



JW Draperies Health Care Services Laundering Processes, Temperatures and Alternatives

The United States Center for Disease Control, in Atlanta, GA, position on hospital cubicle/privacy curtains remains unchanged for the past decade, stating that fabric has a low contributing factor to infection control issues in hospitals however new studies are indicating that fabric privacy curtains do contribute to infection control concerns and should be cleaned cyclically and regularly.

Temperature Facts

Temperatures above 140 degrees F kill bacteria – *dry heat or water heat.*

Recommendation labels on fabrics indicate the MAXIMUM SAFE temperature for the fabric to avoid shrinking and damage to the fabric.

Heated water does accelerate the chemical action of detergent but is not required in the washing process of curtains.

Emulsification occurs when curtains are washed in detergent with bleach and water. During the agitation process foreign material (soil, germs, etc) within the curtain fabric emulsify with the treated water and subsequently go down the drain.

Industry standards for water temperature

Cold 65 to 75 degrees F

Warm 80 to 100 degrees F

Hot 120 to 140 degrees F

Steam 212+ degrees F

Maintaining the integrity and longevity of fabrics- Our process & policy:

JW Healthcare Services in-plant cleaning process for privacy curtains:

1-Wash using room temperature (Cold) water with Powdered Laundry & Oxygen Bleach Detergent.

2-Tumble Dry at 140+ degrees F for 35 to 40 minutes.

3- Flat Press Steam at 212+ degrees F.

Cubicle/Privacy curtains are expensive, the fabric and mesh are subject to damage from agitation in hot water. JW Draperies cleans with cold water to avoid damaging the fabric but uses dry / steam heat to kill any residual bacteria or germs.

Infection Control and Cross Contamination Prevention

Policy and procedure for the handling, cleaning and storage of Privacy (Cubicle) Curtains within the JW Draperies facility and during transportation.

1. Soiled curtains are to be brought in via hard surface plastic wheeled buckets from the trucks directly to the wash area.
2. The curtains are to be either loaded directly into wash machines, or put on the floor in the "soiled" area.
3. From the wash machines curtains are to be placed into designated "clean" roller bins and taken to the dryers.
4. The dryers are to be run at temperatures of 135 to 150 degrees for 30 minutes, a standard preventative protocol for killing potential infectious diseases, scabies, bedbugs, viruses, etc.
5. The clean dried cubicles are to be laid out on rolling tables in the "clean" area.
6. The curtains are to be placed on the steam press table and treated with boiler generated steam for releasing wrinkles, and to serve as an additional treatment in the preventative protocol for killing potential infectious diseases, scabies, bedbugs, viruses, etc.
7. Clean and pressed curtains are individually folded on the "clean area" folding table, hung on 13" hangers, and placed in the warehouse area for storage on pipe racks designated for the particular healthcare facility until delivered back to the facility.
8. Plant manager will daily monitor all "clean" and "soiled" containers to ensure they are in their designated areas to prevent cross contamination.
9. Drivers are to ensure, while at the healthcare facility, that clean curtains are removed from their trucks prior to loading soiled curtains.
10. Machines used to wash and dry curtains must be designated for curtain cleaning only.

Alternatives and Methods used to Avoid Laundering Curtains.

Anti Microbial Fabrics

Good proactive “due diligence” precaution. Regular laundering is still required

UV Machines

Expensive and only effective if both sides of curtain are exposed and with no folds in fabric. They do not remove visible soiling.

Antiseptic Sprays

Good “stop gap” measure but no guarantee that entire surface was decontaminated.

Disposable Curtains

Good for quick change outs, but either an expensive long term commitment if using good quality curtains or costly and poor customer satisfaction scores if using low end disposables.

Mechanical Draw Devices to avoid human contact

Batons, Wands, Plastic Tabs or other devices to prevent human contact

- .1 A number of facilities have implemented this type system with limited success, and in almost all cases eventually discontinued it.
- .2 The batons/wands put strain on and break the carrier/slide they are attached to. Generally adding a heavy duty lead carrier is necessary, however most track systems do not offer a lead carrier , (because the baton system has been found to be impractical).
- .3 People generally do not use the baton, or even if they do reach for the baton will still grab the edge of the curtain.
- .4 Batons become an additional maintenance issue, they break off, become “toys” for visitors, etc.

Conclusion:

The general feedback from EVS, administration and infection control departments, that have researched and tried alternative systems, has been that, if you have curtains, they need to be cleaned cyclically, isolations need to come down as needed, and any system to avoid this does not work or is more costly and time consuming than a standard cleaning program.