

# Linen Handling Best Practices

## Protecting Against Infection in Healthcare Facilities

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# Welcome and Introduction



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# Agenda

- Learner Objectives
- Infection Risks
- The Goals of Proper Linen Handling
- A Virtual Tour of a Commercial Laundry
  - Key Concepts of Laundry Processing
  - Laundry Certifications
- Handling Clean Linen – Best Practices
- Handling Soiled Linen – Best Practices
- Knowledge Review
- Final Thoughts and Q&A

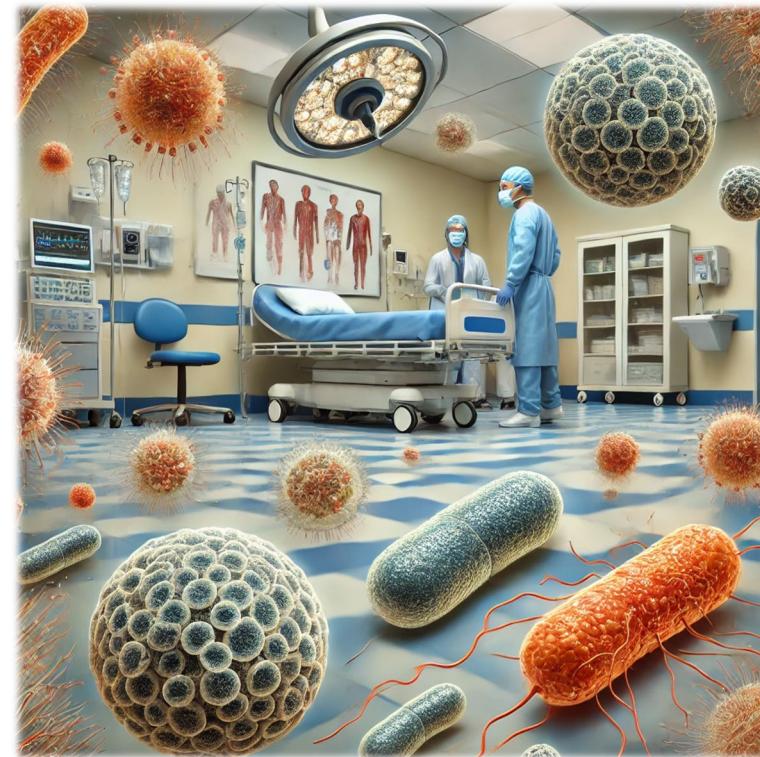


# Learner Objectives

- Identify the key infection risks associated with improper handling of clean and soiled linen
- Explain the importance of properly handling linen in healthcare settings
- State the capability of commercial laundries and their role in infection prevention
- List the best practices for handling clean and soiled linen

# Infection Risks

- Common pathogens associated with healthcare linens
  - Clostridioides difficile (C. difficile)
  - Staphylococcus aureus (including MRSA)
  - Candida albicans and candida auris
- Routes of infection transmission
  - Direct/indirect contact, aerosolization, cross-contamination
- Risks to patients, healthcare workers, facility staff, and visitors



**Knowing the potential infection risks with healthcare linens is the first step to preventing them!**

# The Goals of Proper Linen Handling in a Healthcare Facility

- Protect patients, healthcare workers, facility staff, and visitors from exposure to harmful pathogens that may be present on soiled linen
- Minimize the risk of cross-contamination between clean and soiled linen
- Maintain the integrity of clean linen so it remains suitable for patient use
- Ensure compliance with regulatory standards (e.g., OSHA, CDC, CMS, the Joint Commission)

**With the right approach in place, facilities can reduce infection risk and protect patients, workers, and visitors against infection!**

