

Marks & Spencer - This isn't just hand drying...

The highest standards of cleanliness and hygiene have always been a defining characteristic of Marks & Spencer, throughout every dimension of its operations. This even extends to setting standards for its suppliers.

Jet Towel is being installed in new stores and in existing stores where the toilets are being refitted as part of a development or remodel. Launched in Europe in Spring 2007, Jet Towel has already revolutionised washroom hygiene throughout Japan and Asia.

Rather than trying to evaporate moisture, Jet Towel blasts water from hands with two high speed wafer thin airflows that atomises the water and collects it, drying the hands in only 10 seconds. This compares to the 20-30 seconds of a conventional dryer, and is more energy efficient and hygienic too.

Styled with understated elegance, Jet Towel simultaneously creates an ambience of sophistication and high tech hygiene. Mitsubishi's first Jet Towel was launched in 1993 and the version now being made available in Europe is the seventh generation development. Since its earliest installations it has proved a winner with installers, for its high tech elegance; with operators, for its low running cost and reliability; and with users for its convenience, speed, and hygiene.

Its environmental credentials are high because Jet Towel avoids the use of paper towels and its power consumption is a fraction that of alternative dryers. In use just-washed hands are placed into a slot on the Jet Towel's upper side and sensors automatically start the 180mph airflow. This can be unheated to maximise energy savings, or heated to a pleasant 35degC using a low power storage heating system for instant warmth.

Moisture is blown downwards on both sides of the hands to the drain, and when the dried hands are retracted airflow stops. This completely non-contact operation saves energy as the airflow does not continue after the user has departed and avoids any bacterial transfer.

The materials of construction are anti-microbial, thus providing enhanced hygiene throughout Jet Towel's working life. Test data shows that rapid multiplication of airborne bacteria is not encouraged by Jet Towel, unlike some conventional hot air dryers.

At the heart of Jet Towel are advanced brushless motor and fan technologies that is designed for seven years of service at 1,000 uses per day. Power consumption of the motor is a tiny 650W, a fraction of that of a traditional dryer and barely half that of similar systems. Significantly, Jet Towel is whisper quiet, enhancing the image of sophisticated elegance.

Marks & Spencer trialled Jet Towel at its London head office as well as in a new store outside Glasgow, and has retrofitted units to an increasing number of existing stores. It is also helping redefine hygiene standards at a furniture factory in Wales that supplies M&S and all Marks & Spencer suppliers are being encouraged to adopt the technology as soon as possible.

“For Marks & Spencer, hygiene was an absolute requirement,” says Jet Towel specialist Peter May. “We had to show that we could offer an improvement over their already demanding standards.” After that energy consumption was important because their ‘Plan A’ commits M&S to attaining equally high environmental and carbon standards over a very short time frame. When you work out how many pairs of hands are dried by Marks & Spencer every day, you realise that as well as being very ‘green’ Jet Towel is making a significant cost saving. “Noise was another parameter high on the list, and again Jet Towel blew the opposition away.”

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