



News Release
Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council

HLAC Raises Concerns Over Improperly Used Exchange Carts and Unused HCTs

PLAINFIELD, IL - April 12, 2016 - The Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council (HLAC) is saying there is "legitimate and increasing concern" of a "widespread" and "unsafe" industry practice regarding the back-and-forth on exchange carts of unused healthcare textiles (HCTs) between hospitals and laundries.

In a newly published article in [Facility Care](#), HLAC board members Gregory Gicewicz and Carol McLay write, "It is an unsafe practice for healthcare laundries to return unused linens on exchange carts from the hospital back to the laundry plant, where those same unused textiles - *without being reprocessed* - are then topped off with clean linens and returned to the hospital."

In the article, "A Strategy for Overcoming the Hidden Dangers of Improperly Used Exchange Carts," Gicewicz and McLay say there is "legitimate and increasing concern that this practice may be widespread across the industry."

The authors write that HLAC "believes that this improper practice presents numerous opportunities for contamination of textiles."

While authorities such as The Joint Commission provide direction on the safe transport of unused linens to the healthcare facility, the authors note "they don't to our knowledge address *the return* of unused linen from the healthcare facility *back to the healthcare laundry*. In fact, few entities have actually addressed *the return trip*."

The article provides several options for laundries and hospitals that address the concerns.

HLAC Board President John Scherberger said the nonprofit organization, which inspects and accredits laundries that process reusable healthcare textiles, has begun a process for clarifying its standards regarding exchange cart systems.

"Mixing unused, unprocessed linens with clean linens and returning all of them to the hospital is a failure of functional separation as is defined in our 2016 Standards," Scherberger said. "However, with regard to exchange cart systems, there seems to be some confusion that we will address and endeavor to clarify with the industry and with healthcare laundries."

"By raising these concerns over improperly used exchange carts and unused HCTs, HLAC has put regulatory agencies and relevant healthcare and laundry entities on notice that we believe patients and staff are potentially being put in harm's way," Scherberger said.

About HLAC

The Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council (HLAC) is a nonprofit organization formed for the purpose of inspecting and accrediting laundries processing healthcare textiles for hospitals, nursing homes and other healthcare facilities. Visit www.hlacnet.org and on Twitter [@NewsHlac](https://twitter.com/NewsHlac).

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