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Industry Focus: Energy

Blue Skies Ahead

Ozone water treatment is taking off

By Kelli Abe Trifonovitch

It's so poetic it could sell the very detergents it's eliminating. Ozone is the same gas that turns the sky blue. When ozone is used to treat water in laundry systems, it saves on energy, water and the need for harsh bleaches and other chemical cleaners.

That is why the Waikiki Beachcomber Hotel decided to install an \$80,000 ozone system for its laundry room a couple of years ago after a trial run, and why other hotel properties have recently followed suit. Beachcomber's Director of Housekeeping Roy Honda says he figures the hotel made a return on its investment in one-and-a-half years, since it began saving about \$50,000 annually by using less water, less electricity and fewer chemicals.

"It's been working great for us and saving us money. It's good for the environment," Honda says. A traditional wash cycle would have taken 200 gallons of water, much of which would need to be heated. Now the laundry cycle uses just 100 gallons of sky-blue, unheated, ozonated water.

The man who sold Honda the system, John Connors of Ozone Industries Inc., says, "It's a huge savings in energy as well as chemicals, because ozone is a natural bleach, but it's a low-level bleach. So there's a lot of



BLUE TANK GROUP: John Connors' Ozone Industries Inc. engineers and sells water treatment systems such as this one in the Waikiki Beachcomber Hotel's laundry room. Photo: Jimmy Forrest

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linen saved, because [the hotels] don't replace the usual amount of linen." He says the annual deterioration rate of linen has been reduced from 10 percent to less than 2 percent.

"The ozone thing right now is crazy," says Darren Kimura, whose energy consulting company has supervised the installation of ozone water-treatment systems at a number of hotel properties. "It's kind of at the beginning of technology application here. It's really only been about three years that Hawaii has really taken to it."

One of the biggest companies in the United States has been commercializing ozone purification for a couple of decades. GE Osmonics, a company of the GE Water Technologies division of General Electric Co., has been disinfecting water using ozone since the '70s, and partnered with Fuji Electric Ltd. of Japan in 1997 to develop commercial ozone generators.

ozone

Pronunciation: O-zon
 1 : a triatomic, very reactive form of oxygen that is a bluish irritating gas of pungent odor, that is formed naturally in the atmosphere by a photochemical reaction and is a major air pollutant in the lower atmosphere, but a beneficial component of the upper atmosphere, and that is used for oxidizing, bleaching, disinfecting and deodorizing
 2 : pure and refreshing air

Source: The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (www.m-w.com)

Ozone-system companies such as Connors' got a huge boost in 2001, when the FDA ruled that ozone could be used as an antimicrobial agent on food, including meat and poultry. The decision has literally led to new markets of business for Ozone Industries Inc. Connors has placed ozone-disinfection systems in the Star Market chain of supermarkets, and recently added Times supermarkets to his list of clients. He says ozone treatment to kill bacteria and viruses can extend the shelf life of produce, meat, poultry and fish. At the time of this writing, his partner was meeting with Costco officials on the Mainland about these ozone systems.

"I'd like to corner the market with the grocery chains and/or Costco," says Connors. That would boost the approximately \$150,000 in sales

Ozone Industries expected in 2003.

Connors says, "It's been a struggle and still is. I'm not

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getting wealthy, but am staying excited and interested."

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