



# Riverside Health Fitness Center

*Towel Tracker reduces towel loss by 95 percent and saves 3,000-member fitness club \$278,000 in four years*

Riverside Health Fitness Center is a 70,000 square foot fitness club located an hour south of Chicago, in Bourbonnais, Illinois. Owned and operated by Riverside Healthcare, it provides medically-based fitness and wellness services to over 3,000 members. Amenities offered include an Olympic-sized pool, warm water therapy pool, sauna/steam room/whirlpool, basketball court, indoor track, and suspension training system.



## The Towel Situation

Before Towel Tracker, Riverside members obtained clean towels in the locker rooms. Riverside's Fitness and Facilities Director Sam Bugajski elaborated, "We stored clean towels on shelves. Right underneath them was a counter space with a hole cut in it, and a 30 gallon garbage can sat under that hole. Members took fresh towels from the shelves and threw used towels in the garbage can. Using this system, we lost about 2,400 towels a year from theft and accidental theft."

## The Solution

Riverside's Executive Director Casey Ashline discovered Towel Tracker at an industry trade show and stated, "I was immediately intrigued." After conducting an informal survey to benchmark towel usage and laundering at Riverside, Ashline received approval to purchase a Towel Tracker, which was installed right outside of both locker rooms in spring 2012. Following are the cost savings and benefits that Riverside has experienced in the past four years:

- **Reduced towel loss**

Towel loss has dropped by 95% since installing Towel Tracker. Only 8-10 towels now go missing each month, which has dramatically reduced the need to purchase replacement towels. This has saved Riverside \$11,388 each year, which equates to \$45,552 in total cost savings over four years.

- **Improved towel availability**

Bugajski explained, "Before Towel Tracker, we'd put clean towels out and within a very short amount of time, people would come up and say there were no towels left. We found out people were taking three, four, or more towels at a time and hoarding them in their lockers." To address this problem, Riverside implemented a policy that allows each member to take a maximum of two towels from Towel Tracker per visit. Bugajski said this policy has been beneficial because it "helps distribute the towel inventory more evenly. It has also kept more towels readily available, because towels are coming out of the cabinet at a regular rate."

- **Eco-friendly reduction in towel usage and laundry-related costs**

Before Towel Tracker, Riverside washed 525 loads of towels per month, which equaled 6,300 loads per year. After installing Towel Tracker and implementing the two towel policy, overall towel use dropped by 50%. As a result, Riverside now only washes about 250 loads per month—that's 3,000 fewer loads per year, which represents a 53% drop in the number of loads washed. This has led to a corresponding eco-friendly cost reduction in the laundry detergent, electricity, and gas used in the laundering process, as well as a 250,000 gallon drop in water used to launder towels each year. As a result of these changes, Riverside's overall laundry expenses have dropped by \$23,496 per year. This equates to \$93,984 saved since Towel Tracker was installed four years ago. In addition, Riverside was named a top three finalist in the Green category of the 2013 international RFID Journal Awards, for its implementation of Towel Tracker.

## Additional Benefits

- **Reduced labor costs**

Before Towel Tracker, the towel management process was labor intensive. Bugajski explained, "We needed male and female locker room attendants to ensure we had access to both locker rooms. Every hour, they picked up laundry carts from the laundry room, wheeled them to two different towel areas in each locker room, then dumped dirty towels from the 30 gallon trash cans into the laundry cart. The garbage cans were often too heavy to pick up, so the employees emptied them by hand, rolled the carts to the laundry room, and repeated the process a second time to unload towels into the washing machines. Then they had to restock clean towels in the locker rooms."

Bugajski observed, "Towel Tracker significantly simplified things. It centralized our towel pickup and drop off location outside both locker rooms, so we now only need to keep one staff person in laundry, and it's not as critical who we have there genderwise. Towel Tracker also simplified the pick up and drop off procedure for towels. We just unlock the return cabinet, push the return cart to the laundry room, and load the towels right into a laundry machine. It saves a lot of steps for our employees."

Ashline estimated that the streamlined towel management process, combined with the huge decrease in towels being laundered and folded, has reduced towel-related labor by 11 hours a day. She also added, "Since we implemented the system, we've lost several people by attrition and we've never needed to replace them." Together, these changes have saved Riverside \$34,800 in labor costs per year, which equates to \$139,200 in cost savings over four years.

- **Cleaner facility**

When members know their towels are being tracked, they no longer leave them lying around. Instead, they proactively return their towels to Towel Tracker's return cabinet. This means that employees no longer need to walk around picking up used towels from throughout the facility, and it has also resulted in a cleaner facility.

## Customer Reaction

When Towel Tracker was first installed, there was initial pushback from some members. However, Ashline stated that "After four to six months, we rarely heard any negative comments. In fact, many members started paying us compliments for our innovative solution to the expensive process of supplying towels to members." She further added that members expressed appreciation for Towel Tracker's positive impact on the cleanliness of the facility. Bugajski also commented, "When we sign new people up, we explain the system to them. They've been very accepting of Towel Tracker, because it's the only towel system they've ever used at Riverside. It's worked out well."

## Summary

Since installing Towel Tracker four years ago, Riverside Health Fitness Center has saved:

\$45,552	in towel loss prevention
\$93,984	in laundry-related expenses
<u>\$139,200</u>	<u>in towel-related labor costs</u>
<b>\$278,736</b>	<b>total cost savings</b>

In addition, Riverside's return on investment was a mere 5.34 months according to Ashline, who commented, "Our goal was just to cut towel loss by 50 percent, but we ended up saving so much more." Bugajski added, "I definitely recommend Towel Tracker. If you have the available funds, go ahead and get it, because it is definitely worth it."



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*Samuel Bugajski  
Riverside Fitness and Facilities Director*

For more information about Towel Tracker visit: [www.toweltracker.com](http://www.toweltracker.com)