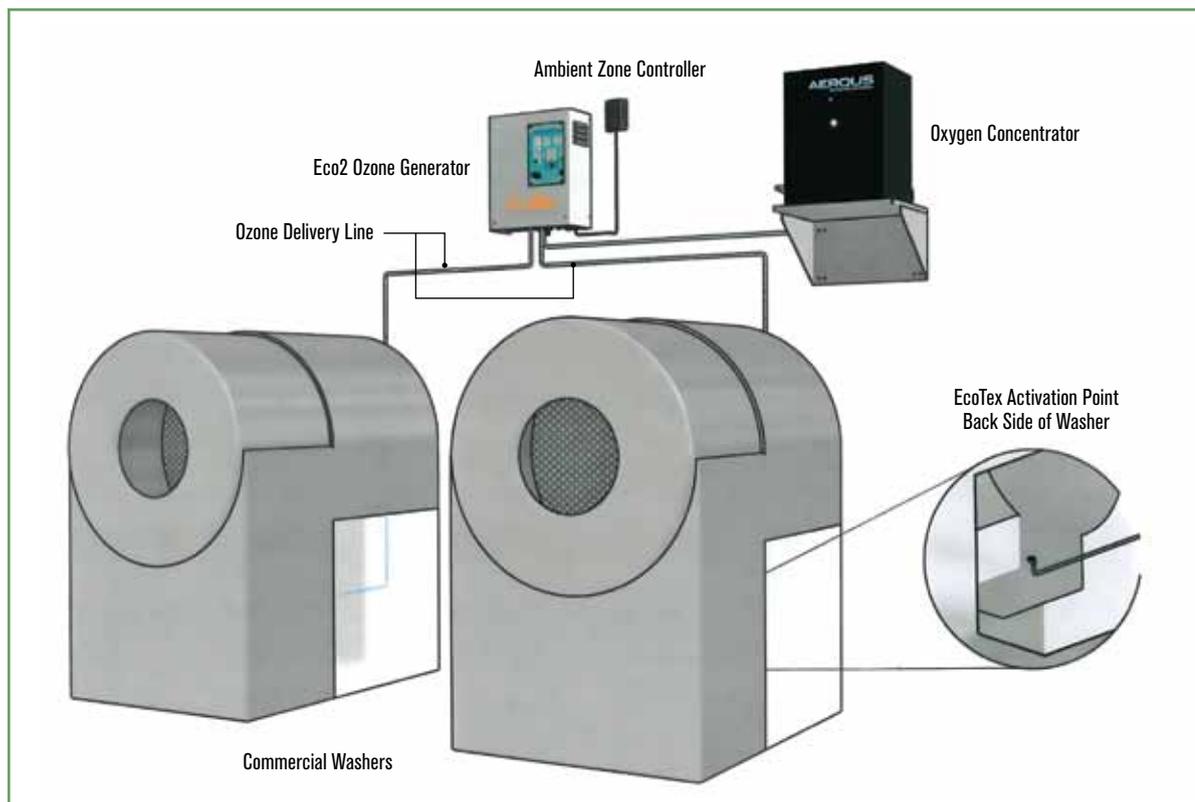
Located just minutes from Pacific Ocean beaches on California's Central Coast, midway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, Sohi's establishment earned an Intercontinental Hotels Group (IHG) Torchbearer award for 2011-2012 as one of the top 1% of hotels in the Americas. This property also has continually been ranked No. 1 in the region by IHG since it opened in 2008, in addition to receiving TripAdvisor's Certificate of Excellence every year since 2009.

Along with a steady stream of business travelers, Sohi said about two-thirds of the hotel's 80 rooms and suites often are occupied by wine enthusiasts from around the world. They come to sample vintages from the area's famed Paso Robles Wine Country, with more than 200 wineries within a 30-minute radius.

Energy Savings

As the operating owner (several franchise partners are not actively involved), Sohi

The ozone system helps the hotel save approximately 44 gal of water per load of laundry.



has been general manager of the hotel since day one. The EcoTex system from ClearWater Tech entered the picture about 18 months ago. Sohi acknowledged he had some initial concerns. "Hearing about what EcoTex does and its savings made switching seemed like a no-brainer," he said. "But sometimes too-good-to-be-true scenarios really aren't true at all."

Sohi has found many of the system's benefits—such as reducing hot water gas costs by as much as 85%—to be the real deal. "The ClearWater representatives thoroughly covered how the process worked, how the installation would proceed and how much money I would start to save, primarily in gas for hot water," he said. "Right away, I could see savings on my statements with the number of therms in daily usage. My overall daily usage gas therms have actually decreased, even though our overall occupancy rate has risen.

"I know I'm also saving money on water, chemicals and labor," Sohi added. "These aren't as easily measured and calculated, but I'm confident we are saving money and resources while becoming a greener operation."

The EcoTex system can, on average, save a hotel as much as 35% on overall water usage on laundry. This water reduction comes from elimination of steps within a wash cycle and/or reduced water levels within a specific step. Washers the size of Sohi's pair of 60-lb Unimacs can consume 125 or more gal of water per load. At 35%, that is almost 44 gal of water saved per load.

Linen Replacement

Sohi also has found that the ozone system helps keeps linen replacement costs down. "All of this has come with zero breakdown in the integrity of my linens," he said. "Here, too, I know I'm saving [on] replenishment costs. We use top-[of-the]-line bedding, so extended linen life will have an impact. Exactly how much will become more evident in time."

Sohi appreciates the green benefits ozone treatment has provided the business—especially when it comes to cost savings. "The most amazing part of all this is that there is no upfront cost at all," he said. "Usually going green means there are some costs associated or rebates, which must be budgeted or waited for. With this program, your savings pay for the equipment, and once that is paid off, the savings are 100% yours. It's a win-win situation for everyone."

Smooth Transition

Sohi's washers and dryers process about 2,500 lb of laundry per week on-occupancy from April to October. "Near perfect" is how Sohi describes laundry room output destined for guest rooms as well as other hotel usage. Maintaining that standard was another

critical issue for Sohi when deciding to switch to a cold water ozone system.

"Our hot water program was really dialed in, and I hesitated to mess with something that's working," he said. "With cold water rather than hot and [fewer] chemicals, would our laundry come out as clean? There's a fine line, a balance

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between water and chemicals, [that] requires adjustment with ozone compared to washing in hot water. There was troubleshooting early, plus testing the EcoTex chemical formula and working with it a few times to really get the best program for us.”

Unlike most transition projects in which

Sohi must become personally involved, this project allowed him to be more hands off. “EcoTex was on point. The ClearWater and the Aqua Systems (chemical supply representative) people worked really well together to get the system working correctly and get us dialed in,” he said.

Greener Laundry

Rarely has Sohi had to call for service. When he has, response time is usually same day. “They’re efficient and expeditious in solving whatever problem I have,” he said. “You don’t often get as much from a vendor, and when I do, I really appreciate it. It’s nice to say that we use ozone technology, and I know it will help our score when our business becomes green certified. We want to be a responsible business in every way, and environmentally is one of them. EcoTex, with less water usage, energy savings and other advantages, plays a key role in our effort. If it were a requirement for all hotel operations like ours, everyone would benefit.”

Utility companies appreciate energy savings,

“If it were a requirement for all hotel operations like ours, everyone would benefit.”



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