

Material Planning: Bedding, Linens, and Uniforms



■ Bedding

- Sheets and Pillowcases
- Blankets
- Bedspreads, Comforters, and Dust Ruffles
- Pillows
- Mattress Covers

■ Bath and Table Linens

- Bath Linens
- Table Linens

■ Uniforms

This chapter is the fourth and final chapter devoted to the examination of material administration. In this chapter we explore **bedding, linens, and uniforms**. These items are the highest annual cost items in hotel operational supply inventories. Initial supplies required to support operations of a commercial hotel the size of the model hotel can well exceed \$200,000.

Before deciding on the requirements for an initial supply of bedding, linens, and uniforms, the professional housekeeper must have a thorough knowledge of the composition and construction of these items. The professional housekeeper must then establish purchase specifications for these items so that the purchased items complement the property rather than detract from it.

The intention of this chapter is to acquaint the housekeeper with the range of materials and manufacturing methods used to construct these textiles.

Bedding

Bedding encompasses all materials used in the making of a bed. This includes sheets, pillowcases, blankets, pillows, bedspreads, **dust ruffles**, comforters, and mattress covers.

Sheets and Pillowcases

Many small (inexpensive) hotels change linen once a week or when the guest departs, whichever occurs first. For many years, people believed that a quality hotel

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, students should be able to:

1. Generate purchase specifications for bedding, including sheets, pillows, mattress pads, blankets, and bedspreads, for a certain class of hotel.
2. Develop purchase criteria for table linens, including proper size, fabric content, and method of construction.
3. Generate standards of selection for employee uniforms.
4. Generate criteria for bath linens for different classes of hotels.

should change guest linens daily, even when the guest was staying for more than one night.

Today, environmentally responsible hotels leave that choice up to the guest.

These linen reuse programs can save tremendous amounts of water and energy and can also prevent the introduction of additional laundry chemicals into the environment.

A hotel is not lowering its service standards when it gives a guest the option of reusing a towel or sleeping in the same sheets for a second night.

Fabric Materials and Construction

Although 100 percent cotton sheets are available, the overwhelming majority of hotels use a cotton/polyester (Dacron) blend. A 50/50 Dacron/cotton blend is thought to provide the optimum qualities of the natural and the synthetic fibers.

Cotton/polyester blends are more durable than straight cotton. After 100 launderings, cotton loses 35 to 40 percent of its tensile strength. Cotton/polyester blends lose 3 to 7 percent. Expected wear increases three and one-half times with a blend.

Blends do not shrink as much as cotton. If cotton is tumbled dry, it will shrink from 5 to 8 percent. A blend will shrink from 0 to 3 percent.

Blends are more economical to launder. They will retain 15 to 50 percent less water than a full cotton sheet after extraction. This feature means a faster drying time for blends.

Blends, unfortunately, are not softer. In recent years, many high-end hotels have been touting their high-thread-count, all-cotton sheets. T-250 and T-300 all-cotton sheets (see the following discussion of thread count) have replaced satin and silk sheets as a mark of luxury in many a first-class hotel. There are even T-700 Egyptian cotton sheet sets selling for more than \$1,000 a set. Some Ritz-Carltons advertise 300-thread-count sheets and feather beds in their rooms.

The cotton fibers in a sheet can be either combed or carded before spinning. If the fibers are carded, the fabric is rough and dull looking. Sheets that are made in this

manner are called **muslin** sheets. If the fibers are combed, the fabric is much smoother and has a greater tensile strength. Sheets made from this process are called **percale** sheets.

The threads running lengthwise through the sheet are called the **warp**. The threads that run crosswise (horizontally) are called the **weft** or **filling**. The most common weave for sheets is called the plain weave. In this weave the warp and weft threads are perpendicular to each other.

Textiles are graded by the **thread count** and **tensile strength**. Housekeeping managers should specify a sheet that has a thread count of at least a T-180. This means that there are 180 threads in a one-inch-square piece of sheet. Ideally, there should be 94 threads in the warp and 86 in the weft. In any event, the numbers of warp and weft threads should be fairly close. The tensile strength is determined by the amount of weight it takes to tear a 1" × 3" piece of fabric.

