



Hand Dryers Are Back In Style

By Arely Castellón

Remember when hand dryers were popular in public restrooms? The drying process was noisy, seemed to take forever (30 to 45 seconds), and they did not kill germs. Then, as with everything else, technology changed, providing units that are quiet and faster, creating renewed interest due to green compliance programs.

Options for current hand dryers have never been greater. Dry times are now 10 to 15 seconds, and they are hands free, making them very hygienic. Several new models sanitize the air while drying. One manufacturer provides an internal ultra-violet lamp that is designed to disinfect the air exiting from the nozzle. The ultra-violet lamp remains active 24x7, so it is constantly killing bacteria, and improving the air quality in the restroom.

Why Are Hand Dryers Appealing?

A recent analysis in *Sanitary and Maintenance Magazine* indicated that the average cost of paper towels (\$28/case) is over \$1,400 per year/per restroom. Compare that to a top of the line hand dryer, and a one-time expense for a hand dryer becomes attractive. There is no paper waste on the floor, and they also reduce the incidence of clogged toilets, reducing labor and maintenance costs. Energy requirements are minimal and newer models help qualify for LEED points. Lastly, cleaning crews have more time to clean if they don't have to refill dispensers, which is always appealing for the cleaning crew and the property manager.

What are the drawbacks?

Clearly, upfront cost is a consideration, since hand dryers vary in price from \$150 to over \$1000 per unit. In addition, the technology is not foolproof, so there will be maintenance costs, albeit small.

From a user's point of view, it is important to consider the increasing trend of using paper towels to grip handles to open doors when exiting a restroom. This is readily evidenced by the trash cans positioned next to the door or by the accumulation of paper towels on the floor when a trash can is not present. Hand Sanitizers can easily remedy this situation.

According to the U.S. Green Building Council, the LEED-EB policy requires: "Development of strategies for promoting and improving hand hygiene, including both hand washing and the use of alcohol-based waterless hand sanitizers." By installing the dispensers next to doors, the need for paper is eliminated.

Hand Dryers Support Green Initiatives

With all the emphasis on green, clearly, hand dryers are part of the program. In fact, Lynn-Ann Ierna, Director of Property Management with Midgard Management in Fort Lauderdale, recently selected hand dryers for their new LEED Certified building undergoing final construction at 1401 West Cypress Creek Rd. Her reasoning:

"We chose the hand dryers to eliminate paper towels, not only a cost savings to our CAM, but also as part of our green initiative."

Certainly another green solution to consider, we expect hand dryer placement to increase as buildings convert to greater green usage. It clearly complements green cleaning.



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