3.15 Laundry Protocol for Washing Linens Contaminated with an Emerging Infectious Disease (EID) Agent

Purpose: To prevent the exposure of laundry personnel to an EID agent when laundering linens contaminated by EID patients.

Audience: Nursing and laundry personnel.

Policy Statement:

I. Preparing linen for transport and handling soiled linen during transport to the laundry.
   A. Laundry from an EID patient will be placed in a color-coded laundry bag in the patient’s room.
   B. Transport of linen
      1. Linen will be transported taking care to avoid opening or bursting the bags during transport.
      2. Gloves will be worn for handling laundry bags. After gloves are removed, hands will be washed with an antiseptic soap or an alcohol hand rub will be applied to the hands.

II. Handling soiled linens from EID patients at the laundry.
   A. Laundry personnel who unload the laundry bags from the transport vehicle should wear gloves.
   B. Bags should be placed where they will be opened and where the laundry will be placed into the washers.
   C. Personnel should then remove their gloves and wash their hands with an antimicrobial soap or apply an alcohol hand rub.
   D. Prior to opening laundry bags, personnel will don an N-95 mask for SARS or avian influenza or a surgical mask for swine influenza, goggles, gown and gloves.
   E. Laundry should not be sorted before placing it into the washing machine.
   F. When removing laundry from bags and placing it into washing machines, it should not be shaken or otherwise handled it in a manner that would aerosolize infectious particles.
   G. Personal protective equipment (PPE) must be removed in such a manner as to avoid self contamination from secretions.
on the outside surfaces of the PPE. (See Policy 3.2 Isolation of Patients with an Emerging Infectious Disease [EID] or a Possible EID).

III. Decontamination of surfaces with which contaminated laundry comes into contact.

A. Contaminated surfaces (e.g. areas with which personnel's hands come into contact or areas on the outside of the washing machine with which laundry may have come into contact) should be cleaned and decontaminated with a hospital grade disinfectant.

B. Personnel who decontaminate surfaces should wear a gown and gloves.

C. After decontamination, gown and gloves should be removed in such a way as to avoid contamination of hands with an EID agent from the outside surfaces of the gown and gloves.

D. Hands should be washed with an antiseptic soap and water or an alcohol hand rub applied.

IV. No further precautions are necessary, because when the laundry is removed from the washing machine, it will have been decontaminated by the washing process.