Fabrics that come directly from a loom are called **gray goods**. This means that the fabric has not received a finishing treatment and is unsuitable for most purposes. *Finishing* is an all-inclusive term that is applied to a number of treatments that can be administered to a freshly woven fabric. Finishing includes washing, bleaching, and a process called **mercerizing**, in which the fabric is treated with caustic soda. Mercerizing swells the cotton fibers, increasing the strength and luster of the cloth. Fabric may also be sanforized. **Sanforizing** preshrinks the cloth to prevent it from shrinking more than 1 percent during regular laundering. Cotton/polyester sheets are normally chemically modified during manufacturing to provide what is often called a "durable press" or "no-iron" effect. This fabric is smooth to begin with, stays smooth after laundering, and stays smooth while in use. Some finishing treatments are patented processes.

Sheets may be dyed, but white is the color choice for most hotels. If sheets are to be dyed, the best process is to dye the threads in a vat before weaving, but most of the time the completed fabric is dyed. White sheets will often have a colored thread or colored piping in the sheet to indicate the sheet's size for sorting. White sheets

are preferred because they do not fade after laundering, nor do they require extra handling for sorting.

Sheets that have minor imperfections are called **seconds** and are usually marked with an “S” or have the manufacturer’s tag cut off. Most seconds are perfectly acceptable in the majority of hotels.

Sheets and pillowcases are shipped in case lots. A case may have from a dozen to 12 gross in its contents, depending on the size of an order and a manageable weight per case. An example of how a linen case is marked is as follows: “2F/11S-81 × 104.” This information is translated as follows: 2 dozen first-quality, 11 dozen second-quality, double sheets.

Size

There are two sheet measurements. The **torn sheet** size is the size of the sheet before hemming. The **finished sheet** has a top and bottom hem. Institutional sheets normally have a 2-inch hem on the top and on the bottom. This is done so that the sheet does not require extra handling when folding or making the bed. Also, since the sheet can be reversed, it is hoped that both hems will wear evenly.

In Table 7.1 recommended sheet sizes for each mattress size are given in inches.

Fitted sheets are never used in commercial applications because they tear at their corners, they take up to three times the space in storage, and they can be used only as bottom sheets. Standard sheets, however, are more flexible, and larger standard sheets can be substituted for smaller sheets.

Par Levels

The term **par** refers to standard, specific, or normal levels of stock. Linen pars are the standard levels of linen inventory required to support operations. “One par linen” is that quantity of each item required to com-

pletely outfit the guestrooms of the hotel one time. Since one par is hardly enough to have an efficient operation, a par number must be established to ensure adequate supply for smooth operations. (The GRA who has to wait for the laundry to finish laundering linen before a bed can be made hardly represents the efficient use of costly personnel or shows proper guest service. In addition, freshly laundered sheets should be allowed to “rest” for 24 hours before being put back into service. This will ensure their durability.)

Hotel properties having their own linen supply need to have 3½ par linen on hand (1 par in the guestroom, 1 par soiled for tomorrow’s laundry work requirement, 1 par clean for tomorrow’s work in the guestrooms, and ½ par new in storage). Hotels that must send their linen out to be laundered require 1 additional par because of out-and-in transit time.

Blankets

A blanket is an insulator; it keeps body heat in and cold air out. The best blanket is light in weight for comfort, but at the same time it should be a highly effective thermal insulator. Adding weight to a blanket does not necessarily make it a better insulator. The way a blanket is woven (how it traps the body heat) is what makes a blanket warm.

Fabric Materials and Construction

Although wool blankets have extremely high heat retention, they are much heavier than synthetic blankets. Synthetics such as polyester, acrylics, and nylon are the preferred fabrics for commercial blanket construction.

Another positive aspect of synthetic blankets is that they can be laundered as well as dry-cleaned. However, repeated launderings will tend to make blankets fade over time. If blankets are to be laundered, care must be taken to ensure that the blanket binding is made of the same material so that different fibers do not shrink at a different rate.

Blankets can be woven, needle-punched (similar to carpet tufting), or made through an electrostatic process. Woven blankets are normally more expensive, but they are not necessarily better insulators. One popular blanket variety is the thermal blanket. Thermal blankets are light woven blankets that have large air pockets for insulation. A regular blanket or sheet is placed on top of this blanket to increase its insulation coefficient.

Care should be taken to select blankets that are moisture permeable. A blanket that cannot transfer moisture will make the guest feel clammy and uncomfortable.

Above all, blankets should be fire retardant.

