

Resort Housekeeping: A Practical Approach (Part II)

BY HOUSEKEEPING BEST PRACTICES TASK FORCE MEMBERS (on behalf of ARDA Resort Operations Council)

This continues the series on housekeeping best practices, with a more in-depth look at procedures and recommendations for linens. As with the first part of this article, these tips will need to be tailored to best fit your resort environment—depending on available resources.

Laundry Recommendations

Realizing that key decisions concerning laundry vary—depending on available budgets, on-site facilities, storage space, and general property design—the recommendations for best practices in this article are in general terms with an understanding that high quality standards can be achieved and maintained through a variety of means. Each property must make decisions that are right for a particular location. Some may decide to contract out the laundry services with a professional service, others may handle onsite, and others may use a combination of the two.

Our goal as a panel is to provide decision-makers with an outline of the key items to consider, along with recommendations for best practices.

Outsourced Laundry vs. In-House Laundry Considerations

- Limitations of space and capital may limit ability to build a facility onsite.
- When factoring in the costs of staffing, chemicals, commercial equipment, and utility costs, it may be more cost-effective on the front end to outsource.
- Typically, if you outsource to a laundry service, your par levels should be higher to allow for turnaround—thus a larger investment in linens is required upfront.
- Once linen leaves the property to be sent to a third party, it has greater potential for shrinkage (loss of inventory), so you have to budget extra for replacement costs.
- Whether outsourcing or in-house, many properties are placing an emphasis on green/sustainable laundry operations.



Best Practice

Be sure to keep clean linens separated from soiled, used linens at *all* times. If possible, your laundry carts should be color coded so that soiled linens always go into soiled linen carts and clean linens stored and transported in completely separate carts. If you cannot afford this system, then linen carts need to fully cleaned and disinfected between uses whenever making a switch between soiled and clean linens. This same principle would apply to laundry transport bags and storage areas.

Linen and Towel Inventory and Par Level Considerations

- Accurate and timely inventories are key components to the successful management of these assets. Full knowledge of the linen par levels at your property is important. A linen inventory, regularly scheduled every 30 or 60 days (or at a

minimum every 90 days), should be part of your resort's best practices.

- Recommended inventory levels should be at 2.5 to 3 par. You will then have one par in use in units, one par in storage immediately accessible if needed, and the third par in transit to or from laundry. Many resort properties are working with less than 2 par of linen while running 75 percent or more in occupancy levels. Increasing par levels would reduce damage to linen supply as well as lower payroll costs.
- Be sure to include purchases and discards into your count to determine a standard shrinkage rate for your property, which is necessary for accurate budgeting.
- Take the usable life of each (linen and terry) into consideration when evaluating shrinkage.
- Ideally, the same team members should count each inventory period, adding to the quality of consistency for you inventory. (See section below for details about conducting an inventory.)

Unit Linen Standards for Consideration

Key elements to establish when setting standards include:

- Size and depth of property mattresses;
- Linen thread count, weight, color, etc.;
- Use of duvets vs. bed spreads; and
- Number and size of pillows on each bed.

Also, take into consideration whether the resort does flat and fitted sheeting or triple sheeting.

It is also important to forecast just where the industry is headed with trends in bedding and then determine whether or not your property is going to follow those trends if they mean a substantial increase in costs of linens and/or laundry.

Conducting Your Linen Inventory

Conducting a thorough linen inventory is essential for the executive housekeeper or laundry manager, so as to properly distribute them throughout the property.

Experience has shown us a direct correlation between an accurate and successful inventory count and how well the information regarding your inventory plans is communicated to the necessary team members throughout the property.

Step One: The Preparation Process

The preparatory process begins days before the actual inventory is conducted. Clearly

A Basic Understanding of Linens and Terry Cloth

TERRY CLOTH

Terry cloth is a fabric with loops that can absorb more water than a traditional cloth, due absorbency and softness. There is a wide variety of terry cloth in the marketplace today ranging in size, durability, softness to the touch, and type of fabric. A few more popular types are combed cotton—which uses a process that yields extra strength, softness, and daily wash durability—and microfiber, the newest type of terry cloth fiber, made of synthetic fibers. With microfiber, the loops are always cut, making it an excellent cloth for cleaning delicate surfaces.

Terry cloth is the preferred material for bath towels, bath sheets, hand towels, washcloths, pool towels, and robes found in resort bathrooms and pool areas.

TYPES OF FABRIC LOOPS

Name/Ratings	Loop Length	Softness	Absorbency	Cost	Durability
Egyptian Cotton Loops	Longest	Softest	Very high	\$\$\$	Least
Pima Cotton Loops	2nd longest	Very soft	Very high	\$\$\$\$	Durable
100 % Combed Cotton	3rd longest	Soft	High	\$\$	Very durable
100% Standard Cotton	Middle length	Less soft	Less	\$	Very durable
86% Cotton/14% Poly	Short length	Least soft	Least	\$	Most durable
Microfiber	Cut loops	Very soft	Extremely high	\$\$\$	Very durable

communicate the proposed linen inventory date and time to all team members, housekeeping and laundry attendants, including their particular roles.

1. Each room, suite or unit must be properly outfitted with the full compliment of bed linen and terry items. The general assumption is that a full par of linen is in all occupied and vacant rooms/suites. Supervisors/inspectors must verify that all rooms are properly stocked and vacant/ready.
2. Adequate laundry staff should be scheduled to process all linens the evening prior to the morning inventory. This includes stocking the fixed and rolling shelving with linens in a consistent manner by type and with folds facing forward to accelerate the counting process. Discarded items are counted by type, logged, and bagged according to property guidelines. We suggest that

cleaning towels and mop heads are to be inventoried by color and type as well. The executive housekeeper/director of housekeeping may have additional specific instructions to housekeeping and laundry team members.

