

SAFETY IN THE LAUNDRY

Health & Safety Procedure Title:		SAFETY IN THE LAUNDRY	
Procedure Number:		Rev. Level	003
Written by:	Summerville Healthcare	Date:	May 2022
Edited by:	Hilda Joyce		
Approved by:	Mary Thomakutty	Commence	May 2022
Next Review Date:	May 2025	Review by:	Mary Thomakutty

Date	Rev Level	Revision Description	Reviewed by
2014		Original	
2017	1	No changes	
2020	2	COVID - 19	
2022	3	REVIEWED	Mary Thomakutty

INTRODUCTION

In most care homes the washing machines and the dryers are used extensively. The machine suppliers should provide information maintenance, cleaning, electrical safety, fire preventing, isolating water and electrical supplies in the event of an emergency. Maintenance should always be carried out by a competent person. In addition to the hazards caused by the machines, management need to be aware of the hazards associated with blood borne disease. Soiled linen must be treated as if it were contaminated.

**LAW/ REGULATIONS/GUIDELINES / CODES OF PRACTICE**

- [The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work \(General Application\) Regulations 2007](#) (S.I. No. 299 of 2007). Some biological agents have the potential to

SAFETY IN THE LAUNDRY

affect certain sensitive risk groups and there is a specific legal obligation under Part 6 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations, 2007, (S.I. No. 299 of 2007) for employers to assess the exposure of children and young persons and pregnant, post-natal and breast feeding employees to biological agents.

For example, certain biological agents such as toxoplasma and rubella virus can cause foetal harm and as a result the employer must assess exposure of pregnant employees to these viruses.

- [The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act](#) (No. 10 of 2005). Under this legislation there are specific requirements in relation to substances. A substance is defined under the Act as including any natural or artificial substance, preparation or agent in solid or liquid form or in the form of a gas or vapour or as a micro-organism (i.e. a biological agent).
- [The European Union \(Prevention of Sharps Injuries in the Healthcare Sector\) Regulations 2014](#) (S.I. No. 135 of 2014). These Regulations apply to all employers and employees in the healthcare sector. They require the employer to carry out a sharps risk assessment and implement specific control measures to protect employees at risk. Employers whose main activity is not the provision of healthcare but whose employees may work with sharps will not fall within the scope of the Regulations (unless they are working on the premises of a healthcare employer who is subject to the Regulations) but will still fall under the scope of the Biological Agents Regulations.
- The European Communities (Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment) Regulations 2011 to 2019. The transport of healthcare risk waste and infectious substances is covered by these Regulations.

SAFETY IN THE LAUNDRY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to identify the hazards found in a laundry and to set out the procedures necessary to minimize the opportunity of risks to staff and residents.

POLICY

It is our policy

To prevent residents entering the laundry.

To ensure that staff follow good practice and avoid risks.

To ensure that machines are maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instruction.

RESPONSIBILITY

PiC / Laundry person.

MAINTAINANCE OF MACHINES

The movement of machinery parts can pose a hazard to staff, so machines should be fitted with an interlocking mechanism that prevents them from being set in motion until the front loading door is closed. This door must be kept closed until any accessible moving parts have come to rest. With tumbler and spin dryers it is equally important to ensure that opening the doors cuts off the electrical supply, bringing the cylinder to a halt. The electrical interlock switch used for this purpose should also prevent powered rotation of the drum until the door is closed.

Periodic checks on the interlocking devices should form part of the maintenance schedule. This can be one by attempting to start the machines with the doors open and also attempting to open the doors when the machine is running. Any failure in these tests should be reported immediately to the PiC, who should prohibit the use of the defective machine pending repair or replacement.

SAFETY IN THE LAUNDRY

There is a high risk of fire if the lint traps are not frequently cleaned on the tumbler dryer. This can be done with a vacuum cleaner and the inspection should form part of the maintenance schedule.

In larger laundries, it is likely that mechanical ventilation may be required.