# A Quick Survey!



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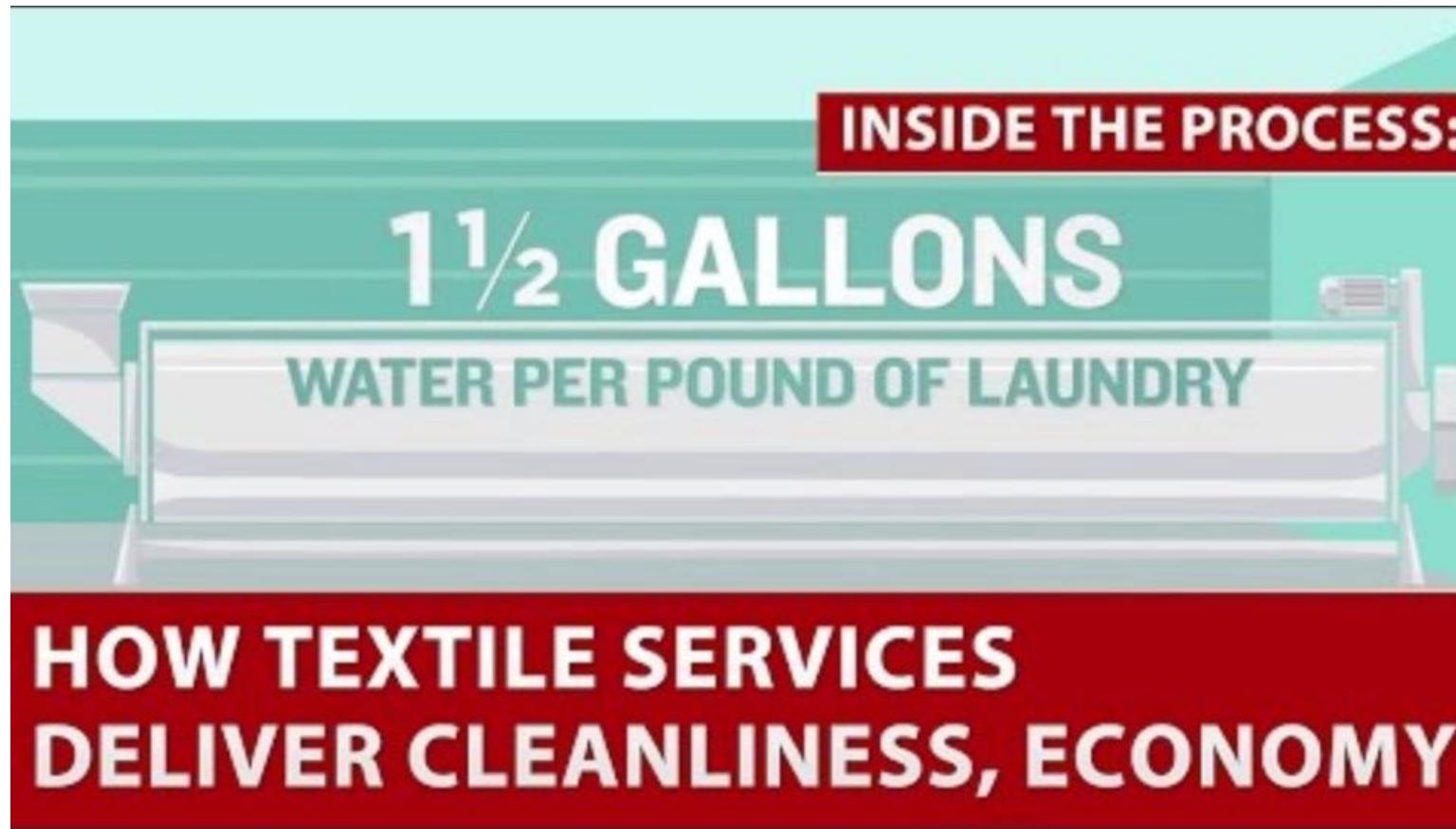
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**FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS:** In the last two years, have you visited the laundry facilities of your laundry service provider?