Some hotels provide electric blankets in their rooms. One school of thought holds that electric blankets are a service feature appreciated by many guests and that their use will decrease the hotel’s heating costs. Other hoteliers believe that the theft rate of electric blankets is

TABLE 7.1 Recommended Sheet Sizes (in inches)

Name	Mattress Size	Torn Sheet Size	Finished Sheet Size
Roll-away	33 × 76	66 × 104	66 × 99
Twin	39 × 76	66 × 104	66 × 99
Long twin	39 × 80	66 × 108	66 × 103
¾ twin	48 × 76	66 × 104	66 × 99
Double	54 × 76	81 × 104	81 × 99
Long double	54 × 80	81 × 108	81 × 103
Queen	60 × 80	90 × 108	90 × 103
King	78 × 80	108 × 110	108 × 105
California king	72 × 80	108 × 115	108 × 110
Pillowcase	Standard	42 × 36	20½ × 30
Pillowcase	King	42 × 46	20½ × 40

higher than that of ordinary blankets, that electric blankets are potential fire hazards, and that some of their guests hold that sleeping under an electric blanket is dangerous, unhealthy, or both.

Size

A blanket that is too short for a bed will wear prematurely from constant tugging by the guest. A blanket should be the length of the mattress, plus the thickness of the mattress, plus an additional 6 inches for tucking. The width of the blanket should be the width of the mattress, plus double the mattress thickness, plus 6 additional inches for tucking.

The weight of a standard blanket will vary from 2½ to 3½ pounds. Lighter blankets should be used in the Southeast and Southwest, and the heavier blankets should be reserved for northern climates.

Par Levels

Blankets should be set at one par plus 10 percent in southern climates. In some northern climates, the par level may be as high as 2½ par, where an extra blanket is placed in the room for each bed. This policy, however, often results in a higher theft rate.

Bedspreads, Comforters, and Dust Ruffles

The bed is the focal point in most guestrooms; consequently, the bedspread is extremely important from a design perspective. The bedspread should complement the colors and other design elements in the room, but it should be durable and easy to maintain.

There are two main styles of bedspreads—throw spreads and tailored spreads. Tailored spreads fit the corners of the mattress snugly, whereas throw spreads bulge at the corners at the foot of the bed.

A bedspread may reach to the floor, covering the mattress, box springs, and the frame, or it may be a coverlet that covers only the mattress. If a coverlet is used, a dust ruffle is added to the bed to cover the box springs and the frame. A dust ruffle is a pleated cloth skirting that extends around the sides and foot of the bed. This decorative fabric is often sewn onto a muslin fabric that is placed between the mattress and box springs, thus holding the dust ruffle securely in place. The dust ruffle is normally cleaned when the bedspread is cleaned.

In a formal setting, the bed is also decorated with **shams**. Shams are pillow covers that match the fabric used in the bedspread.

In an informal setting, the bed is often covered with a quilted comforter that does double duty as a bedspread and a blanket.

Fabric Materials and Construction

Synthetic materials such as polyester have come to dominate the commercial bedspread market. Dust ruffles are often cotton/polyester blend products.

Most hotels would prefer to have a washable bedspread fabric that is guaranteed to maintain its shape through repeated washings. When purchasing new bedspreads, use one for a trial sample to ensure that it does not shrink, fade, or wrinkle. All spreads should be fire retardant.

Size

As has already been mentioned, a full-sized bedspread just touches the floor, while a **coverlet** or **duvet** covers the top of the dust ruffle. Coverlets are easier to handle and they fit better into the washer and dryer, but to place a dust ruffle on the bed requires the mattress to be removed.

Duvet covers are now preferred to any other bed covering in the better hotels. The better duvet covers are stuffed with goose down. Westin's "W" Hotels, a boutique chain, is often credited with popularizing the "overstuffed" bed look. Its bed linens have become so popular that they are available for sale to their guests.

Par Levels

The par level for bedspreads, coverlets, comforters, and dust ruffles should be one plus 10 percent.

Pillows

It seems as though everyone has a different opinion as to what is a good pillow. Some prefer soft pillows, and others prefer hard pillows. One camp holds that to be truly comfortable a pillow must be filled with goose down, whereas others contend that polyester will do just as well.

Natural Fills

The standard by which all other fills are measured is down—specifically, goose down from the European variety of goose. Goose down consists of the small, soft feathers found on a goose or duck. Duck down is considered to be inferior to goose down. Using goose down alone to fill a pillow is prohibitively expensive, so the larger down feathers from ducks are blended together with the goose down in most instances.