Risk of:

- Infection e.g. Legionnaires' disease.
- Skin, eye or respiratory sensitisation.

Possible causes:

- Exposure to biological agents via contaminated laundry, contaminated sharps in laundry or contaminated water aerosols.
- Exposure to proteolytic enzymes in detergents.

Biological agents are widely found in the natural environment and as a result found in many work sectors. They include bacteria, viruses, fungi (including yeasts and moulds) and internal human parasites (endoparasites). The majority of these agents are harmless however some may have potential to cause ill health.

THE EFFECTS OF BIOLOGICAL AGENTS

As they are usually invisible, it is often difficult to appreciate the risks they present. As a worker you may be harmed by:

- being infected by a biological agent,
- being exposed to toxins produced by the biological agent, or
- having an allergic reaction to the biological agent or substances it produces, for example, enzymes.

Biological agents have the ability to replicate rapidly, require minimal resources to survive and can infect at very small doses.

SAFETY IN THE LAUNDRY

TYPES OF EXPOSURE

In the workplace, exposure to biological agents can be:

- intentional, whereby the employee works directly with them, for example, in a laboratory or research facility, or
- unintentional, whereby the employee is exposed to the biological agent due to the work they do, for example, a healthcare worker who is exposed to a blood borne virus, a laundry worker who receives a needle stick injury.

MANAGING THE LAUNDRY

Under no circumstances should residents enter the laundry. Adequate security must be provided at entrances.

No staff other than those appointed to work in the laundry should enter the laundry room.

- A laundry area designated for that purpose only, with separate ventilation
- The laundry must not be located in a site, which is directly accessible to the kitchen
- Laundry must not be carried through the kitchen.
- An industrial washing machine must be professionally installed so that it does not create an aerosol, hence contamination.
- An industrial dryer is recommended to ensure that linen is thoroughly dried
- The laundry manager should ensure that a preventative maintenance programme is established and a record kept of the checks made as evidence of diligence and care
- Adequate hand-washing facilities for staff should be available with dispenser soap and paper towels provided.

SAFETY IN THE LAUNDRY

LAUNDRY FOR WHEN DEALING WITH COVID-19 POSITIVE

Provide alginate bags and ask the residents to put personal laundry inside before collecting

- Store the laundry in a dedicated area before washing – away from residents and communal areas
- All linen should be placed in an alginate stitched or water soluble bag and then placed in an outer red canvas laundry bag
- Laundry bags must be secured until awaiting delivery to laundry.
- Unbagged linen must not be carried out of the room and appropriate PPE should be used when handling soiled linen, i.e. plastic apron and gloves.
- Staff- wear gloves and apron when handling laundry- do not shake the linen
- Linen must be washed using hot water ($>65^{\circ}$ for 10 mins) and standard laundry detergent
- Hot air driers may be used
- Ensure social distancing in the laundry room with signage
- Provide alcohol hand gel, gloves and aprons

SAFETY IN THE LAUNDRY

References

1. Health Surveillance and Protection Centre, (2020) Preliminary Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Infection Prevention and Control Guidance including Outbreak Control in Residential Care Facilities (RCF) and Similar Units V1.1 March 2020.
2. Centre for Disease Control Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Healthcare Settings accessed 30/03/2020
3. National Clinical Effectiveness Committee, (2014) Sepsis Management National Clinical Guideline No. 6 accessed 30/03/2020 @ <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/clinical-strategy-and-programmes/guideline-no-6-sepsis-management.pdf>
4. European Centre for Disease Control, (2020) Considerations related to the safe handling of bodies of deceased persons with suspected or confirmed COVID-19
5. European Centre for Disease Control, (2020) Infection prevention and control and preparedness for COVID-19 in healthcare settings Third Update. 31st March 2020.
6. Health and Safety Authority, COVID 19 – Advice for Employers accessed 29/03/2020 @ <file:///C:/Users/COVID%2019/COVID%2019%20-%20Advice%20for%20Employers%20-%20Health%20and%20Safety%20Authority.html>