**FOR COMMERCIAL LAUNDRIES:** In the last two years, have you invited your healthcare customers to tour your laundry?

# A Virtual Tour of a Commercial Laundry



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# Key Concepts of Laundry Processing

- Time and temperature, wash chemistry, and mechanical action
- Automated systems
- Process controls and process monitoring



**Commercial laundries can clean and decontaminate both soiled and blood-soaked linens!**

# Laundry Certifications

- Role of third-party commercial laundry certification programs such as TRSA's Hygienically Clean Program
  - Strict compliance requirements as demonstrated in quality assurance documentation
  - On-site inspection by trained auditors
  - Independent laboratory testing to validate process outcomes



# Second Survey of the Day!



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## FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS:



Where did you get your initial training on how to handle clean and soiled linen? In school, from your facility, from a professional association like TRSA or APIC, or from your laundry service provider?

- ① The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

# Handling Clean Linen Best Practices

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# Handling Clean Linen: Best Practices

- Storage and transportation of clean linen
  - Where to keep clean linen and how to bring it to where it needs to go
- Distribution protocols
  - What to do with the clean linen once in patient care areas
- Training and compliance
  - How to ensure staff knows what to do and follows proper procedures





**How many times is clean linen touched after it's laundered and before it's put in use for a patient?**

ⓘ The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

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# LINEN HANDLING PRACTICES



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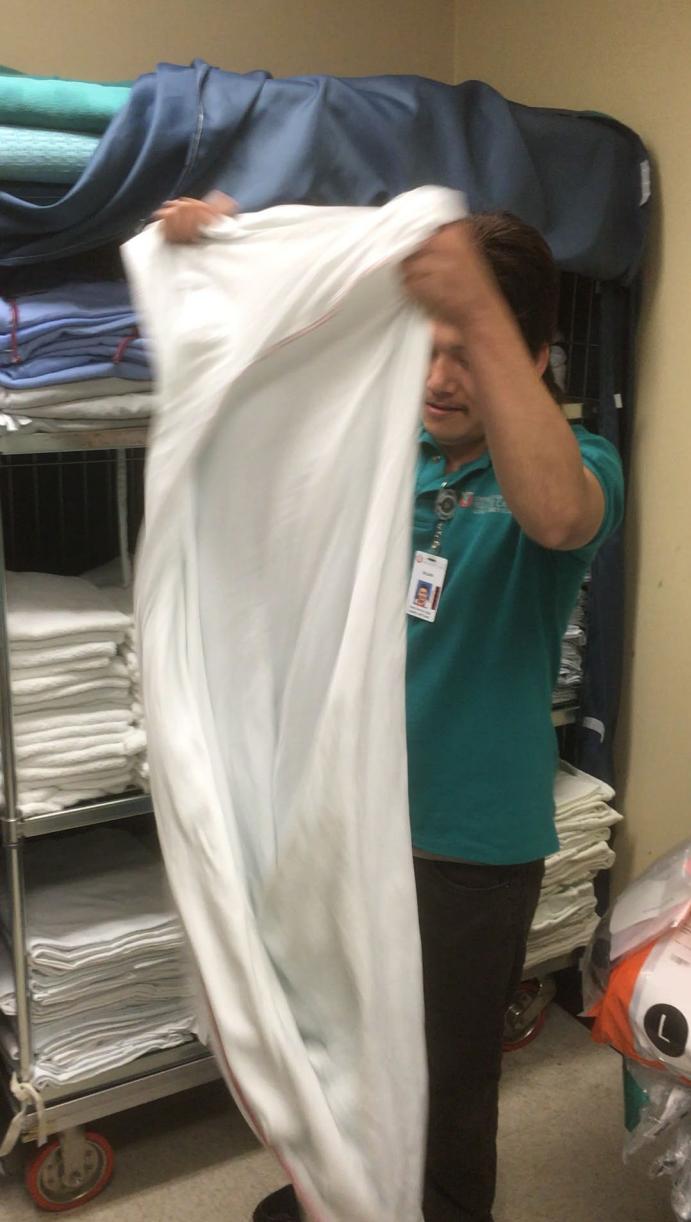
1. Out of the cart onto a shelf
2. Off the shelf onto a distribution cart
3. Off a distribution cart onto a shelf on the floor
4. Off the shelf on floor to a mobile hall cart
5. Off hall cart into room
6. Hopefully put on bed, but not always
7. Care giver freshening room and bed
8. Family coming into room touching patient & bedding
9. Doctor/Nurse providing patient care
- 10.....
- 11.....
- 12.....