Down or down/feather blends are found only in the most upscale hotels.

Synthetic Fills

Synthetic fiber pillows have become the widely accepted norm throughout the United States. Polyester fibers lead the market in the synthetic category. In addition to the aforementioned cost advantage, synthetic fibers can be laundered, and fewer individuals are allergic to them as compared with down and feathers. A few rare individuals are allergic to synthetic fills, so every property should have a few down/feather pillows in its inventory.

A well-made pillow should be resilient, evenly filled (no lumps), and not too heavy (heavier pillows are

an indication of inferior synthetic fibers); the fill and cover should be fire retardant, and the **ticking** should be stain- and waterproof.

The materials used in the construction of a pillow are printed on a label that is required by law.

Mattress Covers

Mattress covers serve two purposes: They provide a padded layer between the guest and the mattress, making for a more restful sleep, and they protect the mattress from stains resulting from spills and from incontinence or sick guests.

Mattress covers should be changed whenever the guest checks out.

Quilted Pads

All-cotton quilted pads are very expensive. One problem associated with quilted pads is the tendency of the diagonal threads to break after a few washings, which allows the fill to shift and the pad to become lumpy.

All-cotton pads tend to shrink from 15 to 20 percent, so it is imperative to allow for this shrinkage when purchasing pads.

Felt Pads

The preferred pad for hotels is the 100 percent polyester felt pad. There is less than 2 percent shrinkage with this pad. The pad does not pucker or become lumpy; it is also far less expensive than any quilted pad, and it can be moisture-proofed.

All mattress covers should meet the federal standard FF-4-72 for fire retardancy.

Vinyl

Vinyl covers are more appropriate for hospital applications. The newer generation of vinyl covers can even be washed like cloth and can be sterilized.

Bath and Table Linens

The quality of a hotel's bath and table linen is a remarkably accurate indicator of the hotel's class and price level. The thicker the towels, the more expensive the accommodations.

Bath Linens

The intended purpose of a bath towel is to absorb water, but a towel is often used by the guest as a rag to wipe up spills or as a shine cloth for shoes. Considering the abuse that hotel towels receive, it really is a wonder that, according to one major linen manufacturer, the average hotel uses only 12 towels for one hotel room per year.

This figure represents loss from normal wear and tear, permanent staining, and theft.

In this section we will also examine cloth bath mats and shower curtains.

Fabric Materials and Construction

The standard hotel bath linen is a white terry cloth towel that is a blend of cotton/polyester fibers.

Terry cloth towels are woven on a loom. The fibers running lengthwise in the towel (the **ground warp**) are usually a blend of two parts polyester and one part cotton. Polyester in the warp gives the towel its strength and helps to minimize shrinkage.

Pile warp is the yarn that runs lengthwise in the towel that make the terry loops on both sides of the towel's surface. These fibers should be 100 percent cotton for absorbency. The filling or weft is the yarn that runs horizontally across the towel. The filling should be 100 percent cotton. The **selvage** is the side edge of a towel or other woven fabric. It is a flat surface with no pile warp.

Towels, like sheets, can be sold as either firsts or seconds. Seconds are usually caused by a thick filling thread, a dropped warp or filling thread, or an uneven hem or border. These types of defects in no way impair the absorbency or durability of a towel. Therefore, many hotels willingly use towel seconds.

Bath mats are made in the same way as a terry towel, but the material is much heavier.

The best type of shower curtain for a commercial operation is a curtain made of 260 **denier** nylon. This type of curtain is better than any plastic curtain because it is easier to maintain, it resists mildew, it does not become stiff or brittle over time, it does not show soap stains as readily, and it is available in a multitude of colors.

The best protection against soap stains and mildew is to use a vinyl liner with a curtain. Do not use clear vinyl liners because these will show soap stains. Use a white or pastel-colored vinyl. The vinyl should be a minimum 6-gauge thickness. Plastic snap hooks are better than other types of plastic hooks or metal hooks.

Size

The standard size for a good quality towel is 25" × 50". An average size for a face towel is 16" × 27". A good bath mat will measure 22" × 34", and decent size for a washcloth is 12" × 12".

Towels and washcloths can be found in larger or smaller sizes than the above recommendations. The selection of a particular towel size should be based on marketing considerations.

Par Levels

A reasonable bath linen par level for a hotel with its own laundry is 3½. If the laundry must be sent off the premises, the par level should be increased to 4½.

