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Trends and Innovations in Walk-in Cold Storage for Educational Settings

The walk-in cold storage industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, driven by increasing demand for efficient and reliable storage solutions in various sectors, including educational settings. Walk-in cold storage units enhance a school's ability and capacity to store perishable items at controlled temperatures, ensuring freshness, product integrity, and health and safety regulations compliance.

Cold storage plays a crucial role in optimizing operational efficiency across a wide range of educational settings, from preschools and elementary schools to colleges and universities. While its impact is most evident in cafeterias, the value of cold storage extends beyond that, providing essential support to educational programs that emphasize hands-on and experiential learning, such as culinary arts and laboratory sciences.

This industry report will provide valuable insights into emerging trends and innovations in walk-in cold storage solutions tailored for educational settings. Decision-makers can leverage this information to align their specific needs with available options. By making informed investment decisions that prioritize efficiency and reliability, schools can capitalize on buying power to procure food items in bulk to save on delivery fees and take advantage of commodity availability.



The Fiberglass Advantage

Walk-in units with fiberglass exteriors offer numerous advantages over traditional panel box units. For starters, fiberglass possesses excellent insulation properties, effectively preventing heat conduction. This feature makes fiberglass an effective heat shield--regardless of the weather conditions--thereby improving temperature control and eliminating fluctuations that could potentially impact the quality of stored items.

Furthermore, fiberglass is easy to clean, highly durable, and extremely resistant to corrosion, making it an ideal choice for challenging conditions and moist environments. And, perhaps most importantly, the inherent resiliency of fiberglass contributes to an overall reduction in labor and maintenance requirements, freeing up valuable time and resources for other important tasks.

THE FIBERGLASS ADVANTAGE

- Reduced On-Site Labor
- Attractive Exterior Finishes
- Sanitary NSF Certified Interiors
- 12-Year Structural Warranty
- Opens Up Valuable Interior Workspace



Exterior and Interior Customizations

When designing the exterior and interior of walk-in units, safety does not have to come at the sacrifice of aesthetics. The manufacturing process allows for the seamless integration of practically any design feature. By entrusting the design to the manufacturer, customers can avoid involving third parties that may jeopardize the structure's integrity.

Incorporating custom textures, contours, colors, and special finishes opens a world of design possibilities. Whether it's a vibrant school logo or a subtle color that blends harmoniously with the surroundings, complementary designs create a more cohesive environment and foster a sense of community. The era of monotonous, uninspiring industrial boxes is long gone.

Flexibility

In the contemporary educational landscape, the demand for customized refrigeration solutions extends beyond surface-level enhancements. Customers seek interior options that transcend the conventional food service layout, offering flexibility to accommodate unique requirements. This may involve multi-roomed units or exceptionally large footprints. Similar to constructing a new home, selecting the right building partner is paramount in transforming a walk-in vision into reality.

Modular walk-in cold storage units and additional shelving systems offer schools the flexibility to expand their storage capacity according to their current needs. These solutions optimize storage space and maximize available resources.

Modular units can be easily assembled, disassembled, and customized. This flexibility enables schools to adapt to changing demands, such as accommodating increased inventory during busy periods or adjusting to seasonal fluctuations.

Trailers

Polar King's trailers offer the same durability and strength as permanent units but with the added advantage of mobility. This unit style is especially advantageous for school districts operating multiple facilities within a district, ensuring efficient and reliable storage capabilities across multiple facilities.