# Storage and Transportation of Clean Linen



- Proper storage conditions
  - Dedicated storage room with controlled access
  - Regular cleaning schedule with set cleanliness standards
  - Shelves are accessible for cleaning
  - Monitoring of conditions (e.g., ceiling leaks, dust build-up, etc.)
- Avoiding cross-contamination during transit
  - Separation of clean linen from soiled linen, trash, and other potential hazards
  - Cart covers when using carts
  - Hand hygiene
  - Maintain accountability of the linen



- What's wrong with this action?

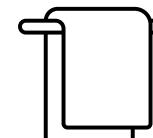


# What is this worker doing that could contaminate the clean linen?

- ⓘ The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

# Distribution Protocols

- Hand hygiene fundamentals
  - When to wash your hands
  - Soap vs. alcohol-based hand sanitizer
  - How to wash your hands
- Use of PPE
  - When to use PPE
  - How to use PPE
  - Always follow your facility's procedures
- Stocking clean linens in patient care areas
  - How to handle the linen
  - Avoid storing clean linen in patient rooms



# Training and Compliance



- Training
  - Ensure new hires are trained during onboarding
  - Ensure all personnel who handle clean linen or monitor compliance are trained
  - Provide annual refresher training
  - Maintain training records for personnel
- Compliance
  - Follow all OSHA, CDC, and facility policies and regulations
  - Conduct audits and monitor for violations
  - Use checklists
  - Provide real-time feedback
  - Update training based upon trends

# Handling Soiled Linen Best Practices

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Nancy Tree – Process QA & Compliance Manager, Alsco Uniforms

# Handling Soiled Linen: Best Practices

- Collection and Containment
  - How to protect oneself
  - How to collect soiled linen
  - What to do once the soiled linen is collected



# Handling Soiled Linen: Best Practices



- **Consolidate and Storage**
  - How to continually protect oneself
  - How to consolidate and store soiled linen safely

# Handling Soiled Linen: Best Practices

- Training and Compliance
  - How to ensure staff is trained
    - Knows what to do
    - Follows proper procedures for handling soiled linen





**A show of hands (and make sure you're wearing your gloves) –  
Where do you put blood-soaked linen? In the soiled linen  
hamper, the trash, or in red bag waste?**

- ⓘ The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

Where do you put blood-soaked linen? In the soiled linen hamper, the trash, or in red bag waste?



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# OSHA Red Bag Waste Letter



- Letter to Executive Director, Association for Linen Management—October 29, 2013
  - Widespread confusion over OSHA's regulations on the proper handling of contaminated healthcare linens

<https://www.osha.gov/laws-regulations/standardinterpretations/2013-10-29>

# Collection and Containment

- Standard/Universal Precautions
  - Assume all human blood and other potentially infectious material (OPIM) are infectious
- Proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
  - Always follow your facility's PPE policy



# Collection and Containment



- How to Collect Soiled Linen
  - Remove non-linen items (e.g., medical devices or materials)
  - Bundle the linen slowly
  - Do not shake the linen
  - Keep it away from your body

# Collection and Containment

- Use hampers/bags designated for soiled linen
  - Put the soiled linen in the soiled linen hampers/bags
  - When a hamper or bag is 2/3 full, ensure it is properly closed
  - Do not put soiled linen in the trash or in red bag waste



# Consolidate and Storage



- Proper PPE
  - Always follow your facility's PPE policy
- Exposure Control
  - Verify all soiled linen bags are properly sealed and intact
  - Do not put direct pressure on any soiled linen bags

