

**LLT wash system simplifies
workflow, boosts efficiency for
Detroit hospital co-op laundry.**



LAVATEC
Laundry Technology Inc.



Their Lavatec batch tunnel washers process nearly 10 million pounds of laundry annually for Metropolitan Detroit Area Hospital Services, Inc. (MDAHS), meeting the needs of five acute care facilities and four clinical/surgery centers.

Processing nearly 10 million pounds of laundry a year for nine hospitals means about 8-1/2 hours of nonstop operation for Metropolitan Detroit Area Hospital Services, Inc. (MDAHS) every Monday through Friday, starting at 7:00 a.m. A Co-op service for five acute care facilities with more than 1400 beds and four clinical/surgery centers, MDAHS began servicing member institutions in 1972 from its then-new facility on Detroit's Oakman Boulevard, just west of downtown.

A recent 11,000 sq. ft. addition gives MDAHS a total of 47,000 sq. ft. for equipment used to handle the network needs of Trinity Health System and Henry Ford Health System facilities as far west as Chelsea, with the largest single facility being St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor.

“Our members rely on us for timely processing and delivery of goods that adhere to stringent healthcare standards,” emphasizes General Manager Jillane Mannlein. Those tasks have become a lot easier - and the quality of processed goods much better - since two 14-compartment Lavatec batch tunnel washers were brought on-board.

“Although our previous machines were state-of-the-art, several production issues persuaded the Co-op Board to agree to replace them in 2007,” Mannlein says. Assistant General Manager Dave Haas, a 30-year laundry industry veteran then in his third year with MDAHS, played a key role in the search process.

Lavatec design simplicity and operational reliability resonate: ‘They just work.’

Haas initially knew little about Lavatec Laundry Technology (LLT), having worked with other makes elsewhere. Looking into new options, he was quickly drawn to the Lavatec tunnel.

“It’s a simple machine compared to others, well engineered and well built. We’re a no-frills laundry and we don’t spend money on extraneous stuff. We invest in equipment and keeping costs down for our members.”

Mannlein concurs. “Lavatec machines fit in with the way we do business.”



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Haas points to Lavatec tunnels' minimal moving parts where less can go wrong, and notes that other manufacturers' machines use chain drives:

“A 14-module tunnel like our Lavatecs would have 14 chain drives to lubricate and maintain, and 14 idler wheels to go with them. Our Lavatec tunnels don't have chains; the wash drum is driven by four friction drive assemblies. If one or even two wheels has a problem, you can keep the process going and stay on schedule with just two drives working.”

Other features of the bottom-transfer machines further emphasize his point. “These tunnels are very easy to operate and the controls are very simple and user friendly.”

Lavatec and MDAHS worked closely together prior to installation, determining the best possible layout and equipment configuration, ascertaining locations for steam valves and drains, chemical injection points and a myriad of other details.

Why 14 compartments at 110 lbs.? “This was worked out with Lavatec, to deliver the productivity we need while giving us adequate rinses,” says Haas. “It also provides potential for running more pounds per hour through the machines.”

Observing that some manufacturers push center- (or top-) transfer machines, Haas indicated Lavatec offers both center- and bottom-transfer, plus double-drum construction. “We have single drum at the load and discharge ends of our tunnels, with the flexibility of double-drum in the middle. It's the best combination for us.”

Haas said the automated systems keep goods flowing smoothly. “These tunnels are very reliable. They just work.”

A huge difference in brightness and much less water.

What's more, their “work” delivers the quality output that MDAHS member-hospitals look for. “There was a huge improvement in whiteness in all of our goods when we started using the Lavatec tunnels,” Haas reports. That's still true today, along with effective disinfection. In addition, “the batch process avoids even incidental mixing of, say, scrubs and sheets, which sometimes occurred with our previous machines.”

Water usage dropped significantly with the Lavatec tunnels, by about 25%, according to Haas. Less steam is required, too, much of this due to switching to gas dryers. “We used to run two of the three boilers with the old dryers,” Haas says. “Now we only use one. Granted, there is some trade-off in savings, with gas for the newer dryers.”



Variable discharge option enables Metropolitan Detroit Area Hospital Services, Inc. (MDAHS) to direct goods to either the extraction presses or - in the case of surgical garments and other items with micro denier fabrics - to the centrifuge, which provides gentler spin extraction in order to preserve linen integrity. System equipment is manufactured by Lavatec Laundry Technology (LLT).



“The Lavatec tunnel system has turned out to be one of the best investments we've made.”

Assistant General Manager Dave Haas

The combination of Lavatec extraction presses and a centrifuge also effectively minimize drying times and, in turn, energy required.

Custom-tailored MDAHS 'Lavatec wash system' keeps things moving

Haas' “they just work,” tunnel observation applies to other, integrated components of what he calls the “Lavatec Wash System.” In addition to the two tunnel washers, the Co-op service employs two Lavatec hydraulic extraction presses, a centrifuge and two shuttle conveyors servicing 12, 220-lb. dryers. They



also have two Lavatec washer extractors with standalone dryers. Lavatec conveyors link system components, and move goods from dryers into finishing, and a Lavatec rail system gets the laundering process literally up and running in soil-sort, expediting overhead transfer of loads to each washer.

One of the tunnels utilizes Lavatec's variable discharge option, sending goods to either an extraction press or the centrifuge. MDAHS launders surgical garments and mattress under-pads which contain water-resistant micro denier fabric with this system. Those batches go into the centrifuge for spin extraction, so as to preserve linen integrity while prepping the goods for fast, efficient drying.

Commenting on the number of dryers, Haas reveals savvy insights from years in the business. "One common problem even in well-run laundry operations, is caused by lack of drying capacity. When you're scheduling a high-volume variety of goods - sheets, towels, scrubs, mats and the like, plus some special items for a few of our members - having to wait for dryers can force the tunnel to go on hold. This isn't a critical issue, but we maintain a consistent and tight schedule. Our cadre of dryers gives us not only capacity, but the flexibility to keep our array of goods moving without delay."

Bottom line: "Our operation stays on schedule all day, every workday."

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Minimal maintenance easily performed

"We spend only a couple of hours a month 'PM-ing' our Lavatec tunnels," Haas says. "They require minimal maintenance, which also applies to the other equipment in our Lavatec system."

When MDAHS has called for service assistance, Haas says "Lavatec's response is excellent," noting that "parts haven't been a problem" over the six years since initial installation. Reprising his earlier point, "Our laundry invests in equipment and keeping costs down for our members." To which Mannlein adds, "The Lavatec tunnel system has turned out to be one of the best investments we've made."

About Lavatec Laundry Technology, Inc.

Delivering dependable commercial laundry equipment engineered for higher returns throughout their lifecycles has always been the Lavatec Laundry Technology (LLT) mission statement. A rarity among manufacturers of continuous tunnel washers, Lavatec LT offers center transfer, bottom transfer and double-drum construction options, plus a full range of readily integrated, end-to-end laundry system components: washer extractors, extraction presses, centrifuges, dryers, conveyor systems, pickers, feeders, ironers and folders. Simple design, durable construction, user-friendly operation and low maintenance are hallmarks of Lavatec LT machines. A global leader with equipment in laundry operations throughout Europe, the Far East, South and North America, in the United States alone, over 6,000 Load Warriors are in place. For additional information, visit www.LLTusa.com.

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