

Optimising laundry management in aged care

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There is a considerable pressure on aged care residence administrators to manage the large volume of laundry items that must be consistently cleaned in accordance with strict health and safety procedures.

Infection control is imperative in aged care, so the correct handling of laundry is essential. The aged care sector recognizes the risks associated with laundry and uses complex procedures for handling them while providing a continuous supply of clean laundry.

The many items that require laundering in an aged care settings can include sheets, blankets, towels, quilts, curtains, table linen, kitchen cloths, residents' clothing, the appropriate hygiene standards in laundering these items must always be maintained.

Safe handling protocols are also crucial, and staff must be trained accordingly. These procedures include making sure the appropriate PPE is worn by staff who handle soiled textiles and linen to protect them and to prevent further transfer.



All soiled linen and clothing, especially towels and bedding can host a vast variety of bacterial species that put people at risk, particularly the more vulnerable aged care residents.

Bedding is a prime environment for the growth of bacteria and viruses. Body sweat, saliva and dead skin cells provide the perfect conditions for bacteria and viruses to flourish. Many are dangerous such as staphylococcus, E. coli, gastroenteritis and influenza. Improper laundering can spread these germs from one laundry item to another.

It can be overwhelming to manage all the difficulties of maintaining laundry supplies to comply with standards. Managers must combat rising production costs and the increased strain on staff to follow the rigorous procedures that prevent cross infection and ensure compliance with AS/NZS 4146:2000.

However, many of the difficulties in managing laundry on site in an aged care setting can be circumvented by outsourcing the work to specialized laundry services.

Costs and productivity

Outsourcing laundry services can reduce facility costs and improve productivity, allowing managers to focus on core objectives rather than the enormous tasks of laundry work.

There is a considerable amount of specialized training required for on site laundry staff. This can be expensive, especially if there is a high turnover rate of staff. An outsourced laundry service reduces the need to train staff on laundry processes except for its safe collection and storage. It also eases some of the management stress caused by unexpected staff absences.

An outsourced laundry service also liberates the space that would otherwise be needed on site for a laundry room and associated machine repair space. Space is also saved with the smaller amount of linen storage required. There is no need to hold excess stocks for seasonal peaks as additional items can be ordered when necessary. Regular stock controls by the commercial laundry service ensures that the aged care residence always has the optimum level of stock.



Equipment and space

When operating a laundry on site in aged care residences, management is faced with investing in expensive commercial laundry equipment and keeping up repairs and maintenance to maintain a constant supply of clean laundry in accordance with standards.

Aged care residence managers also must consider the extra water consumption, electricity bills and the expense of laundry detergents and chemicals.

Outsourcing the laundry service bypasses these expenses and disruptions.

When machine breakdowns occur, the supply to the aged care residence continues with the commercial laundry's back-up machines and extra linen stock.

In this way identifying and rectifying equipment productivity failure is all efficiently managed by the commercial laundry.

Commercial laundry services often have a guaranteed, reliable daily service. Many of the commercial laundry services in New Zealand have fleets of vehicles for efficient and reliable transportation of laundry to and from aged care premises.

It is far more efficient to have the laundry service collect soiled items, hygienically launder and maintain them and deliver fresh linen on an agreed schedule.

Specialist laundry services can automate stock procedures with meticulous tracking of laundry items to optimize the management of these assets in aged care communities. With the use of radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags, items can be tracked from collection to delivery to ensure nothing is lost.

The technology turns linen management into a well organised process to avoid product shortages and overstocking by effortlessly tracking stock quantities.

Overall benefits

By outsourcing, laundry management becomes a more efficient, value-orientated process. Here are some of the key benefits of outsourcing laundry:



- Reduced investment and running costs
- Reduced administration burden
- Better use of space
- Reduced staff load and staff training
- Reduced water consumption and electricity/gas bills
- Increased confidence in quality assurance
- Guaranteed service and hygiene standards
- Meet environmental regulations
- Security of high-quality supply
- Cost-efficiency with less inventory in storage
- Faster processing of laundry
- Savings on detergents and chemicals costs
- Flexibility of orders as required
- Simplified laundry routine
- Time saved for other aged care services and facility maintenance.
- Resources to deal with emergencies

A reliable laundry service can streamline the laundry process for aged care residential communities. It can help to cut costs, improve efficiency, and raise productivity and aged care residence managers can convert time-consuming inefficient processes into efficient value-orientated procedures.

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