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 be 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 your 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 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 stock 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

**Accurate and timely inventories are key to successful management.**

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**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 to 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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Ratings</th>
<th>Loop Length</th>
<th>Softness</th>
<th>Absorbency</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Durability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Cotton Loops</td>
<td>Longest</td>
<td>Softest</td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>$$$</td>
<td>Least</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pima Cotton Loops</td>
<td>2nd longest</td>
<td>Very soft</td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>$$$</td>
<td>Durable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% Combed Cotton</td>
<td>3rd longest</td>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Very durable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% Standard Cotton</td>
<td>Middle length</td>
<td>Less soft</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Very durable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86% Cotton/14% Poly</td>
<td>Short length</td>
<td>Least soft</td>
<td>Least</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Most durable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microfiber</td>
<td>Cut loops</td>
<td>Very soft</td>
<td>Extremely high</td>
<td>$$$</td>
<td>Very durable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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/hoaa-outreach/toolbox.aspx](http://www.arda.org/hoaa-outreach/toolbox.aspx) on the ARDA Web site.