



## **New CMS S and C Letter: Revised Guidance at F Tag 441-Laundry and Infection Control**

Subject-- Revised Guidance for F Tag 441: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is clarifying and revising guidance to surveyors in Appendix PP of the SOM regarding citations under F Tag 441 related to 42 CFR §483.65(c). The memo addresses laundry detergents with and without antimicrobial claims, use of chlorine bleach rinses, water temperatures during the process of washing laundry, maintenance of laundry equipment and laundry items, and ozone laundry cleaning systems.

Following is the link to a new Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Survey and Certification Letter: **Clarification of Interpretive Guidance at F Tag 441-Laundry and Infection Control (1-25-13)**:

<http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/SurveyCertificationGenInfo/Downloads/Survey-and-Cert-Letter-13-09.pdf>

Revised Guidance for F Tag 441: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is clarifying and revising guidance to surveyors in Appendix PP of the SOM regarding citations under F Tag 441 related to 42 CFR §483.65(c). The memo addresses laundry detergents with and without antimicrobial claims, use of chlorine bleach rinses, water temperatures during the process of washing laundry, maintenance of laundry equipment and laundry items, and ozone laundry cleaning systems.

- Included is the advance copy of CMS revised guidance to surveyors for Appendix PP at F-Tag 441 / 42 CFR §483.65(c).
- The memo and revised guidance recognizes improvements in technology related to laundry detergents and antimicrobial claims; use of chlorine bleach rinses; water temperatures; maintenance of equipment and laundry items; and ozone laundry cleaning systems.
- The Advance Copy of the Transmittal is attached to the Letter. **All changes are redlined.**

+++++

- Requirements at 42 CFR §483.65(c) Infection Control, Linens, state “personnel must handle, store, process, and transport linens so as to prevent the spread of infection.”
- Current guidance does not address updates in manufacturer’s technology for laundry equipment and cleaning agents.
- CMS is updating surveyor guidance, in consultation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to address improvements in technology in laundry processing:
  - **“Detergent and water physically remove many microorganisms from linen through dilution during the wash cycle. An effective way to destroy microorganisms in laundry items is through hot water washing at temperatures above 160 degrees F (71 degrees C) for 25 minutes. Alternatively, low temperature washing at 71 to 77 degrees F (22-25 degrees C) plus a 125-part-per-million (ppm) chlorine bleach rinse has been found to be effective and comparable to high temperature wash cycles.”**
- Guidance is added on maintenance of laundry equipment, laundry items, and ozone cleaning systems.
  - **Laundry detergents:**
    - “Advances in technology allow modern-day detergents to be much more effective in removing soil and reducing the presence of microbes than those used in the past when much of the research on laundry processing was first conducted.”
    - Facilities may use any detergent designated for laundry in laundry processing.
    - Laundry detergents used by nursing homes are not required to have stated anti-microbial claims. Facilities should follow manufacturer’s instructions for use.
    - CMS does not endorse any specific laundry detergent or product.
  - **Water temperatures and chlorine bleach rinses.**
    - “Laundry processing in facilities typically occurs in a low water temperature environment.” A chlorine bleach rinse is not required for all laundry items processed in low temperature environments due to the availability of detergents able to produce ‘hygienically clean’ laundry without chlorine bleach.
      - The Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation defines “hygienically clean” as “free of pathogens in sufficient numbers to cause human illness.”.
    - A chlorine bleach rinse may still be used for laundry items such as cottons.
    - “Hot water washing at temperatures greater than 160 degrees F for 25 minutes and low temperature washing at 71 to 77 degrees F (22-25 degrees C) with a 125-part-per-million (ppm) chlorine bleach rinse remain effective ways to process laundry.”
    - If a facility chooses to use a hot water temperature environment, the temperature maintained for 25 minutes should be 160 degrees Fahrenheit.

- **Maintenance of equipment and laundry items.**
  - Facilities are not required to maintain a record of water temperatures during laundry processing cycles.
  - CDC recommends leaving washing machines open to air when not in use to allow the machine to dry completely and to prevent growth of microorganisms in wet, potentially warm environments.
  - Facilities are required to follow manufacturer's instructions for all materials involved in laundry processing (e.g., washing machines; dryers; laundry detergents, rinse aids, or other additives)
  - Facilities should follow manufacturer's instructions for clothing, linens, and other laundry items to determine the appropriate methods to produce a hygienically clean product.
  - Facilities should consider residents' individual needs (e.g., allergies) when selecting methods for processing laundry.
  - Facilities should have written policies & procedures; training for staff who handle linens/laundry.
- **Ozone cleaning systems**
  - Ozone cleaning systems are acceptable methods of processing laundry.
  - Ozone cleaning may require professional services. Facilities choosing ozone systems will need an initial agreement with the laundry service that stipulates laundry will be 'hygienically clean' and handled to prevent recontamination from dust and dirt during loading and transport.

**Evvie F. Munley | Senior Health Policy Analyst | [LeadingAge](#) | P 202.508.9478 | [LeadingAge.org](#)  
[emunley@LeadingAge.org](mailto:emunley@LeadingAge.org)**

Connect with **LeadingAge**: <http://www.LeadngAge.org/connect>  
*Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail*