TABLE 7.2 Model Hotel Par Requirements

	Rooms Breakdown			
	Rooms	Furniture	Total Beds	Pillow Requirement
Suites	5	1 king bed		3/Bed
Kings	13	1 king bed		3/Bed
Parlors	15	1 queen bed		2/Bed
Double-Doubles	320	2 double beds		2/Bed
Total	353	20 roll-away beds (use double sheets)		1/Bed Total pillows + 10 percent

	Bed and Bath Linen			
	1 Par	3.5 Par	Price	Cost
Sheets				
King			\$12.00	
Queen			9.50	
Double			7.50	
Pillowcases			1.50	
Bath towels			3.00	
Hand towels			1.10	
Washcloths			0.40	
Bath mats			2.80	
1/Room				
Bed pads			7.70	
(1 par + 10 percent)				
Blankets			28.00	
(1 par + 10 percent)				
Pillows			7.80	
(1 par + 10 percent)				
Totals				

The information given in Table 7.2 refers to the model hotel. Room configuration and other criteria, including approximate prices per item, are given. Use this information as an exercise to determine linen pars and to develop an approximate cost of initial supplies.

Table Linens

In the food business, first impressions are lasting ones. Because success in this business depends so heavily on repeat business, the astute operator wants to make a first-time impression that will cause customers to come back again and again.

The focal point in most food service operations is the tabletop. It should look as pleasing as the menu, and nothing adds to this scene more than crisp, clean **napery** (table linens).

Fabric Materials and Construction

There are two dominant types of materials used for tablecloths and napkins: momie cloth and damask.

Momie cloth is normally a 50/50 cotton/polyester plain weave cloth that is relatively inexpensive, durable, and fairly colorfast, and does not pill or attract lint.

Damask is made using a twill weave. It can be divided into three categories: linen damask, cotton damask, and cotton/polyester damask blend. Linen is superior in appearance to the other two, but it is considerably more expensive. The cotton/polyester damask has the same advantages of the 50/50 momie cloth, but it has a better appearance and looks better after laundering.

Cotton/polyester blends are expected to shrink an average of 3 percent, as compared with cotton alone, which will shrink an average of 12 percent. Blended napery is expected to last up to four times as long as cotton alone. Ordinary cotton napkins should last for 34 launderings, and cotton tablecloths should last for 32 launderings on the average. Blends dry faster and are easier to iron.

Size

The drape of a tablecloth should be a minimum of 8 inches all around the table. Table 7.3 is a listing of some

of the standard sizes for tables and tablecloths. This table is meant only to serve as a guide; only a designer or table manufacturer can give you a plan that you can depend upon.

Change Agents

Stephen Ashkin

PRESIDENT
THE ASHKIN GROUP

Stephen Ashkin is principal of The Ashkin Group, a consulting firm focused on creating healthy, high-performing indoor environments through “greening” the cleaning process and products. Robert Gottlieb’s new book, *Environmentalism Unbound* (publisher, date), describes Stephen Ashkin as the “leading advocate for a stronger environmental profile among cleaning product manufacturers and suppliers” and “the most visible industry figure advancing the cause of environmentally preferable products.”

Ashkin has served as the chairman of the task force that wrote the national cleaning standard, *Standard Guide on Stewardship for Cleaning Commercial and Institutional Buildings* (ASTME, 1971), and introduced the concept of “green” cleaning into the commercial cleaning industry. He is a founding member of the president’s Green Chemistry Challenge Awards Program and judge for the White House: Closing the Circle Awards. He is actively involved with federal agencies (i.e., EPA, U.S. General Services Administration, Department of Interior), as well as numerous state (i.e., Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts) and local efforts to develop guidance on green cleaning. He is a past member of the board of directors of the U.S. Green Building Council and contributing author of the Council’s *Green Building Rating System*; he is currently working on the *LEED Standard for Existing Buildings* to incorporate green cleaning credits. He is the co-author of Pennsylvania’s *Green Building Maintenance Manual* and the *Sustainable Building Technical Manual: Green Building Design, Construction and Operation*. An internationally known speaker, radio personality, and author, Ashkin has written more than 75 articles on green cleaning, indoor air quality, sick building syndrome, protecting health, and more. He was selected to the Power 50 by the Indoor Environment Review as one of the 50 most influential people in the indoor environment industry.