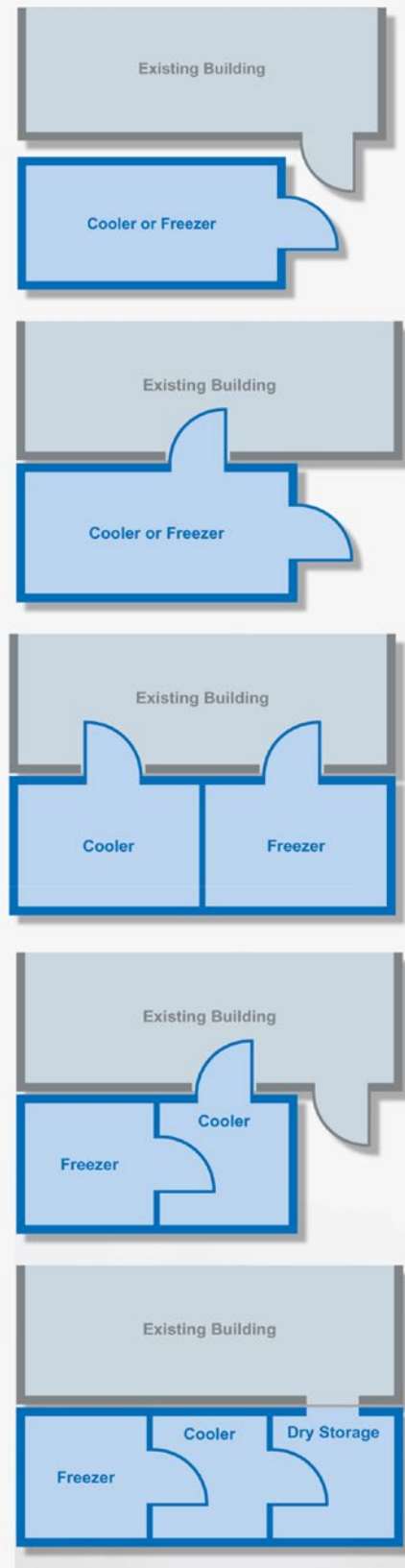
Trailer mobility allows for easy relocation of the unit as necessary, ensuring that perishable items remain protected even during unforeseen circumstances such as extreme weather events or extended power outages. They are an excellent option not only for emergency situations but also for non-emergency purposes, such as events and fundraisers. They can also serve as a reliable backup solution during a remodel or scheduled maintenance of primary walk-ins.



Furthermore, trailer cold storage units are particularly advantageous for school districts that operate multiple facilities within a single district.

Multiple Compartment Options

Some walk-in cold storage units offer multiple compartment configurations, providing separate storage zones for different temperature requirements. This feature allows schools to store different types of perishable items simultaneously, such as chilled foods and frozen goods, without the need for separate storage units.



CASE STUDY

Polar King Trailer 'Paid for Itself on Delivery Day'

Polar King also offers refrigerated and freezer trailers, which are another sound option for school districts nationwide. Take Livingston Parish Public Schools, for example.

LPPS serves over 27,000 K-12 students across 43 schools. The district depends on a refrigerator and freezer units to store and manage an average of \$80,000 in frozen grocery orders each week.

However, with only two refrigeration/appliance repair technicians supporting LPPS, any freezer failure presents a significant risk of food loss – as well as a food shortage for students. This nearly came to fruition in 2023. Even worse, this happened during a holiday week, when parts were hard to come by.

So, LPPS invested in a 6'x16' Polar King refrigerated trailer. On the day that the new Polar King trailer was scheduled for delivery, one of the district's high school freezers broke down, and the replacement parts were on backorder. Without immediate cold storage, the school risked losing \$45,000 worth of food, an amount that would take weeks to replenish due to supply chain challenges. But with the trailer, the food was safely stored without any loss.

"What we like most about the trailer is its flexibility," says Christina Coats, who is a special programs administrator in the district's child nutrition department. "Whether we have it housed here at the central office or when we receive shipments from local vendors, or even when we have to go out to a school to save food when a freezer goes down, the Polar King unit is reliable and is versatile. If there's a power outage at school, we know the trailer can be hooked up to a generator and will protect our foods from spoilage."



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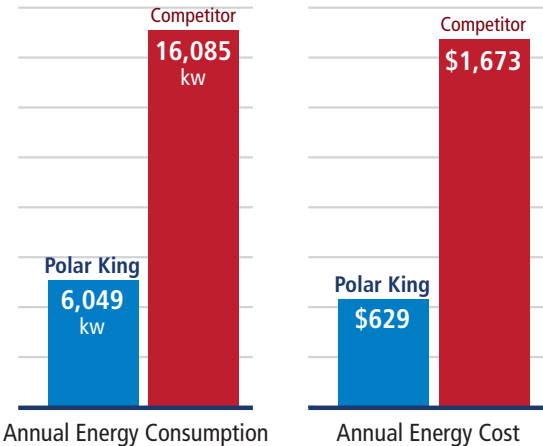
~ Christina Coats
Special Programs Administrator
in the District's Child
Nutrition Department



Energy Savings

While space-saving is important, energy-saving is essential. Fortunately, a variety of energy-saving technologies can be incorporated into walk-in cold storage units. These include the seamless fiberglass construction that prevents moisture penetration and therefore reduces the energy lost. Polar King uses an array of technologies like fan motors, evaporators, and a specialized defrost system. These technologies work together to minimize energy consumption, reduce operating costs, and improve sustainability.

