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What's New With You?

Jeff Storie

The View From Afar

Remote monitoring service for water heaters provides peace of mind locally, nationally

The National Restaurant Association estimates that as of this year, there are 970,000 restaurant locations across the United States. For the \$632 billion restaurant industry, this translates to 300,000 gallons of water running through water heating systems every year.

In the restaurant business, the adage "time is money" is more than just a cliché; it's gospel. And when a water heater fails, every second equates to money lost.

A Common Headache

"The water heater is one of those products that when it's down, you have to close your doors," said Maria Johnson, National Director of facilities management for Pei Wei Asian Diner.

With 175 Pei Wei locations across the United States, Johnson has a fleet of water heaters to look after, among other responsibilities.

Like many restaurants, Johnson said they would not be alerted to a water heater malfunction until a patron could not wash their hands or kitchen staff could not wash the dishes. Then, a contractor would be called, and the problem could take hours or days to repair, all while the restaurant is losing sales.

In addition, she had to rely heavily on store managers to keep her aware of any product failure or malfunction at each location.

Realizing this method was not the most effective, Pei Wei took a proactive approach. The company transitioned from traditional boiler and storage-tank water heating systems to high-efficiency gas water heaters with a remote monitoring service feature.

Going Remote

Chef Jeremy Barlow of Nashville's Tayst Restaurant & Wine Bar also knows about the stress and loss of revenue that happens when a restaurant lacks hot water.

For Barlow, the most important part of his restaurant, and consequently the part that requires the most of his attention, is the food, so he always keeps one eye on his restaurant's water heaters.

Barlow found peace of mind when he installed a remote monitoring system for his water heaters.

The service monitors water heaters and boilers, alerting him of any faults or areas of concern. Via the Internet, he can monitor the water heaters' performance and make changes to their settings. In addition to remote access, the system alerts Barlow via text message or email should a problem arise.

Proactive Problem-solving

Thanks to the remote monitoring service, Johnson has seen a significant increase in her restaurants' efficiency. She is notified of even the smallest of issues, which are quickly addressed and rectified.

"The service has been great when it comes to letting us know if there are any problems with the water heater, even before the store manager knows," Johnson said. "The store is contacted and led through troubleshooting over the phone. Whether it is as simple as resetting the water heater or something more complicated, we no longer discover issues by accident."

Barlow, too, has experienced a sense of relief since installing the monitoring service.

"Now, I don't have any worry," he said. "Any concern about the restaurant having to shut down because the water heaters have stopped working is gone. The monitor service lets me get back to running my business."

Johnson recalled a specific time when a store's water temperature had been set too high, which could lead to wasted energy and money.

"I get an email identifying any changes in a water heater, usually within the hour, detailing the issue," she said. "One time, an alert came through saying that the water was too hot. We contacted the store and instructed the branch manager on how to reduce the temperature. That, to me, is great. It's something that we might not have discovered for a long time."

It's cases like these that have established Johnson's trust in the remote service.

"I definitely have a greater peace of mind and more comfort now," Johnson said. "Our monitoring service is faster than humanly possible. It allows the store manager to focus on running the store. That is vital to our staying open."

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