

BEST PRACTICES – Preparing for Hygienically Clean Certification

“Hygienically Clean” is defined as “the reduction of microbial counts to a level free of bacteria, viruses and other disease-producing organisms and free of pathogens in significant numbers to cause human illness.”

Concept

Once a service exclusive to the Healthcare industry, Hygienically Clean accreditation is now available to textile launderers serving *every* industry, courtesy of TRSA’s independent certification program. Now enterprises specializing in outsourced laundry services in the realms of Hospitality, Food Service and Industry can also reap the benefits of increased efficiency, better-trained staffs and elevated consumer confidence that results from third-party verification.

When applying for any of the four TRSA cleanliness certifications, our goal is for your staff and facility to be fully prepared at time of inspection to meet the standards necessary to achieve Hygienically Clean Certification at its conclusion.

Implementation

1. Step One of the implementation process should be the creation of a Quality Assurance Manual unique and specific to your enterprise. Detail every aspect of the following components in your service chain:
 - Textile pick-up and transport to laundry facility;
 - Identification and separation of soiled linens and textiles;
 - Variety of wash chemistry agents to be utilized;
 - Manifest of facility equipment specifying schedules for equipment maintenance and calibration;
 - Personnel names and/or titles assigned to various tasks;
 - Contingency plans in the event of equipment or power failure, Acts of God;
 - Sanitary storage and transport of product in return to client;
 - Illustrate implementation measures for compliance with OSHA and other Federal and local safety standards.

2. Ensure separation of “soiled” and “clean” areas of your facility, as well as all means of conveyance—trucks, tubs, carts, conveyor belts and bins.
3. Take stock of wash chemistry practices, including wash times and temperatures. Ensure that processes and products test positively for effective soil removal and microbial mitigation. Describe measures focusing on safe storage of cleansing agents and hazard avoidance.
4. Maintain sanitary methods of transport, particularly in the delivery process of laundered products. Provide standards with regard to personnel qualifications, hygienic compliance and training.
5. Verify effectiveness of communications policies –as well as mitigation procedures—with regard to hazardous, environmental or other unexpected contingencies.
6. Apply for certification process and inspection, budgeting for application fees and any additional onsite preparatory expenses. A separate application must be submitted for each plant (separate facility) requesting certification. To qualify for a one-per-company filing fee, multiple plant applications must be filed simultaneously.
7. Prepare facility and staff for inspection.

The preceding implementation measures are fairly standard, with universal cross-industry relevance. But no two facilities are exactly alike, and subtle differences and demands may be unique to a particular enterprise. While OSHA, CDC and EPA regulations must be observed nationwide, local and state-mandated standards vary regionally, so these area-specific policies must be identified and addressed in your Quality Assurance Manual.

Of course, where the demands of outsourced laundering truly diverge are across different industry platforms. Food Service in the Hospitality realm (restaurants, institutions, catering) differs greatly from Food Safety (animal processing, dairies, produce packaging, et al). And removing the petrochemical soils from the uniforms and textiles found in the Industrial/Manufacturing segments of business offers challenges and hazards completely different than the human pathogens found in linens and textiles utilized in Healthcare facilities.

Across the board, one thing is certain: TRSA’s Hygienically Clean, third-party, quantitative biological testing and certification of cleanliness not only ensures better health and human safety, it promotes higher standards throughout the laundry industry, effecting greater efficiency, better-trained personnel, and a

boost in consumer/client confidence—all of which promotes increased successful trade.

Practical Applications

Dozens of HLAC procedural standards, dubbed “statements” are based on business practices that while helpful, have little to do with actual outcomes relating to the hygienic quality of linens processed in a laundry. “Hospitals are always interested in outcomes versus processes,” says Liz Remillong, regional vice president of Crothall Healthcare, Phoenix. “They appreciate the attention to the process, but outcomes are what matter most to them.” While Crothall has chosen to continue its HLAC accreditation, it also added TRSA’s Hygienically Clean program to its 20-plus healthcare plants.

Jim Hall, CEO of Northwest Healthcare Linen, Bellingham, Washington echoes Remillong’s points about “outcomes,” versus the textile testing procedures. “Our customers specifically ask, ‘How do we know they are clean?’ In the past we had to explain that the ‘process’ provided them with clean textiles. They wanted assurance or proof of that, which is what Hygienically Clean certification provides them. Testing provides documented proof as opposed to promises.” Hall’s company achieved the Hygienically Clean certification prior to dropping HLAC four years ago.