

Installing Variable-Speed Pool Pumps

Good for business, good for the environment



Photo: Barefoot Pools

IN LIGHT OF THE NEW DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY regulations going into effect in 2021, now is a good time to integrate variable-speed pool pump replacement sales into your business plan. Selling the energy-saving benefits of variable-speed pool pumps (VSP) is quite rewarding, according to pool professionals who have made variable-speed pump replacement a central part of their business.

Many pool professionals on the West Coast, like Jose Garcia, owner of Barefoot Pools in Phoenix, have been replacing single-speed pumps with variable-speed pumps for more than 10 years. Barefoot began as a pool service business that primarily cleaned pools and provided chemical water-balancing services. However, in 2011 Garcia started selling variable-speed pumps when local utilities began offering rebates to pool owners who upgraded their pools. "It was a real game changer for our business," Garcia says. "The rebates initially offered by our local energy companies made it easy to start a conversation about replacing single-speed pumps for variable-speed pumps."

Garcia says the energy companies in Arizona not only provided pool owners with a rebate but also paid pool professionals directly to install and properly program the new VSPs. "We got in early and were switching pumps left and right," Garcia says. "We were installing around 180 variable-speed pumps per year in those first

OPERATIONAL COST SAVINGS

Based on a 32,000-gallon pool at .08/KWH with the pool being used eight months out of the year

SINGLE-SPEED PUMP <i>Existing</i>	INTELLIFLO VARIABLE-SPEED PUMP <i>Estimated</i>
<p>TURNOVERS PER DAY</p> <p>1.8</p>	<p>TURNOVERS PER DAY</p> <p>1.0</p>
<p>RUN TIME</p> <p>12 HOURS</p>	<p>RUN TIME</p> <p>12 HOURS</p>
<p>COST PER DAY</p> <p>\$1.99</p>	<p>COST PER DAY</p> <p>\$0.32</p>
<p>COST PER YEAR</p> <p>\$483</p>	<p>COST PER YEAR</p> <p>\$77.33</p>
<p>SAVINGS</p>	
<p>SAVINGS PER YEAR</p> <p>\$405</p>	
<p>SAVINGS PERCENTAGE</p> <p>84%</p>	

*This calculator is based on standardized Curve C performance data as supplied to the California Energy Commission per the Title 20 Appliance Efficiency Regulations. The pump's actual performance and subsequent energy consumption is dependent upon various characteristics of the plumbing system, including but not limited to pipe size, pipe lengths, filter type, fittings and auxiliary equipment.

few years." Now, Barefoot Pools has grown to two retail locations focusing on service, repair and remodeling of swimming pools, and he attributes part of its growth to the profits and customer loyalty that comes from replacing single-speed pumps with variable-speed pumps.

BENEFITS TO VSP SALES

While rebates are a great way to get the conversation started, Garcia also discovered fairly quickly that changing pool pumps from single to variable speed offered many other benefits that ultimately pushed homeowners to agree to the change. "Benefits like lower monthly utility bills, reduced noise pollution and cleaner water are things that customers understand and appreciate," Garcia says. Although the rebates from the utilities in Arizona ended almost five years ago, Garcia replaces around 250 single-speed pool pumps with variable-speed pumps every year because of the additional benefits.

TRY THE CALCULATOR AT bit.ly/VSPCalc

Lower monthly utility bills: Using actual data and calculating the potential monthly savings in utility bills is an excellent way to overcome the price objection when selling variable-speed pumps. "I have always used the Pentair Pool Pump Savings Calculator when explaining the benefits of variable-speed pumps to my customers," Garcia says. "I keep the calculator on my iPad, and we plug in the customer's pool data and the rate they are paying from their electrical company. The calculator does the math, which shows all of my customers that they will immediately start saving \$30 to \$50 a month on their electrical bill by installing a new VSP."

Garcia has the cost calculator on display at his retail stores and on the iPads of all his service trucks so his staff can quickly show consumers the financial benefits of switching over. "Consumers are becoming much more aware of the importance of doing everything



Photo: Barefoot Pools

possible to be eco-friendly and these VSP pumps are better for the environment because they use so much less electricity," Garcia says.

Reduced noise pollution: In densely populated areas with lots of pools, a quieter pool pump not only improves the backyard living environment for your client but also for their neighbors.

"We explain that switching over to a VSP not only reduces monthly operating expenses but also offers much quieter operation," Garcia says, "which means there is less noise pollution for the pool owner and their neighbors — so everyone in the neighborhood gets more enjoyment of their backyard."

Pool professionals can explain to their customers that they will know the pump is working because they see water movement in the pool, not because they hear the pump running.

Cleaner, clearer water: Because of the slower operating speed of the VSP pump, the filter works more efficiently so the pool water is cleaner. The slower speed allows the filter to catch smaller particles.

"At first, customers were skeptical this new pump might run 23 hours a day and keep the pool water cleaner than their old single-speed pump that would run eight hours a day," Garcia says. "However, the pool owners would call a few days later to say they immediately noticed their pool water looked cleaner and clearer."

Pool equipment will last longer and work better because there is less strain put on the entire system. Additionally, having the pump run for more hours a day, means the pool water is healthier. "Stagnant pool water can more easily develop algae or other water borne annoyances," Garcia says.

MAKE VSP REPLACEMENT PART OF YOUR BUSINESS PLAN

Replacing single-speed pumps with variable-speed pumps is a profitable endeavor and should be central to the business plans of all pool professionals, especially in the next few years. Not only will you be ensuring pools are compliant with DOE regulations, but the work can significantly improve your bottom line. Even more importantly, selling variable-speed pool pumps will improve customer loyalty with your clients, because of all the benefits that come with VSPs — lower monthly electrical bills, cleaner water and a quieter, more peaceful backyard. ■