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State of Oregon  
Oregon Health Authority  
OREGON PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION

## **PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION INFORMATION BULLETIN**

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### **INTERPRETATION MANUAL**

## **TOURIST ACCOMMODATIONS / BEDDING & LINEN CLEANING**



### **QUESTION:**

What laundering schedule should be enforced as it relates to cleaning of bedding and linens in lodging facilities?

### **BACKGROUND:**

Most state codes do not address the laundering of **all** bedding used on the bed in a tourist lodging facility. Control of diseases and vermin is achieved by assuring that the sheets and pillowcases are laundered between guests. Contact with the blanket is minimized by providing a fold-back of the sheet over the blanket of 10 to 12 inches. Blankets, pillows, and mattresses are checked for vermin and required to be kept clean.

The lodging guests now expect that the bedding in lodging facilities is maintained at a high standard of cleanliness. As public health officials, we must remember that our primary concern is disease and vermin control. Our standards are minimums against which we measure health and safety. In addition, the demand for ecological protection and practice has, in many facilities, lowered the frequency of laundering.

Blankets, spreads and mattress pads have not been required to be laundered between guests. Because of varying usage patterns from bed to bed, especially in multiple bed rooms, it is difficult to mandate a regular cleaning schedule for these items. These items are typically not constructed to be as durable as the sheets and pillow cases, so cannot be laundered after each use.

Due to the increase in bedbug infestations, it is recommended that mattresses, pillows and box springs be covered with a bedbug-proof cover or encasement. This is often a part of a facility's integrated pest management (IPM) plan. Many of these covers help control allergies, as they are sometimes dust mite-proof as well. Hotels are often using them in all their rooms.

For bedbug control, bedding should be washed in hot water and dried thoroughly at high temperature. Most commercial washers and dryers easily achieve temperatures high enough to kill insects. According to the CDC, disease concerns in linens are few if the facility is following commercial laundering procedures. Employee handling of the dirty and laundry and clean linens is an important part of disease and insect control.

Housekeeping staff should follow universal precautions when handling dirty linens and towels, as required by OSHA. Clean and dirty should not mix, and separate containers for each must be used.

It is recommended that housekeeping staff be trained about the signs of an infestation of bedbugs, lice, fleas, cockroaches and other common pests, to assist in prompt identification and treatment of any problems.

## **INTERPRETATION:**

Cleaning frequencies for bedding and linens per OAR 333-029-0090:

1. Sheets, pillowcases, towels, and washcloths must be laundered before being provided to new guests or occupants. With today's resource conservation initiatives, linens and towels should still be laundered at least once a week for longer-stay guests.

Blankets, spreads, and mattress pads are not required to be laundered between guests, but are required to be maintained clean and in good repair. The use of quilts or comforters that are not machine washable is strongly discouraged, as non-machine cleaning is difficult and the time / temperature requirements for bloodborne pathogen and insect destruction is difficult to achieve. Stained, dirty or soiled blankets, spreads and pads should be cited under this section, and cleaning or replacement required.

2. Field inspection staff must inspect laundry facilities, to assure proper laundering, to help the hotel avoid the cross-contamination of clean and dirty laundry, and to assure linen storage areas are clean, dry and show no sign of infestation.

A. All linen should be handled in a manner that prevents the contamination of clean laundry. Problems, such as clean laundry being dumped into a laundry cart previously used for dirty laundry, are often seen. Sometimes the dirty laundry is sorted or placed on the same table on which the clean laundry is sorted and folded.

B. Laundry carts must be made of impervious materials, smooth and easy to clean.

C. Clean laundry must be stored in a clean, dry place. This area is not be a good area in which to store or place cleaning carts and vacuum cleaners, as these may become insect infested.

3. In rooms with additional beds, unused bedding does not need changing between guests, but housekeeping staff should check to assure the bed has not been used.
4. All bedding, mattresses, linens, springs, frames and plinths must be in good repair.