His other related activities include serving as technical advisor to the Center for the New American Dream, Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG), member of EPA’s Working Group on Healthy Schools, and lead author for Green Seal’s environmentally preferable cleaning program, and assisting in developing several green product standards. Ashkin is the founder of the not-for-profit Internet Initiative for Children’s Health and the Environment, which brings together children’s environmental health professionals and advocates, such as the EPA, with major mainstream Internet firms such as AOL, WebMD, and Medscape to disseminate critical information necessary to protect children from environmental threats.

TABLE 7.3 Tabletop and Tablecloth Sizes

Seating	Top Size	Cloth Size
Table for 2	36" × 36"	54" × 54"
Table for 4	45" × 45"	64" × 64"
Table for 6	54" × 54"	72" × 72"
Table for 8	60" round	90" × 90"
Table for 10	66" round	90" × 90"

Par Levels

Par levels will vary depending on the number of covers forecasted, hours of operation, number of meal periods open, and frequency of the launderings.

However, as a rule of thumb in a new operation, there should be a par of four tablecloths per table and nine to twelve napkins per table. These par levels should do if the restaurant is open for two meals, and a 24-hour laundry service is available.

Uniforms

Many hotel departments have uniformed employees. In some cases, each department maintains its own individual supply inventories of uniforms; in other cases, the housekeeping department is custodian of uniforms used throughout the hotel. If the housekeeping department is custodian of all uniforms, a large secure storage space, along with worktables and repair capability, are necessary.

Uniforms may be processed in the laundry daily and be issued each workday as the employees report to work. Some uniforms may be subcustodied to specific employees who maintain their own uniforms. Some

Executive Profile

Mary Ann Washington *Team of Olympians*

This winter, much of the world's attention was focused upon the city that Mary Ann Washington has grown to love: Salt Lake City, Utah. Just as Olympic athletes spend countless hours of their days training, Mary Ann Washington has worked her way through the ranks to provide similar resources for her employees at the four hospitals throughout the Urban Central District of the IHC system.

by Andi M. Vance, Editor, *Executive Housekeeping Today*

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A pilgrim in many respects, Washington initiated her career in Jackson, Mississippi. She started as a housekeeper at St. Dominic's Hospital in 1970, and it only took a few months for her manager, Jessie Richardson, to recognize Washington's potential. Richardson promoted Washington to a supervisory position only six months later, despite the protest of her staff. Those with seniority in the department felt that Washington was too young to be a supervisor. Washington strove to prove them wrong.

Richardson, a member of N.E.H.A. (now I.E.H.A.), harnessed Washington's aptitude and guided her in the right direction. "She [Richardson] saw my potential before I did," remembers Washington. "I knew that she really liked the spirit of the housekeeping department, but she became my mentor. She helped introduce me to things I wouldn't have been aware of otherwise."

During this period, Richardson introduced Washington to I.E.H.A. Since then, Washington hasn't looked back.

Already immersed up to her waist in work both day and night, Washington decided to embrace more responsibility by taking N.E.H.A. certification classes offered at Hinds Jr. College in Jackson. "I started my Certified Executive Housekeeper (CEH) certification in 1977," she remembers. "It was not an easy task, as all classes were not readily available. Back then, things weren't as organized as they are today. During this time, I would have to travel to various locations to attend classes at night. As I reflect on those times, it was difficult, but it was all worth it."

Ten years later, Washington packed up her bags and left many of her good friends and family in search of a change. While she loved the familiarity and hometown feel of Jackson, she yearned to experience life elsewhere. Landing in Salt Lake City, Utah, in January of 1980, she took one look at the surrounding mountains and discovered a sense of peace. "Moving from the South to Utah was a tremendous culture shock," she remembers of her arrival. "This city was so clean. The mountains took my breath away and the people were so relaxed and laid back. I soon felt comfortable and right at home."

Only a month later, Washington returned to her career in housekeeping at LDS Hospital (Latter Day Saints). At the time, ServiceMaster managed the housekeeping services. Once again, it took only a few months for her supervisor to recognize her potential. Soon after, she accepted a position as a supervisor, which switched her employer from LDS to ServiceMaster.

In 1986, Washington was promoted to a managerial position at Cottonwood Hospital, another hospital in the IHC system. She worked at this 220-bed hospital until 1989, when housekeeping management returned to an in-house department. While she was required to reapply for her

own position, Washington remained at Cottonwood in a management capacity.

