

Coronavirus Briefing

Managing Linen in Hotels & The Hospitality Sector



FEBRUARY 2020 | COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

The spread of Covid-19 (Wuhan Coronavirus) infection has tested the preparedness of our healthcare system and its supply chain in managing outbreak of this kind. What makes this outbreak even more challenging is that even the hospitality sector suddenly faced the question of managing linen that might have been handled by a person with a known/suspected infection. Such encounters expose strengths and weaknesses of the measures currently in place; the industry must address together any lack of preparedness and procedures to respond to such outbreaks.

Below are the facets a hotel/venue may want to consider if they are affected by any case of communicable or transmissible disease. The Textile Services Association is working with their laundry members to plan and make available the laundry's portion of responsibilities. That may include provision of infection control bags and preparing to make a decision on what to do with the infected linen. Hotels should consider developing policies and a detailed risk assessment to manage the infected linen – this should also include ways to assist laundries to fulfil their role. In our discussions with hotel operators in the hospitality sector, the following aspects were identified; you may want to consider these to suit your operations.

1. Developing diligent procedures and guest-reporting processes to identify recent visits to any region that may have been affected by an outbreak of any communicable/transmissible disease. Depending on your risk assessment at the time, consider ways to manage staff allocation taking in to account any employees with weakened immune or pre-existing conditions.
2. Prompt alerts to laundries as soon as hotels/venues identify any suspected or confirmed infection of a communicable sort.
3. Preparedness to work together with the laundries to decide whether a hazardous waste handler to be employed or to take the linen back to the laundry to be processed. Since the main aspect of the risk to be managed remains with the laundry, the laundry should have the ability to make a final decision on what to be done with the linen regardless of who owns the stock.
4. Adequate information made available to the laundries to help them make right decisions and to effectively manage the linen.
5. The processes involved when linen with suspected or known infection are at different stages of its journey to being collected by the laundry:
 - a. When the linen is identified and contained within a room and / or clearly traceable – depending on the risk assessment, the hotel should consider quarantining the room and the linen bagged (as per the agreed procedure), clearly labelled and ready for the laundry to make a decision

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on as per Point 3 above. Depending on your local risk assessment, you should consider a deep-clean and thorough disinfection of the room and any other relevant facilities.

- b. When the linen cannot be traced any longer, already been removed from the room in question, mixed with other linen and waiting for collection by the laundry – the hotel/venue should consider ways to assist the hazardous waste handler and/or the laundry collection staff with appropriate PPE and / or RPE (as per your local risk assessment).
 - c. When the linen cannot be traced any longer and already in the possession of the laundry – the hotels should inform the laundry provider with time periods of the potential contamination and any other information that can help the laundries manage the risk as best as they can.
 - d. Unknown/unanticipated exposure – By keeping a diligent eye on any serious outbreaks of infection in the region, you may be in a better position to identify and manage risks to your people and operations.
6. Establishing a robust hand hygiene procedure for housekeepers, maintenance and other staff.
 7. **PPE/RPE and Risk Assessments:** Depending on the results of the local risk assessment, consider options regarding Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and/or Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) after all other reasonably practicable measures have been introduced to prevent or control exposure.
 8. Documenting lessons learned and working with your laundry providers to develop a review process.
 9. In the event you operate an OPL (On Premise Laundry), you should ensure that your wash programme is adequately (temperature validation) equipped to effectively process such infected linen.

Please contact the TSA by telephone on **020 3151 5600** or by email on tsa@tsa-uk.org

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