By reducing energy consumption, schools can lower their utility bills and allocate those savings to other educational initiatives.



Compliance Logging and Temperature Monitoring

Compliance logging is a critical practice for schools to meet regulatory standards and maintain the quality and safety of stored items. By meticulously documenting temperature data and other relevant information, schools can demonstrate their adherence to established guidelines, enable traceability in case of incidents, and maintain a controlled storage environment.

Innovative suppliers like Polar King offer a range of temperature monitoring options to support compliance logging. Certain walk-in units come equipped with digital systems that allow technicians to access information remotely. This feature empowers off-site fixes, eliminating the need for a technician to make frequent on-site quality checks. Additionally, internal and external thermometers can be installed on the units, along with temperature alarms that promptly alert users when temperature fluctuations occur. The digital system also enables monitoring from a mobile device, providing real-time notifications in the event of a temperature change or power outage.

THE POLAR KING WARRANTY

- 25-Year Coverage Internal Foam Structure
- 12-Year Coverage Walk-In Structure
- 5-Year Extended Compressor Coverage
- 1-Year Miscellaneous Parts & Accessories

- Structure
- Roof
- Doors
- Interior Surfaces
- Exterior Surfaces
- Frame
- Floor

Warranty

When it comes to investing in walk-in cold storage units, longevity, and reliability are non-negotiable factors for schools and other educational institutions. Evaluate a manufacturer’s warranties and factor that into your buying decision. For example, Polar King offers the most comprehensive manufacturer warranties in the industry, with 25-year coverage of the internal foam structure, 12-year coverage of the walk-in structure, 5-year extended compressor coverage, and a 1-year warranty for any miscellaneous parts or accessories not covered by the other warranties.



Hurricane Zone Approval and Independent Certifications

In regions prone to hurricanes and severe weather conditions, such as coastal areas and hurricane zones, walk-in cold storage units must meet specific requirements and regulations to ensure their durability and structural integrity. Hurricane zone approval signifies that the units have undergone rigorous testing and meet the standards necessary to withstand high winds, flying debris, and other extreme conditions associated with hurricanes. This approval is especially important for schools located in hurricane-prone regions, as it provides peace of mind and ensures the safety of stored items during severe weather events.

Other independent certifications also play a vital role in verifying the quality, performance, and compliance of walk-in cold storage units. Some well-known certifications in the industry include NSF International, Underwriters Laboratories (UL), and Miami-Dade County certification. Independent certifications provide objective assurance to schools that the walk-in cold storage units they choose have undergone rigorous testing and meet the necessary quality and safety requirements. Polar King units are Miami-Dade approved, meaning that their units are approved for all areas in Florida, including Hurricane Zones.

Conclusion

Schools can benefit from investing in walk-in cold storage solutions designed for their unique needs. These solutions ensure compliance with regulations, facilitate efficient inventory management, support educational programs, and enhance the overall safety, quality, and freshness of stored items. By understanding the emerging trends and innovations discussed in this report, schools can make informed decisions and optimize their cold storage capabilities.

Looking to the future, the walk-in cold storage industry is poised for ongoing evolution to meet the increasing demands of educational settings. Anticipated trends include advancements in temperature monitoring and automation technologies, further integration of energy-efficient solutions, expanded customization options tailored to specific educational requirements, and an ongoing emphasis on safety and compliance standards. By embracing these innovations, educational institutions can enhance their storage capabilities and effectively meet the evolving needs of their students, staff and visitors.



ABOUT POLAR KING INTERNATIONAL

The introduction of the Polar King outdoor walk-in freezer into the food service industry was the result of three generations of walk-in refrigeration technology and experience. Polar King's fiberglass, one-piece walk-in cooler is the natural evolution of the walk-in cold storage industry from the conventional metal panel constructed unit. In early 1982, Polar King began operations by constructing and shipping walk-ins from a modest 12,000 sq. ft. facility in New Haven, Indiana. As demand grew for outdoor fiberglass commercial walk-in coolers and commercial walk-in freezers, production was moved to a 251,200 sq. ft. facility located in Fort Wayne, Indiana. For 40 years, Polar King has provided thousands of walk-ins to single-unit operators, chain restaurants, schools, health care facilities, government agencies, and many other industries requiring dependable outdoor walk-in refrigeration.

For more information, visit polarleasing.com or contact Polar King, 4424 New Haven Ave, Fort Wayne, IN 46803 USA at 877-224-8674.

