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Portable Cooling for National Account

It may sound counter-intuitive, but emergency cooling actually can be planned — and there are many advantages to using a planned approach. Case in point: To keep the air cool in thousands of North American locations, Luxottica Retail relies on a backup cooling plan established with Atlas Sales & Rentals Inc., a distributor of portable air conditioning equipment.

For customers buying prescription eyewear, an air-conditioned environment is a must to ensure a comfortable shopping experience, an accurate exam, and a perfect fit. And for retailers who make lenses onsite, lab areas must be kept cool to prevent critical heat-generating equipment from breaking down.

“We have known for years that portable equipment provides an excellent solution for emergencies or for temporary cooling, when the regular a/c equipment is shut down for maintenance or repairs,” said Dennis Feix, senior maintenance manager for Luxottica Retail.

“We used to requisition this equipment as needed through our various service regions. It was a somewhat piecemeal approach, and was more time-consuming and costly than we wanted it to be.”

Luxottica Retail is a part of Luxottica Group, and represents retail chains in North America including LensCrafters, Pearle Vision, Sears Optical, Target Optical, Sunglass Hut, ILORI, and EyeMed Vision Care.

In mid-2007, Feix heard of a special program offered by Atlas to national account customers. “We learned that it would be possible to order portable cooling equipment from a central point of contact, with immediate response and consistent pricing,” he said. Luxottica signed on for the program and has been working with Atlas ever since.



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The benefits of the program, the company said, include a single point of contact

for all service needs, customized emergency response plans, and the flexibility to adapt to customers' order processing systems, including Web-based programming.

Equipment is dispatched from the company's large and growing network of stocked branch offices around the country, Atlas said.

Customers buying prescription eyewear need an air-conditioned environment to ensure a comfortable shopping experience, an accurate exam, and a perfect fit. For retailers who make lenses onsite, lab areas need to be cooled to prevent heat-generating equipment from breaking down.

Feix said that the centralized approach to portable cooling has multiple benefits for Luxottica. "In addition to the convenience of 'one-stop shopping,' so to speak, we are working with a vendor who knows our stores and our equipment needs, making the process both efficient and dependable.

"Whenever we need portable cooling, we call ... and they generally respond within 24 hours or less."

RETAIL CLIENTS' NEEDS

Feix noted that his department has HVAC responsibility for around 3,000 of Luxottica's 5,400 North American retail locations in the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean. The stores are designed with three cooling zones: a retail section, a lab, and the optometrist's examination area.

"Portable cooling can be delivered to any or all zones as needed," he explained. "The most common applications are emergency cooling in the event of an air conditioning breakdown, but sometimes portables are used proactively when an a/c unit is down for scheduled maintenance or replacement."

Feix summed it up like this: "The program has helped Luxottica secure temporary cooling on a more efficient basis and at a more economical cost. We are pleased with the approach." ■



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