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ICS Touchless Cleaning System Contributing to “Aggie Pride” at Texas A&M University

By Bill Taylor

“The Rec” closes at midnight. The first-shift custodial staff starts its workday at 2 a.m. The facility has to be cleaned and be ready to open at 6 a.m. each day. That’s four hours to clean a 400,000-square-foot facility. It sounds like a daunting task, and the Texas A&M Rec Center custodial staff will tell you – it is, but it’s getting better.

The Student Recreation Center (“The Rec”) is one of the largest recreation centers in the world.

A recent report estimated that more than one million people visit the center each year. It’s no wonder. The facility has something for everyone: 14 handball/squash/racquetball courts; a ¼-mile indoor walking/running track; two bouldering walls; a 14,000-square-foot weight and fitness room; an outdoor activity area; special events/archery room; a garden room; and class rooms. The Rec is also home to a world class Natatorium, which hosted the 2009 NCAA Men’s and Women’s Diving and Swimming Championships, and features a competitive swimming pool with two moveable bulkheads, competitive diving pool, a shallow-water instructional pool and two spas. It truly is a “flagship” facility for Texas A&M University, and another source for the legendary “Aggie Pride”.

“We strive to provide the first-rate facility Aggies have come to expect. We want to leave all visitors with a



positive and lasting impression of our center and our school,” said Sheila Sparks, Custodial Supervisor at the Student Rec Center. Sparks manages a full-time staff of 13 employees.

“Our building has to shine,” she continued. “To accomplish that, we start early and stay late. Our day starts at 2 a.m., our second shift ends at 12:00 midnight. Our early shift cleans the locker rooms and restrooms floor to ceiling every day. Our second shift continues the efforts throughout the day.” The Rec’s move to touchless cleaning methods came as a result of the H1N1 pandemic and a desire to clean restrooms in an easier and more cost-effective manner.

“There are so many reasons we needed a touchless cleaning system,” said Sparks. “Our facility is large and we have many visitors; our days are very fast-

paced. We have to work efficiently; spray-and-wipe methods are too slow and ineffective. The high traffic volume also creates a greater risk of infectious disease which we have to stay on top of. We also wanted to go green – with a facility as big as ours, we can use a lot of water when cleaning, and we are very conscious of that.

“Our first experience was with a much larger system. While it is great for heavy-duty cleaning, our staff did not embrace it for everyday floor-to-ceiling cleaning.” Sparks noted that her staff found the litany of hoses and cords cumbersome when moving from room to room. “And the system is so large it did not maneuver into some of the areas it was intended for,” she explained. The cleaning crew didn’t find it convenient, and it wasn’t used on a regular basis. “Our staff reverted back to a crew gun and hose for day-to-day cleaning.”



“We’ve received lots of compliments from our guests since we’ve started using the ICS. Our building is always clean, but they notice something is different, and better—it looks new!”

*Sheila Sparks,
Custodial Supervisor
Texas A&M Rec Center*

“We first saw the ICS Mobile Cleaning System at a conference,” she added. “Immediately we saw how it would benefit our operation. We scheduled our free on-site demonstration.” The Rec custodial staff was immediately impressed with the low flow (1/2 gallon per minute) and low pressure (less than 100 psi) spray. “Like everyone else, our custodial staff is concerned about exposure to communicable diseases like H1N1 and staph infections,” Sparks said. “Because of the ICS’s low-pressure delivery, the dirty, contaminated water wasn’t splashing back on us as it did with other systems we tried. It gave us some peace of mind. The low-flow, low-pressure aspect was also much kinder to our grout. It was cleaner, and wasn’t chipped, and all the while, our bathroom wasn’t flooded with water.”

The Rec Center staff purchased its first ICS shortly thereafter. Even during training, Sparks noted her employees’ comments on how much easier the ICS was to use. “The simpler things are the better,” she said. “Better because the easier it is to train employees, and the easier it is for them to use, the more open they are to accept it and use it.” And use it they are. The custodial staff cleans the Natatorium locker rooms

and restrooms with the ICS daily. That's six locker rooms and 14 restrooms.

"Our time savings is huge. Before the ICS, it took about two-and-a-half hours to clean each locker room floor to ceiling. With the ICS, we can do it in about an hour. We can spray on chemical and let it work for 10 minutes or so while we do something else. Then we can come back and finish up. That's where the biggest time savings come from," Sparks explained. But it's certainly not the only ICS feature that saves the staff's time. Integrated storage for supplies, implements and chemicals also eliminated the time Sparks' staff used to spend locating the items they needed. "They have it all right there at their finger tips, and that's handy," she said.

The time saved allows The Rec's custodial staff to focus even more attention on the quality and inviting appearance visitors have come to expect.



"We've received lots of compliments from our guests since we've started using the ICS. Our building is always clean, but they notice that something is different, and better. They've made comments about the pleasant smell and the look of the locker room grout –it looks new," Sparks explained.

Sparks and The Rec's staff are pleased with the performance of the ICS. "I would definitely recommend this system for cleaning small to mid-sized bathrooms. It is so easy to use and maneuver through the building. It's battery-powered and has an on-board

charger; you can plug it in anywhere when you're ready to charge. There are no hoses or cords to contend with," Sparks commented. "I see a lot of potential in this little machine. We could do a lot more with it. I think it will be good for cleaning stairs and mats, and I look forward to using it more and more.

"On a side note, we love the customization options Hydro offered. We do everything with Aggie Pride, and our cleaning equipment is no exception. At no additional cost, Hydro even produced a cart molded in our Aggie gray and maroon colors and offered to have our department logo included. Hydro gave us exactly what we wanted. It was not only an effective cleaning system, but it exhibited our pride in our building, and our school. That's the thing that I like most, aside from the numerous cleaning features," Sparks concluded.

For more information on Hydro Systems or ICS Touchless Cleaning Technology, please call Bill Taylor, ICS Sales Manager, at (513) 271-8800 or visit www.hydro-ics.com.