# Consolidate and Storage

- Safe Handling
  - If your facility has soiled linen chutes, follow your facility's guidance on proper usage
  - Do not overfill carts with bags of soiled linen
  - Do not put anything other than bags of soiled linen in carts and soiled linen chutes



# Consolidate and Storage



- **PPE Disposal and Hand Hygiene**
  - Dispose of PPE in accordance with your facility's policy
  - Practice hand hygiene

# Training and Compliance—Team Effort

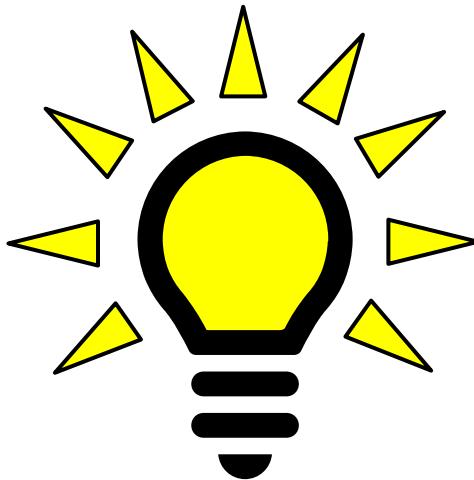
- Training
  - Ensure new hires are trained during onboarding
  - Ensure all personnel who handle soiled linen or monitor compliance are trained
  - Provide annual refresher training
  - Maintain training records for personnel



# Training and Compliance—Team Effort



- Compliance
  - Follow all OSHA, CDC, and facility policies and regulations
  - Conduct audits and monitor for violations
  - Use checklists
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# Knowledge Review

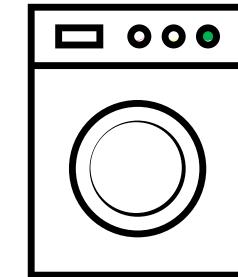
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# Question #1 – The Wash Process

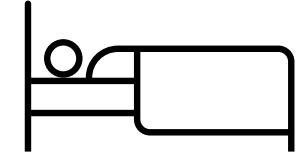


Can commercial laundries clean and decontaminate soiled and blood-soaked linen?

**YES – Commercial laundries can clean and decontaminate soiled and blood-soaked linens.**

**Modern wash processes are strong enough to get healthcare laundry hygienically clean!**

# Question #2 – Clean Linen Handling

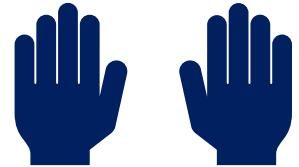


True or False – Clean linen stored in a patient room is not considered soiled linen after the patient is discharged.

**FALSE** – All linen in a patient room should be treated as soiled linen after a patient's discharge.

**A best practice is to always store clean linen in designated and controlled areas outside of patient rooms!**

# Question #3 – Soiled Linen Handling



Why is it important to ensure that soiled linen bags are properly sealed once they are 2/3 full?

1. To prevent leakage during transport
2. To protect against the spread of blood and OPIM
3. To reduce the risk of bag breakage

**Remember – Always check to ensure a soiled linen bag is properly sealed and intact before transporting it anywhere!**

# Final Thoughts

- The importance of adhering to linen handling protocols
- Key action-oriented takeaways:
  - Develop and implement regular training and compliance audits
  - Cross-department collaboration and cooperation (patient care, environmental services, infection prevention, laundry service provider, and leadership)
    - Key activities with laundry service provider
- Resources for further learning
  - AHE
  - APIC
  - CDC
  - The Joint Commission
  - OSHA
  - TRSA

# Q&A

- Feel free to share insights or questions through the chat or follow-up email
- Thank you for your participation!
  - Michael Lang – Process Analyst, Unitex, [mlang@unitex.com](mailto:mlang@unitex.com)
  - Chuck Rossmiller – Senior Director of National Field Sales, Medline, [crossmiller@medline.com](mailto:crossmiller@medline.com)
  - Nancy Tree – Process QA & Compliance Manager, Alscos Uniforms, [ntree@alsco.com](mailto:ntree@alsco.com)