That same year, the position for Manager of Housekeeping operations opened at LDS hospital. Since she'd last worked at the hospital, refurbishment had enhanced the overall appearance of the 520-bed facility. Eager to accept the challenge of changing the image of the department, Washington applied for the position.

"I now know that I am at my best when challenged," Washington says with a laugh. "I had come full circle, having worked at LDS Hospital, then leaving, and finally returning to where I first began. This time, however, everything had changed—new people, flooring, walls and fabrics. It was a whole new ballgame."

The Framework for Success

One of Washington's primary goals in accepting the new position was to help develop a sense of pride amongst her staff. With high turnover rates, something needed to be done in order to maintain staffing levels. Changing the image of the Environmental Services (ES) department meant a complete restructuring of current methodologies. First, Washington worked with her assistants to assure that everything was in place according to IHC's policies and guidelines. Next, she worked with others within the system to develop a training program to devise schedules that were equitable for all employees.

"It was a measurement tool for us," she comments. "We feel that if you can show employees that their schedules are similar to other persons' schedules, then you'll have more buy-in to getting them to perform other functions throughout the department. They need to know it's a team effort."

Standardizing all of the uniforms was another initiative taken in the restructuring. Washington worked with administrators and staff to enhance the workers' image by providing them with new professional attire. This also worked to create a sense of unity amongst the staff. In conjunction with the new uniforms, the staff provided input for a new department logo, slogan, and mission statement. Their new mission statement reads as follows: "Environmental Services is dedicated to providing all customers with responsible and dependable services, and a clean and safe environment."

Another key program developed to reduce turnover levels at LDS was a career-pathing system. While turnover plagued the entire nation, Washington worked with other managers to address the problem. A training program was developed, which provided staff with cross-training knowledge so they could perform numerous functions throughout the department. Specific levels were instituted, which carried specific job titles. Titles ranged from housekeeper to housekeeping specialist. Floor care specialists were designated, as were team leaders. In order to ascend to the next level upon recommendation, testing was given in order to assess the individual's skill level. When an employee passed all the requirements, a five-percent wage increase was distributed.

The Evolution of a System

In three years much changed in the world of environmental services. The IHC system restructured to keep in line with the developments in the healthcare industry change in direction with HMO's and hospital consolidations. The staff was gathered and the name of the department changed to Urban Central Region Environmental Services. Three hospitals existed in the new consortium: AltaView, Cottonwood and LDS. Recently, Wasatch Canyons Hospital was added to the list. Washington maintains ES operations over these four facilities.

"Housekeeping is always an area everyone feels can accept cuts. As managers, we must cut costs and upgrade quality. Thanks to high morale, proper ownership and training, we were in a position to go another level," Washington remarks.

Through the Corvo computer program (trademark for Enterprise Responsibility Management), supervisors at all three facilities in the Urban Central Region maintain a network of instant data and information. Washington is able to instantly gain information regarding discharges, inventory and more.

"Corvo provides a single point of contact for the customer to reach the ES, Security or Engineering. It efficiently distributes workload to available and responsible parties," says Washington. These are the types of programs that will gain prominence in the future. Then you can track how many discharges you have in a day. It's LIVE data. So when you're asking for more full-time equivalents (FTE's), you need data to show what the workloads are. That's the kind of information that managers are going to need in order to provide for their employees and the administration."

Use of robotic technology is another way that IHC has kept abreast of industry trends. After extensive research, Washington recommended to system administration the purchase of a floor care robot. She found that use of the robot would save time and money.

"It was a big leap of faith to recommend going with it," Washington admits. "But now, years later, we still have it here. We find it to be very productive and efficient."

STEP Program

Washington sincerely cares about the development of her employees. While she initiated the career-pathing program at LDS, she has since worked with a task force to enhance some of its attributes. The result was the STEP Rate Program employed throughout the Urban Central region. According to Washington, the program encourages appropriate performance and on-the-job education by providing participants with the opportunity for supervisor/employee review of performance. Various criteria are evaluated in regard to an employee's performance: attendance, adherence to procedures, dress code, public relations skills, assuring compliance, educational requirements, etc. Once every three months, each employee sits down with either his or her immediate supervisor or Washington. If he or she doesn't meet each set of criteria established, the employee will not receive a wage increase.

