

# Happy Hands In The **Restroom Environment**

By: Windy Campbell



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*How improved drying technology affects restrooms, visitors and landfills.*

At sporting events, concerts, airports and other public venues, most Americans make a necessary restroom visit at least once.

And most people — three out of four adults, according to a recent survey by *The Trending Machine* — have at least one complaint about public restrooms.

More than a third cited a lack of proper supplies, including paper towels, among their complaints.

We all have been there.

We wash our hands only to find the restroom's paper towel dispenser empty.

For years, electric hand dryers were a source of restroom angst as well.



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Electric dryers have become more modernized, featuring sleek designs and energy-efficient technologies that reduce noise, eliminate germs and dry hands in 15 seconds or less.

## **Drying With The Times**

First established in the 1940s, electric dryers were once limited to metal boxes with a push button emitting hot air and loud noise for 60 seconds, and after this you hoped to have dry hands.

Poor reviews and low customer satisfaction finally caught up to manufacturers.

In the last decade, electric dryers have been modernized with sleek designs coupled with energy-efficient technologies reducing noise, eliminating germs and often drying hands in 15 seconds or less.

"In the last five years, manufacturers have made significant improvements in hand dryer efficiency, all the while improving customer satisfaction and saving facilities thousands of dollars spent on paper, cleaning supplies, trash removal and landfill costs," says Mike Conlan, founder and chief executive officer (CEO) of [www.HandDryerSupply.com](http://www.HandDryerSupply.com). "New technologies are enabling hand dryers to dry hands in 10 seconds or less, and divert the spread of germs."

Conlan understands the impact that the electric hand dryer industry is making on facilities.

In 2010 he saw an increasing opportunity for demand in electric hand drying products.

The products' technology and functionality were improving at a time when facilities were looking for ways to reduce paper use and cut costs while being more eco-friendly and pleasing patrons.

Many facilities are placing a higher priority on customer satisfaction by upgrading their restrooms as well.

## **Soldier Field Case Study**

In 2012, Soldier Field in Chicago replaced its paper towel dispensers with high-speed, high-efficiency hand dryers.

The 63,000-capacity stadium is home to the Chicago Bears and other year-round events, and facility management places a high priority on restroom cleanliness.

Since making the switch, management has cited numerous benefits, including cost-savings from less use of paper towels, cleaner washrooms and no more trash overflow.

Patrons are citing cleaner restrooms with the dryers enabling them to return to their seats faster; customer feedback has been positive.



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Electric hand dryers boost the sustainable efforts of any building by reducing waste.

"At many facilities, first impressions are everything, and this includes restroom cleanliness," Conlan adds. "Patrons remember great restrooms, and they remember the really bad ones as well. The quality of a facility's restroom often impacts a customer's decision to return to that facility."

Manufacturers are placing a high priority on developing new technologies for more energy-efficient products, faster drying and less noise.

Patrons used to spend 30 to 60 seconds in front of an electric dryer; now with improved dryer technologies, hands can be dried within 10 seconds or less.

Universal voltage enables the dryers to fit most electric specification environments, from 100 to 240 volts, 50/60 Hz.

Patrons don't want to hear the once-familiar loud hand drying noise coming from a nearby restroom.

Products now are being made with quieter motors, making them ideal for sports arenas, schools and libraries where outside noise must be kept to a minimum.

## **Environmental Impact**

Today's hand dryers also use less energy and produce fewer greenhouse gases than the production of paper towels.

They can reduce the environmental impacts caused by paper towel use, including saving trees from paper towel production as well as reducing the burden on already clogged landfills.

Studies have shown that production of one ton of virgin paper towels requires consumption of 450 gallons of oil, 40 gallons of gasoline, 7,000 gallons of water, 3 yards of landfill

waste and 158 million BTU's of energy.

With energy efficient hand dryers, all of this can be eliminated.

The hand dryer energy cost is the only ongoing expense; operating costs of high-efficiency dryers average \$20 per year.

## **Managing Microorganisms**

Manufacturers also are de-bunking the hygiene myths, with newer germ-killing technologies that go beyond HEPA filters and heated drying to prevent the spread of bacteria and microorganisms.

For years, HEPA filters were the mainstay of electric dryers, capturing 99.97 percent of bacteria, mold and germs inside the dryer.

In 2013 newer technologies came to market, which extend beyond HEPA to sanitize hands and kill germs in the surrounding air.

Products are now emitting high-speed, unheated air that dries hands quickly and as hygienically as paper towels, while creating less carbon emissions.

Hands-free models alleviate the need to touch any surfaces at all in order to dry hands.

With so many advances in hands-free features, including electric hand dryers, auto-flush toilets, automatic faucets and more, facility owners have a tremendous opportunity to maximize hygiene and cleanliness in their restrooms, improve customer satisfaction and reduce annual cleaning and paper costs.

After experiencing too many dirty restrooms filled with overflowing trash receptacles and questionable handles, patrons will appreciate the cleaner, touch-free environments, and they will leave these areas with confidence. *CM*

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