

Department Takes Charge And Maintains Quality

Englewood Hospital and Medical Center brings laundering in-house and effectively protects microfiber investment

By Jon DePaolis

When it comes to cleaning at hospitals, microfiber mops are essential to the cleaning arsenal. At least, that is the opinion of Bill Irwin, director of environmental services at Englewood Hospital and Medical Center in New Jersey.

With approximately 1 million square feet of cleanable space — 90 percent of which is hard floors — an efficient mopping program is key. But for years, the department used traditional cotton string mops and sent laundry off-site for cleaning.

“We had to send the mops out to a small laundry service,” says Irwin. “They did their job, but it was a process. We were basically at their mercy as to when our mops would be returned.”

He adds that working with an outside company was just another element to worry about. Which is why, when the department transitioned to 18-inch microfiber mopping products two and a half years ago, Irwin researched new laundering options.

“You never get the same mops back [when using an outside service],” says

Irwin. “Also, they are not always washed or laundered to the correct temperatures, which limits the life of microfiber.”

To make sure their microfiber was protected, Irwin brought the laundering process on-site. Right after purchasing new mops, the department invested in a Miele Professional washer and dryer.

“Now we have much better control,” says Irwin.

Streamlining Processes

Like most environmental services (EVS) departments, Irwin has a strict policy of using one microfiber mop in each patient room. Doing so eliminates the potential of cross-contamination or germ transmission.

The EVS team at Englewood Hospital follows a very streamlined mopping process. When arranging carts, workers identify how many rooms will be cleaned and the microfiber is counted out and added to a bucket of solution, so the mops are ready for use when needed.

“We use far less water and the dry time on flooring is much quicker,” says Irwin.

Once floors have been cleaned,

workers are trained to remove soiled mop heads and place them in a separate bag on the cleaning cart. The soiled microfiber is then delivered to the supply room for laundering.

According to Irwin, the multi-programmable Miele machines were set up during installation to specifically clean the products being used at Englewood Hospital. For example, using information about the microfiber used on site, the machines were programmed to clean at a certain temperature.

“The Miele machines are infinitely programmable,” says Irwin. “I was watching the gentleman who set them up, and it was pretty amazing. They take the information right off the mops, and program the temperature of the machine.”

In addition to temperature, the machines self-feed premeasured chemicals into the laundering process. Irwin simply places the microfiber into the machine, sets the dial and lets the machine do the rest of the work.

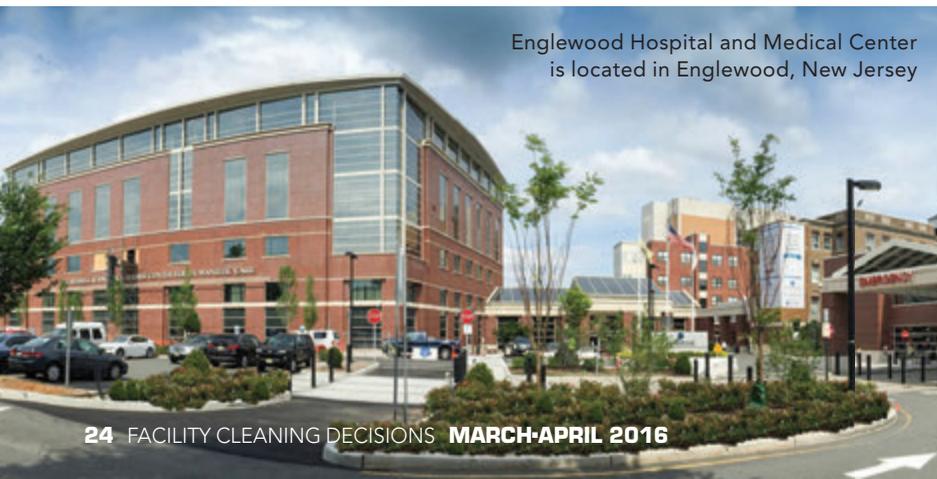
“We fill the washer up three-fourths of the way, which holds about 100 to 120 mops,” he says. “The machine is so easy to use.”

In fact, the simplicity associated with the machines is a big benefit for Irwin. It makes training staff quick and easy. He is also reassured that the staff won't be handling any chemicals and the correct amount will be used every time.

Proven Results

When it comes to microfiber, the biggest threat to its effectiveness is heat. High heats will melt the microscopic fibers,

Englewood Hospital and Medical Center is located in Englewood, New Jersey



clogging the tiny gaps in the textile that collect and contain dirt, rendering them useless. This is common during the drying process if heats are set too high, or if the textile is left to sit on hot dryer drums.

Irwin doesn't worry about this because he is confident that his Miele machines are set up based on the specific temperature needed to clean and dry the microfiber used throughout the hospital.

"After the mops are laundered, they pretty much look brand new," he says.

Of course, mop heads do need to be replaced from time to time. But of those he's had to replace — of which there has only been a few — most were due to rips. They were not a result of damage done by the machines. In fact, purchasing of mop heads has been cut substantially.

Irwin comments that, at one point, the department was placing re-orders weekly. But now, the microfiber mops are lasting far longer and he credits the laundering process for the savings.

"The return on investment with these

machines has been well worth it," he says. "Once you get the machines in there for a while, you're really not buying mops on a frequent basis."

In addition to controlling purchasing expenses, the department has reported other benefits in the form of water savings. According to the manufacturer, departments can experience up to 50 percent savings on water and energy utility costs with this equipment.

Tried And True

During his more than 20 years in the industry, Irwin has used various laundry systems successfully. So when the department at Englewood Hospital decided to bring laundry in-house, they did their homework. In the end, the manufacturer support from Miele and the equipment's programmable features were too great to overlook.

The company also offers a reputable service guarantee. For example, Irwin was told that if there were ever a problem

with the machine, Miele could get a technician out there within 24 hours. This is important in healthcare where cleaning is being done around-the-clock.

There was one time Irwin did have to put this service guarantee to the test. Turns out, the equipment was so effective at pulling dirt from the microfiber that the debris was clogging the pumps. Technicians were immediately sent in to install a filter system to catch the dirt. Now, workers simply empty and wash the filter after laundering.

Given his satisfaction with the products, Irwin says he recommends the brand to other facility executives.

"It made a firm believer out of me," he says. "I never wanted to wash mops in my department. We have enough work to do. But these machines are so easy to use and you can see the amount of debris being removed from the microfiber. It's unbelievable." **FCD**

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