"The program holds everyone accountable, but it is definitely rewarding for the employees. There's a lot of paperwork involved, particularly

Conclusion

In her over 20 years in the industry, Washington has gained a wealth of experience and knowledge. She's served on both local and district levels of the Association, which has helped further advance her knowledge and skill level. By paying close attention to the development of her teammates and instituting programs with proven success, Washington has helped develop a team with Olympic potential.

initially. But now, if the employees aren't called down for their three-month meeting, they're asking, "What's going on?" They really look forward to it now.

"I think the employees need to have their performance recognized regularly. They need to receive that feedback and be recognized and rewarded for the things they contribute. We want to keep our people here."

I.E.H.A. also plays a role in the development of department supervisors. "One requirement for all supervisors in the Urban Central is that they must be certified with I.E.H.A.," Washington acknowledges. "Even if they have degrees, they must attend certain classes and there is a particular curriculum that they must complete before becoming a supervisor. So now, all of our eight full-time supervisors are Certified Executive Housekeepers."

She continues, "I try to mentor my supervisors. Housekeeping is a career. You can advance yourself if you apply yourself. That's what I try to encourage in my staff as well. Go and take classes, go to night school, try to get into something you really like. If you're going to be in it, try and apply yourself to be whatever you can be."

By promoting within, Washington displays her dedication to each employee's development. At the moment, her entire staff is composed of employees who have worked their way up through the ranks. "We hire people into our department, we tell them about I.E.H.A. and give them ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, and we try to really promote our staff. This is reiterated throughout the entire department, from supervisors to frontline staff."

hotels have uniform services provided by companies that purchase, launder or dry clean, and provide five par of uniforms for each employee on a weekly basis. The hotel must pay a premium for this service, since the servicing company must purchase 11 uniforms for each new employee when hired.

The simplest, most cost-effective method of administering a uniform program is for each department to maintain its own uniforms and to subcustody them to employees at the time of employment, allowing each employee to care for the uniforms issued.

Housekeeping uniforms need not be unattractive or uncomfortable. They should fit well and allow for freedom of movement, since much reaching and bending is involved in housekeeping work. A sleeveless dress with a short-sleeved blouse or shirt is a must, and a pocket or two is always helpful. Cotton is best for comfort, but polyester fabrics are the most plentiful. The quality of the GRA's and the senior housekeeper's uniforms should be similar, but color distinctions may be made. An inventory of four different uniforms is appropriate for housekeeping personnel: GRA (female), housekeeping aide (male), supervisor (female), supervisor (male).

A reasonable uniform program would allow for the issue of two uniforms to each employee upon employment and an issue of a third uniform after completion of a probationary work period. Should uniforms become damaged or worn out as a result of work, they should be replaced. Carelessness that causes destruction of uniforms should be the subject of counseling or disciplinary action.

The law requires that employees who are required to clean their own uniforms be compensated. The law suggests that laundry service in the hotel laundry might be a reasonable alternative to an outlay of cash. A total inventory of uniforms should include about five par, the rest being available to fit new employees or to provide replacements for the staff. Sizes range from very small (4–6–8) to very large (22–24). It is a difficult task, however, to maintain a correctly sized inventory.

Summary

Decisions that are made regarding the purchase and use of assets without a sufficient investigation into the char-

acteristics and qualities of those assets can seriously affect the profit picture.

Costs for linens and their maintenance need to be continually assessed in order to determine if the right decisions were reached and to avoid the repetition of costly mistakes. In addition, the costs for linens should always be evaluated on a cost per room per day basis, never on a cost per pound basis. If linen costs are evalu-

ated on a cost per room per day basis, the level of consumption by the guest can also be addressed in the formula.

Linen maintenance and replacement is an ongoing cost of doing business; it is the housekeeping manager's responsibility to ensure that these costs remain reasonable while continuing to meet the guest's expectations.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Bedding

Linens

Uniforms

Dust ruffles

Muslin

Percale

Warp

Weft

Filling

Thread count

Tensile strength

Gray goods

Mercerizing

Sanforizing

Seconds

Torn sheet

Finished sheet

Par

Shams

Coverlet

Duvet

Ticking

Ground warp

Pile warp

Selvage

Denier

Napery

DISCUSSION AND REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Draw up a list of specifications for a guestroom attendant's uniform.
2. Explain the criteria that you would use to evaluate the performance of bedding materials for a hotel.
3. What are the advantages to all-white bath linens that have no logo? Can you see any disadvantages to this type of product?
4. How would you establish a par level for the napery in a new dining room? What criteria would you use to set the same par level for an existing operation?