

## HVAC & PLUMBING PRODUCT NEWS

# HVAC/P®

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# Clean it Up



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right.

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## Finding the Silver Lining

Oklahoma business prevails in spite of strong headwinds

Whether in a traditional coin-op laundromat or an industrial textile cleaning application, hot water — and plenty of it — is the number one consideration. Limit the supply or lower the temperature, and profitability goes right down the drain.

“In the laundry or textile cleaning industry, there’s a simple formula, so to speak,” said Trent Dodson, co-owner of Oklahoma Textile. “There are four inputs needed to get clean material: temperature, time, chemicals and mechanical action. If you’re lacking one of these, you’ll need to make up for it with another.”

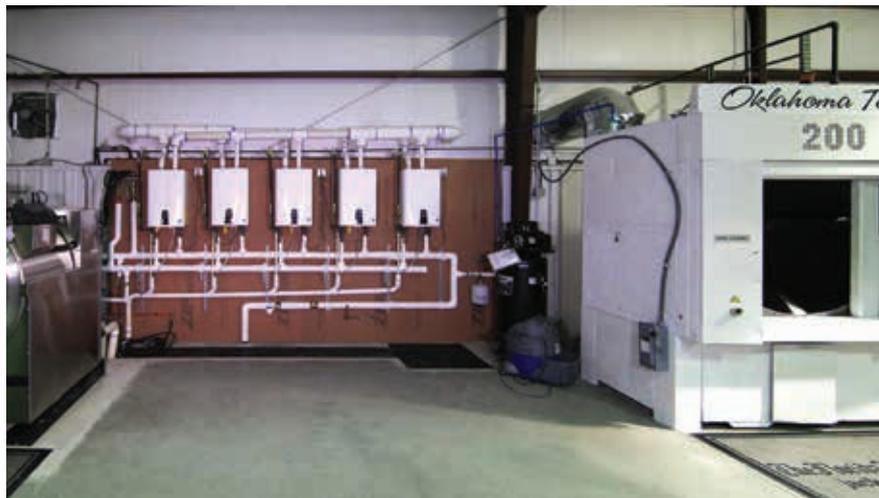
Dodson’s industrial textile cleaning company serves 40 clients in the greater Oklahoma City area. They’ve carved their niche by focusing on relatively few, but large, customers. Maintaining the stellar reputation hasn’t been easy. He and his business partner, Mark Boen, have battled everything from tornados to underachieving water heaters.

### SANDBAGGED

As a startup company in 2009, the initial investment for all inventory, an industrial washer-extractor and a dryer to match, was colossal, leaving little capital for supporting equipment like vehicles and water heaters. The company purchased two, 80 mbh, 50 gallon tank-style water heaters to supply all the hot water for the huge, stainless steel washer.

While hardly suitable to begin with, the tank-style water heaters became grossly inadequate as the client base grew. The company was hobbled by two-and-a-half-hour wash cycles, a direct result of insufficient hot water volume and temperature. By late 2011, the existing setup was inhibiting the company’s growth, and Truman Plumbing was hired to fix the issue.

“They needed hotter water and a lot more of it,” said Les Haugeto, owner of Truman’s.



“Based on prior experience with high-efficiency Navien tankless water heaters, I suggested they seriously consider a cascading, multiple-unit approach. We talked about the cycle times they were looking to get from their washer-extractor and designed a new system accordingly.”

### TWO STEPS FORWARD

Haugeto installed three Navien NP-240s, the precursor to the NPE-240, which boasts a 199 Mmbh input, 10:1 turndown and Energy Star rated at 0.97 EF (energy efficiency). Depending on the time of year, the three units combined were capable of providing

From top: Les Haugeto, owner of Truman’s Plumbing, checks the Navien NPE-240A integrated control panel. > Navien NPE water heaters ensure Oklahoma Textile’s mega washers have constant hot water.

between 6.6 and 10.8 gpm to the washer, with a water temperature of 182 F.

The washer’s initial fill time hadn’t changed much because the building was only equipped with a ¾-inch water line. But cycle times had plummeted because hot water was always on tap. Considering the washer may dump and refill as many as 10 times in a cycle, the difference was staggering.

“As a result of installing the three Navien units, our natural gas consumption decreased slightly, while production and profitability soared,” explained Dodson.

“Our water and sewer bills fell as a result of using less water volume, labor hours dropped and electric bills shrunk as a result of shorter wash cycles and fewer hours spent in the building. Most

# plumbing

importantly, we cut our chemical use in half, which is a huge deal.”

Oklahoma Textile used its new flexibility and expanded capacity to gain new customers. The company was on a superhighway to growth and success. But, all that momentum halted abruptly on May 20, 2013.

## THREE STEPS BACK

That spring day started like all others. At noon the skies darkened and, by 4 p.m., a category F5 tornado had freight-trained its way across a 17-mile strip, leaving a mile-wide swath of devastation in its wake. Millions of square feet of industrial space had been diminished to rubble, Oklahoma Textile included.

“We immediately started looking for new industrial space to rent,” said Dodson. “We got very lucky and found an appropriate building a few weeks later, bought new equipment and called Truman Plumbing again. That whole process took six weeks. Three nearby cleaning outfits graciously



Oklahoma Textile has five cascaded Navien NPE-240As. This means the company has the ability to run a larger washer, or even a second one.

served our clients in the meantime.”

“The new hot water system we enjoyed for a brief time at the old facility solved a laundry list of issues,” he continued. “It was an absolute game changer, so we wanted to expand on it for the new, bigger building.”

## REBUILD BIGGER

This time around, a larger water supply line from the street — now two-inch — meant the ability to run a larger washer, or even a second one. When Haugeto arrived, he had five Navien NPE-240A water heaters in the truck. They’re lined up like soldiers against the back wall, piped and plumbed together, not taking up any precious floor space.

“The NPE-240A, which we used here, has integrated cascading controls,” said Haugeto.

“During the install, all I need to do is run a small communication wire from unit to unit and they’ll modulate only as high as needed to meet the call for hot water. In effect, OK Textile has

a system that can provide 50 stages of input.”

“Every dark cloud, even a 300 mph vortex, can have a silver lining,” said Dodson. “We’re now capable of making more hot water than the new washer can use. Average fill times are down to two minutes and there’s

seemingly no limit to the amount of hot water.

“With the Navien water heaters, we’re cleaning twice as much material in three days than we used to do in six days with the old tank-style units. And we’re doing it better and more profitably.” **CHECK OR CIRCLE #140**

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