

# Running to a tight budget

A rebuilt machine can provide good value but the purchase requires careful thought and both the machine and its supplier need to be checked out

Laundry services must continuously find ways to increase efficiency and reduce costs. Where managers are involved with decision-making about purchasing they need to be informed about laundry innovations.

Today's laundry systems are increasingly advanced, with features that allow greater cycle flexibility, programmability and reliability – all of which goes a long way in promoting better fabric care and cleanability, more efficient use of utilities and chemicals, and better use of laundry personnel's time.

So should a manager consider purchasing used or reconditioned equipment? When sold on a fully warranted "as new" basis, used or reconditioned equipment can provide a cost-effective, reliable alternative to purchasing new machinery.

It makes sense – a laundry can save as much as half the price of brand new models and get perhaps a year's warranty. They can be better than the original machines if they have been rebuilt to meet the very latest health and safety requirements and can incorporate state-of-the-art process controls and traceability. In short a properly rebuilt machine can provide excellent value, if you do your research.

Always seek professional advice and make sure you purchase the appropriate machine for your business. Will it be compatible with the other machines in your plant?

When considering purchasing a refurbished or second hand machine, you need to find out as much as possible about the machine's history and also about its supplier. A reputable supplier should only need the machine's serial number to give you a full history.

Make sure you know exactly what has been or will be done to the machine before you purchase it.

Rebuilt machines are usually disassembled, cleaned, and the basic core parts closely inspected against original equipment tolerances. Wearable parts are replaced prior to re-assembly. It is a good idea to find out what kind of spares, OEM or pattern, have been used and also about the availability of spares in the future. How quickly can they be obtained?

The units may be fitted with state-of-the-art PLC controls or new motor drives where applicable, and tested to ensure total compliance with modern operating standards.

Always inspect a prospective purchase, and take an experienced engineer with you when you do so. If the machine will be re-built to your specifications try to see it at its current site, so you can judge how it has been maintained and used.

Ask suppliers for energy and water consumption figures for any models under consideration. To ensure you are comparing like-with-like, these should be provided in uniform fashion – perhaps either as an average KWH per year figure for example or through use of the energy monitoring programs.

Also ask about efficiency features such as the G-force of the spin cycle for better water removal (which reduces drying time), or drum sensors that measure contents' humidity to stop cycles precisely when materials are dry.

Check that any machine you are considering will conform to relevant regulation.

In the drycleaning field there have been specific developments that cannot be ignored. In the USA, for example, it will have to comply both with federal regulations and state requirements, which may be stricter. In Europe, all drycleaning businesses must conform to the European Union's Solvent Emissions Directive (SED). The SED is a directive relating to "the limitation of emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) due to the use of organic solvents in certain activities and installations".

The timescale for implementation has varied from country to country, and it is important to check with the implementing authority the precise requirements, both for the machine and the circumstances of your business. You then need to make sure either that the seller has already upgraded the machine to meet these or that it will be re-built so that it does. Be on the look out for machines that are on the market because they are *not* compliant.

Anyone considering purchasing second-hand drycleaning machines should study the SED guidance and discuss this with their machine supplier.

To sum up, a re-built machine is still a considerable investment. Like any other, it requires thorough research, but if you do this, the results can be a machine that delivers excellent performance at very good value. **LCNI**

## Used machines checklist

- If a machine is looked after, the lifespan of a fully-reconditioned unit can be a long one
- Anyone determined to buy second-hand should have an extensive tick list to avoid potential disaster
- Ensure reconditioned machines are backed with a parts warranty and a free technical advice service
- Always attempt to find out the history on all machinery and remedy any faults prior to selling. Determine if the machinery has been thoroughly tested, serviced and cleaned
- Choose a good manufacturer, respected machine model and bear its age in mind
- A maintenance record, by a specialist, is vital and you should seek a log-book. A sign of previous good care is that the machine has been maintained with OEM rather than parts-bin parts
- For drycleaners, it is essential that machinery installed is compliant with the minimum standards required under the Solvent Emission Directive. Check these out thoroughly with the implementing authority, and seek expert help when you examine machines