3. Housemen (or other assigned staff) are to stock each storage closet on guest floors in a consistent and organized fashion dictated by the executive housekeeper. All items are to be folded and placed on shelves with the fold facing forward to accelerate the counting process. At the end of the day, the housekeeping supervisors/inspector should inspect each closet for organization, consistency, and preparedness for inventory the next morning. All storage closets must be locked at all times to insure accuracy of counts.
4. Room attendant carts should be stocked in accordance with guidelines provided by the executive housekeeper. All carts should have linens properly folded by type with folds facing forward to accelerate the counting process. We recommend that all microfiber cleaning towels and mop heads be brought to the main laundry (or other designated area) for processing and inventoried with the

Accurate and timely inventories are key to successful management.

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- laundry count. [NOTE: We suggest that a cart that is properly stocked for inventory is shown to the staff prior to the inventory to minimize having to correct placement concerns during the inventory process. Cart number and count should be maintained on a separate sheet from storage closet to ensure that each cart on property is accounted for during the process.]
- Evening housekeeping staff should be given specific instructions on where to pull necessary linens from and what to do with soiled linens recovered from rooms serviced during the evening prior to the inventory.
 - At close of business the night before the inventory, we recommend posting signs that state "Linens Inventory in Progress" in laundry or designated central storage area. No one should pull any linen until the inventory is completed. Staff that arrives early to work should not move any items until all teams have completed their counts.
 - Throughout the process, the executive housekeeper should revise the inventory count forms or spreadsheets for distribution and tabulation of inventories.

“Constantly evaluate the inventory process to see where it could be improved.”

Step Two: Inventory Count

Once all areas are stocked in an organized manner, the inventory should proceed in an expedient manner. It should take between 45 minutes to a few hours to count the entire property.

The executive housekeeper should assign the same team members to the actual inventory counts for most consistency and accuracy. Teams of two people usually work well in most properties. Regardless of the final size of your inventory teams, each team must be given specific areas to be counted.

Some examples of team assignments:

- TEAM ONE:** Assigned to count fixed and rolling shelves in laundry/housekeeping area, including microfiber cleaning items,

soiled items from the previous night, and new linen on storage shelves and linens found in and around equipment such as washers, dryers, and ironer.

- TEAM TWO:** Assigned to count the storage closets in one-half of buildings.
- TEAM THREE:** Assigned to count the remaining building storage closets including and linens on the room attendant carts.

Step 3: Final Tabulation/Reporting

Once the established teams have completed their assigned counts, the executive housekeeper should tabulate the quantities from the teams and input into the inventory Excel spreadsheet. With an accurate total level of linen inventory now available, these numbers are used to determine the amount of linen required to order to maintain the pre-determined par levels. Note: the amount of linen required to order is usually calculated in terms of dozens.

Remove all "inventory signage" and thank everyone for their cooperation in this efficient operation. As an important final step, team members should evaluate the inventory process and suggest improvement for efficiency prior to next inventory count. If the inventory count forms or spreadsheets need to be tweaked or revised, the executive housekeeper can make notes of this for the future.

Chemicals

With respect to on-site laundry operations, determining which chemical company to use is a very important aspect, in terms of effectiveness levels, dispensing system automation, sales and service, price, training of staff, etc.

This topic deserves at minimum an honorable mention in the day-to-day operational cost of running a laundry. One of the worst things in laundry is to have everything else in place—the equipment, correct par, the staff to process the linen—but yet not have quality chemicals to effectively clean your items.

Overall

This ends our series on housekeeping best practices and how to enhance the guest experience through the way we keep our units. The issues addressed here are the most top-line ones and we hope you find them useful to incorporate in your own properties. For other best practice resources, please see <http://www.arda.org/hoa-outreach/toolbox.aspx> on the ARDA Web site. ■

NEW PET & SERVICE ANIMAL POLICIES

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service animals. Courts, like the 9th Circuit Court in *Lentini v. California Center for the Arts*, have made the law clear: unless a service animal becomes unruly or dangerous, it may *not* be removed or excluded.

If the animal does become unreasonably disruptive or threatening, the owner is responsible for controlling it; if it cannot be controlled, the animal may be excluded but the guest should be welcome to stay without the animal. On the flip side, the property owner and operator are not required to provide special services for service animals (like food, water, doggy bags, leashes, etc.) or to clean up after "accidents." Housekeeping staff, however, if it is their policy to clean units and put guest's items away, should also treat the animal's accoutrements in the same fashion.

Application of Pet Policies

Remember—service animals are not pets! So the same policies that may apply to pets do not apply them.

A carefully drawn policy that accommodates the latest ADA-approved guidelines for service animals will help you avoid embarrassing encounters at your resort and deflect an expensive legal situation. Familiarize yourself with the latest at www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm. ■

MEMBER PROFILE

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What sales and/or marketing efforts do you think are unique to the Wyndham Vacation Ownership brand?

Because of our large scope and size, we're able to take advantage of multiple opportunities in today's marketplace. Through our Wyndham Asset Affiliation Model—our fee for service model that allows us to leverage our extensive sales and marketing channels—we've added new inventory without having to spend millions of dollars in development cost. We're also focused on acquiring new owners, and our strong alliances with companies like Caesars Entertainment and Sea World provide us with a constant channel to introduce our products to a new generation of owners. ■