

Compliance with OSHA Bloodborne Pathogen Standard 1910.1030

A Closer Look – Part 3 of 3

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This series of articles is designed to assist today's healthcare providers in better understanding the specifics of OSHA Standard 1910.1030. Part 3 focuses on the employers' responsibilities in the laundering of medical textiles.


Previously we have discussed the provision of personal protective equipment and the handling of soiled medical textiles. Of the three fundamental principals that serve as the basis for 1910.1030, laundering is by far the most straightforward with regard to the employer's responsibilities. Today we will briefly explain how a textile service can assist employers in their OSHA compliance initiatives related to laundering medical textiles.

1910.1030(d)(3)(iv) - Cleaning, Laundering, and Disposal. The employer shall clean, launder, and dispose of personal protective equipment required by paragraphs (d) and (c) of this standard, at no cost to the employee.

Based on the excerpt above, it is clear that the employer, not the employee, is responsible for laundering medical textiles. Instances where employees are transporting personal protective equipment to their homes for home laundering are a clear violation of the standard. This occurrence violates the "no cost to the employee" clause and also (as mentioned in part 2) the handling rules discussed in Part 2 of this series.

For employers willing to accept the laundering burden themselves, costs, policies and processes become their main focus. The costs involved can include equipment, chemicals, and compliant storage units. As far as policies and processes, the employer must create, maintain and enforce regulations regarding; issuance, assignment, collection, laundering and identification. Beyond the costs, policies and procedures, employers must also ensure the laundering itself is effective and compliant. Clearly an employer's adherence to the 1910.1030 laundering standards is far more involved than simply placing textiles in a washing machine.

Many healthcare providers are turning a textile rental service for their OSHA compliant laundering needs. A quality, healthcare-focused textile service will support healthcare providers' compliance efforts provided they can offer state-of-the-art, healthcare specific laundering facilities (see photos) and OSHA-approved laundering processes that exceed hospital standards. For healthcare providers considering a partnership with a textile rental service, we recommend including a tour of the processing facility in the decision making process.

Summary - Clearly the employers' compliance responsibilities related to the laundering of contaminated textiles are more straightforward than the provision and handling elements. That being said, given what was discussed in Part 1 and Part 2 of this series, and the complexities therein, many of today's healthcare providers have turned to a textile service to support their compliance initiatives and to protect their employees, their patients, and their practice. 



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