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"We've had no air comfort complaints from customers or employees even on the coldest winter days, and that's good for business," said Grata.

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Hermitage, Pa. — In a competitive auto retailing economy, car dealerships always look for a competitive edge and Mel Grata Chevrolet/Toyota has found climate-controlled indoor air comfort greatly improves customer satisfaction especially during cold Pennsylvania winters.

Instead of fighting inclement weather, Mel Grata customers now drive through one of two new climate-controlled, service/staging areas featuring doorway air curtains. The air curtains, also referred to as "air doors," efficiently separate the indoor/outdoor environments and maintain indoor temperatures especially with perpetual door openings during morning rush hours.

The Chevrolet service area was expanded into a 2,000-square-foot, newly-remodeled three-bay space. The separate 1,500-square-foot Toyota service area is a recently-built two-bay, four-door space. Both buildings adjoin the main 75,000-square-foot dealership's showroom and offices complex. Industrial Direct Drive 12 Series air curtains with three-speed motors manufactured by Berner International, New Castle, Pa., seal each of the seven 12 x 12-foot doorways with a controlled airstream to protect against outdoor air infiltration during hundreds of daily door cycles. **"Without the air curtains, it would take several minutes for the heating system to recover our 70°F set point temperature that keeps customers and employees comfortable from outdoor elements,"** said President Mel Grata who conceived of the idea after seeing air curtains in action on trucking dock slips, vestibules and retail store entrances. **"With the air curtains, the temperature doesn't fluctuate much when doors open."**

Besides creating a comfortable environment, the air curtains are projected to pay for themselves within two years in energy costs, according to a Berner energy audit. The savings accentuate the dealership's green construction efforts that also included high efficiency HVAC systems and recycled building materials. Enough green strategies, including the air curtains, have been instituted into the two service buildings that the project potentially could have potentially earned a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) certification, which is a current trend in auto retailing today, according to Grata.

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