

4 Tips

For Successful In-Unit Laundry

BY TONY SCULTHORPE AND BJ ROSOW

Implementing an in-unit laundry system might seem simple at first, but further examination suggests the need for careful consideration.

Whether an apartment company chooses to provide its own laundry equipment, either through an outright purchase with a service agreement, lease from an outside provider at a reduced monthly rate, or some combination of both, there are many factors management should consider when providing in-home washers and dryers to residents. Today's competitive market means that apartment companies have more options than ever to assist them in maintaining a profitable program with increased resident retention and long-term added value for the community.

1. Control Costs

If apartment managers elect to provide in-home laundry services, they must determine how much rent to charge residents to compensate for the added cost. Managers should investigate market rates for washers and dryers to ensure correct pricing; communities routinely charge \$30 to \$50 per month for an in-home set. If managers elect to lease from outside providers at reduced rates, they then have the ability to make a margin on the rates they charge their residents, avoiding all the issues with maintenance and movement of the equipment, which the provider customarily covers.

While most managers choose not to use in-home laundry as a concession, those who do should be careful to set a time limit for how long residents will receive the concession. If management limits the

Washing Machines

- Clean or replace the water inlet screens at least once a year. Residue builds up quickly and restricts water flow.
- Check hoses for cracking and potential leaks. If there is a water leak from the washer, it usually will require only a simple, inexpensive fix. However, waiting to fix a small problem only makes it more complicated and costly.
- Make sure the drain hoses are secure.
- Level the machines if they have been moved.
- Check drains for blockage.
- Check belt.
- Keep detergent dispensers clean. Not cleaning the dispensers can lead to detergent build-up, which creates a residue that sticks to clothes and looks similar to a grease stain.
- Consider installing stainless steel inlet hoses to prevent potential water damage.
- Advise residents that heavy clothing such as jeans and towels should be spread out over two or more loads. These fabrics absorb a lot of water and can put added strain on the machine.

Clothes Dryers

- Check any make up air vents for clogging.
- Check belts and pulleys.
- Consider having extra lint screens on hand in the event of breakage, vandalism or loss.
- Clean exhaust system once a year.
- Proper ventilation is paramount to drying efficiency. Check dryer venting on a regular basis for air restrictions. Squirrels and other rodents can build nests overnight that restrict airflow. Vines on outside walls have a way of creeping into everything. Lint build up also will have a drastic effect on efficiency and can cause dryer fires.
- Advise residents to regularly clean the lint filter on dryers and to inspect dryer vents to ensure the vents are not blocked. ■

Mac-Gray and Maytag/Whirlpool Commercial Laundry contributed to this article.

