



HLAC

– Three Years of Raising the Bar!

Accreditation lets healthcare customers know they're dealing with an industry leader

By Kathy Tinker



The Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council

Although it seems like only a few months, it's now been three years since the Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council (HLAC) began inspecting and accrediting laundries that serve the healthcare market.

During this period, more than 60 laundries nationwide have achieved accreditation. In March, HLAC reached an important milestone by completing the re-inspection of Reino Linen Service Inc., Gibsonburg, OH, the first laundry to receive accreditation. Reino Linen renewed its accreditation for another three years.

Seeking accreditation is a well thought-out business decision by managers and owners. Preparation for the inspection is a commitment that requires time and effort. Laundries that achieve accreditation play a key leadership role as they clear the path to enhancing the credibility and reputation of healthcare laundries. In addition, they elevate industry best practices and serve as educators to those who seek to learn more about proper healthcare textile processing.

But perhaps most important is the recognition of the role that the HLAC plays in the ever-changing world of healthcare laundry customers. As hospitals and healthcare facilities come under tighter regulatory controls and closer scrutiny regarding infection prevention, choosing the best suppliers, including the laundry provider, becomes a critical business decision. Pursuing voluntary inspection and accreditation by an independent organization can speak volumes to healthcare customers who rely on and readily accept recognized certifications, standards and programs to benchmark and measure performance in every department. For the customer or

prospect, HLAC accreditation helps define the standards that apply to proper techniques for healthcare textile processing.

HLAC '09 plan

In 2009, HLAC will continue focusing on projects that support its mission of developing the highest standards for healthcare textile processing. Later this year, HLAC will open its Standards to the public for a comment period. The formation of an Advisory Committee was announced in February. The Committee's objective will be to support the mission of HLAC by advising, consulting, making recommendations and informing the Council on trends as the HLAC develops policies and programs. Expansion into Canada with harmonized Standards is currently under review. And the HLAC currently is evaluating the addition of a new module written for laundries that process surgical textiles in their facilities. In addition, the HLAC will exhibit at Clean '09, June 18-21 in New Orleans. This event will include a 2-hour seminar on June 19 to educate Clean attendees on the accreditation process.

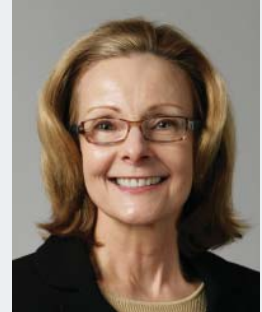
New marketing support

During the past three years, HLAC has focused its marketing toward laundry operators in an effort to build a nationwide network of accredited laundries. Though not yet located in every state, there are now over 60 laundries accredited across the country; more are working to attain accreditation. Having established this base, the HLAC recently has expanded its marketing efforts to include educating

Thinking About Accreditation?

Up-close perspectives from the first three laundries to receive accreditation

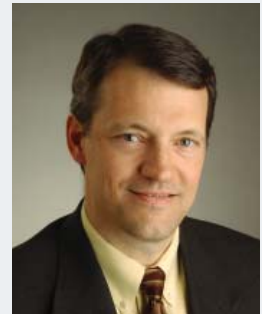
Judy Reino, President
Reino Linen Service Inc.
Gibsonburg, OH



Judy Reino

Because Reino Linen had always been a proponent of creating standards for our industry, pursuing accreditation three years ago was a natural choice for us. In 2006, preparing for the first inspection helped us improve our quality program, streamline operations and build a more thorough documentation system. During the past three years, those improvements provided an excellent method that allowed us to measure and analyze performance each and every day. And the benefits of that are felt not only within the organization but also by our customers. Employees are better trained and more aware of how they make a difference. Customers are confident they have chosen a supplier whose knowledge and expertise they can trust and value. And Reino Linen can deliver a high quality product with superior service—something our healthcare customers rely on every day.

Ed McCauley, President and CEO
United Hospital Services Inc.
Indianapolis



Ed McCauley

As a cooperative laundry with close ties to our owner hospitals, having an outside independent agency accredit us was appealing. Hospitals go through an accreditation process regularly, whether it is from The Joint Commission, HFAP (Healthcare Facilities Accreditation Program) or some other agency. And so they would ask the question, "Who accredits the laundry?" Up until HLAC existed, the answer was always "no one." Now that we have a credible organization accrediting us, it makes our owner hospitals feel secure knowing that their laundry is being held to a standard as well.

David Stern, President and CEO
Paris Companies
DuBois, PA



David Stern

Our healthcare customers are accustomed to dealing with agencies, suppliers and individuals who have earned an accreditation or certification. As a laundry that serves acute-care hospitals, we believe it is important to show customers that we share the philosophy that continuous improvement is the right thing to do. During the past three years, we have talked with our customers about HLAC accreditation, the Standards, and the value an accredited laundry brings to their business. This in turn has led to more knowledgeable and confident customers who gain a new respect for our industry as well as appreciation for a vendor who holds itself to the highest standards possible.

healthcare professionals about HLAC accreditation. The message is clear: Having an accredited laundry means a healthcare organization can be sure that their textiles are processed to the highest standards possible. This is important when a laundry manager speaks with a customer or prospect regarding the availability, cleanliness and quality of textiles and how those factor into the patient experience, including infection-prevention strategies.

Launched in 2008, HLAC's hospital mailing program was well received and utilized by a majority of newly accredited laundries last year. The program includes five letters mailed at no charge to customers or prospects. Additional letters are mailed for a fee to help cover administrative costs. Accompanying the letter is the HLAC Fact Sheet, a 2-sided, 4-color brochure that highlights details of the program and its mission. Due to the popularity of this initiative, the HLAC this year is expanding the program to all of its accredited laundries. Additional marketing efforts aimed at healthcare professionals will include direct mail, presentations at trade shows and conferences, articles and interviews in trade and healthcare journals

and other marketing materials.

The Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council is well positioned to continue its leadership and commitment to excellence in healthcare textile processing. Healthcare is a dynamic industry. It will continue to grow and change at a fast pace, posing increased pressure and challenges for healthcare facilities to focus more on the patient and less on noncore issues, such as laundry. The bottom line is that an accredited laundry can be an invaluable partner to a hospital or medical facility. These laundry companies are proven laundry industry leaders. They bring operational efficiencies, regulatory compliance, textile expertise and more to any healthcare facility that wants to lower its costs and improve patient outcomes.



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