



Limestone Correctional Facility (courtesy of ADOC)



UT Tumble Dryer



UniLinc™ Control



UW Series, 125lb washer-extractor

Alabama Department of Corrections

28779 Nick Davis Road
Harvest, Alabama

No. of Inmates: 29,000
No. of Prisons: 30

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CASE STUDY



CORRECTING THE LAUNDRY

HOW THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS TOOK
TOTAL CONTROL OVER ITS LAUNDRY OPERATIONS

Advanced control systems can make life easier for managers of high-volume on-premise laundries in such institutions as hospitals, nursing homes and correctional facilities. Allowing operators to easily program cycles, monitor machine usage and performance, and reduce downtime with maintenance alerts are just a few of the benefits.

At Limestone Correctional Facility in Capshaw, Ala., prison administrators also discovered that the right control system – UniLinc™ – could help them quickly and cost-effectively diagnose and fix any potential issue.

Limestone, near Huntsville, houses 1,300 inmates, some of whom work in the facility’s busy on-premise laundry room. There, inmates operate new UniMac® commercial washers and dryers to clean the prison population’s sheets, blankets and clothing. As an incentive to encourage inmates to work efficiently, the prison administration allows them to take free time for the balance of their shifts if they finish their work early.

This incentive backfired, however, when inmates began cutting corners to process laundry more quickly, intentionally running incorrect cycles to skip the recommended wash and rinse options for the type of laundry they were processing. This misuse of the control system obviously hurt the finished laundry’s cleanliness, and inmates began to complain. Without the state-of-the-art UniLinc controls, prison administrators would have had to assign someone to spend a day or two in the laundry room to try to spot what was going wrong, and to try to fix the issue by trial and error. Instead, the laundry equipment distributor was able to use the UniMac machines’ state-of-the-art control systems to identify the real problem and find a solution fast.

THE EQUIPMENT

Limestone had recently installed new laundry equipment to increase energy efficiency and reduce utility costs as part of a broader initiative by the Corrections Department to upgrade to energy-efficient equipment system-wide. The expectation was that this initiative would save the department more than \$2 million a year across its 30 facilities. This is possible because the latest advances in technology have helped laundry equipment become far more efficient. For example, utility costs for a 15-year-old washer-extractor can be as high as \$28,600 a year. Today’s UniMac equipment uses less water and energy, costing approximately \$24,500 in utility charges annually – a yearly savings of \$4,100.

On-premise laundry distributor David Antonio, Sales Representative for Southeastern Laundry, Marietta, Ga., supervised the installation of the new UniMac laundry equipment at Limestone. The Alabama Department of Corrections has been a customer of Southeastern’s for more than 12 years.



SERIOUS ABOUT LAUNDRY.

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Southeastern installed seven 125-pound UW washer-extractors, six 170-pound UT tumble dryers and four 75-pound UT tumble dryers at the Limestone facility. In addition to the UniLinc controls, the new washer-extractors offer 200 G-Force extraction rate, which removes excess water during the rinse cycles, leading to decreased dry-times and therefore reduced utility costs.

The UniLinc controls monitor machine usage and provide data on such things as when laundry cycles start and end, idle time between cycles, whether machines are loaded to capacity and whether the proper cycles are being selected based on linen type and facility occupancy. Since laundry management is not the primary job of prison guards or administration, this technology is extremely helpful in a correctional setting. Prison administrators are able to use their office computers to pull reports on how the machines are being operated to ensure efficiency and a high-quality finished laundry product.

“The machines are very easy to use,” said Bert Ousley, Administrative Services Officer, Alabama Department of Corrections. “You select the cycle and push start. Plus the ability to run management reports is something we really value.” The control system is like an extra set of eyes and ears in the laundry room, a resource that prison administrators came to appreciate soon after.

SOLVING THE CLEANLINESS MYSTERY

When administrators began hearing complaints about linens and clothing shortly after the new equipment was installed, they called in Southeastern’s Antonio. Coming from outside the prison system, Antonio was not allowed to bring a laptop into the laundry room to pull reports due to security protocols. Luckily the UniLinc system features an on-machine display screen and control panel that provided immediate data on how the equipment was being used.

“I just walked up to the UniLinc controls and manually looked at cycles being programmed and percentage of cycles used. No report was needed,” Antonio said. “Accessing this information without the use of a laptop was very nice since we were in a very controlled environment. The information I obtained showed the laundry operators were not using the assigned cycles.”

Ousley was amazed when he saw what the actual problem was.

“With this feedback, we were able to immediately take corrective action, something we wouldn’t have been able to do without UniLinc,” he said.

CORRECTING THE ISSUE

To address the problem of how inmates were using the machine, Southeastern took two steps. Antonio set up a training course for administrators and prison guards who also act as laundry managers to educate them about the recommended cycles. In addition, Southeastern was able to use the UniLinc control system to block out inappropriate cycle

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options so inmates could only select correct wash and rinse options tailored to the prison laundry's needs.

While the Alabama Department of Corrections initially upgraded to UniMac machines with UniLinc because of their energy- and water-saving features, it saw the true power of the system to improve not only energy but labor efficiency in Limestone's on-premise laundry.

"With UniLinc, UniMac offers the total package for any corrections facility looking to take complete control over its laundry operations," said Ousley.