

CMS Releases Memo, Clarification of F-441, Laundry and Infection Control

Last week, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released a [clarification memo](#) addressing F441 as it relates to laundry and infection control. The memo includes minor revised guidance which is summarized below:

- On the issue of detergents:
 - Facilities may use any detergent designated for laundry in laundry processing.
 - There are no requirements for detergents to have stated anti-microbial claims.
 - Facilities are instructed to follow manufacturer's instructions when using detergents.
 - According to CMS, modern day detergents are able to produce "hygienically clean" laundry. They define hygienically clean as being "free of pathogens in sufficient numbers to cause human illness".
- Other guidance offered:
 - A chlorine bleach rinse is not required for all laundry items
 - Hot water washing at temperatures > 160° for 25 minutes or low temperature washing at 71-77° with 125 parts per million chlorine bleach remains effective ways to process laundry.
 - Facilities are not required to maintain a record of water temperatures during laundry.
 - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend leaving washing machine doors open to air when not in use to promote drying and prevent growth of microorganisms.
 - Facilities are required to follow all manufacturers' instructions for all materials involved in laundry processing.
 - Facilities should consider resident's individual needs (example: allergies) when processing laundry.
 - CMS in collaboration with CDC has determined that ozone cleaning systems are acceptable methods for processing laundry.
 - Ozone cleaning systems may require a professional laundry service. The facility will need to obtain an agreement in this instance.
 - Whether laundry is processed inside or outside of the facility, facilities should have written policies and procedures which include training for staff who will handle linens and laundry.

If you have any questions about this information, please contact [Cathy Nelson](#).