



Hospitality Laundry

Five Areas to Watch

Hospitality textiles are not that unique from other segments of the industry, but the laundry operates on a different playing field than a healthcare laundry. There is more of an ebb and flow of needs based on seasons, events, or even days of the week. The unique nature of this type of laundry presents its own set of challenges. Andrew Everts, Field Training Manager for Ecolab, outlines five common areas that a hospitality laundry should monitor closely.

1. Par level of linen.

The par level of a hotel should be at least 3 pars. That provides one set of linen on the bed, one on the shelf, and one in the laundry. If a property outsources linen it should have 4-5 pars. Lack of par will cause over washing of linen and not allowing it to “rest” on the shelves for 24 hours. Also, lack of adequate par will increase the water, energy, labor, and chemistry used in the laundry because the staff will be forced to wash small loads to supply linen to the floors.

A newly opened five-star hotel started out with a short par level, intending to increase it over time. However, this did not happen, seemingly without consequence.

The hotel did well save for one area: increased complaints about breakfast room-service orders arriving late. The hotel was forced to comp these meals but still had unhappy guests who either were not able to eat the meal or were late for any morning appointments or activities.

Stymied, the general manager followed the problem, starting in the kitchen. However, the problem was not there. The meals were being prepared promptly and were ready for delivery at the time requested. The next step was to ask the staff that delivered the meals. They were punctual when picking up the meals, but when it came time to use the service elevators to take them up, they were forced to wait a considerable amount of time, making them late for deliveries.

After more research the problem was found: low linen par levels. Because of the low levels, linens that were taken out of the rooms at check-out had to be washed and taken right back to the floors; there weren't enough linens to stock the floor linen closets for housekeeping to use in remaking the rooms. So in the early morning, staff had to scramble to fill these closets. What they were doing was taking the linen cart on the elevator, pushing it halfway out of the elevator to hold it, running to each end of the floor to fill the closets, coming back and going to the next floor to do it all again. This held up the service elevator, making impossible for kitchen staff to get the meals to the rooms on time.

If the hotel had ordered adequate par, these closets would have stayed fully stocked while soiled linens were being washed, completely negating the need for laundry staff to scramble to fill the closets in the morning for that day's use. While it might not seem apparent that what happens in the laundry will affect total hotel operation, this example proves otherwise.

2. Rewash

If the average cost to wash 100 lbs of linen is \$38.00, which includes labor, water, energy, linen, chemistry and indirect costs, then each additional load of rewash costs the property \$38.00. So if a property does only two additional loads of rewash a week, the cost on an annual basis is \$3,952.00. Linen rewash must be measured and managed constantly. This is the indicator of how well the laundry is running.

3. Preventative maintenance

It is essential to keep the equipment such as washers and dryers in proper working order. Because this is a back of the house operation, less attention is paid to the equipment until breakdown. That is too late and too costly. A good PM schedule must be maintained. Often a different department than laundry and housekeeping is responsible for this so it is over looked.

The best way to avoid rewash is to protect the linens at all times. This means that when housekeepers go into a room to clean and strip a room, all of the dirty linens should go into a collection bag so the dirty linens are not exposed. Dirty linens that are loose in a cart may rub against something it shouldn't. If the product is hanging out of the carts it will pick up more stains, in principle. Any linens that are heavily stained should be sorted before washing, then run in a stain load through the washer upfront before the existing stain can become set-in. This will help keep any stains from transferring to other non-stained linens during a wash cycle. Provide plenty of cleaning rags for housekeepers, engineers or kitchen food and beverage employees. The stained linens or terry that won't come clean can be dyed and used for cleaning rags instead of them using good product for the wrong reason.

On the subject of preventative maintenance, the engineering department should establish the parameters based on the equipment manufacturer's suggestions which are spelled out in the maintenance book provided when the equipment is installed. This can be done manually on paper and tracked by hand. There are a number types of computer programs out there that are designed to allow an engineering department to keep up with the daily, weekly, monthly and bi yearly or semiannual maintenance requirements for each machine. We use a program called HotSOS, (Total Hotel Service Optimization System) where we enter into the program the equipment's required maintenance procedures and our technicians check it every day to see what equipment needs what service done to it, i.e., grease bearings, replace belts etc.

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4. Production costs

Labor is the largest expense in a hospitality laundry. In line with this, proper training is essential. Like any department, training is critical to insure that what you expect as an outcome can be achieved. Staff appreciates training that helps them do their job better.

Also look at utility costs. Unmonitored utility costs can break a budget quickly; find out what you spend and engage consultants to find ways to lower costs.

What Can I Do to Save?

- Verify rate schedule is best available
- Turn off lights & equipment ASAP
- Stagger start-up of equipment w/ large loads
- Load washroom equipment properly
- Proper maintenance
 - Keep belts properly tensioned
 - Lubricate bearings
 - Keep electrical connections clean & tight

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David Bernstein, Senior Vice President
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5. Proper drying of linen

Over drying of linen leads to many problems, including: waste of energy, poor linen hand, and decreased linen life. These all lead to increased overall costs.

Over drying is a waste of time, money and resources. Every item does have a shelf life and over drying will cut this life expectancy down greatly. Over drying will have a negative impact on the life expectancy of any product due to the heat damage that can occur during the drying cycle. Over drying can set stains in fabrics along with wrinkles that are very hard to get out.

To prevent this from happening make sure dryer vents are not obstructed with lint, make sure lint screens are clean, and that thermostats are working correctly, especially with gas dryers. If using steam type dryers make sure there are no steam coil leaks as this could make a difference in the drying process which might prolong the time needed to properly dry the items. Make sure the dryer drum is clean and that there are no plastic bags from the soil sort process. Make sure that vent mechanisms are opening and closing properly and at the proper times. If equipment is maintained properly, it will extend the life of the fabric.

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