Home laundry of surgical attire

Recently, a facility was cited by CMS because of home laundry of surgical attire.

AORN in their most recent recommendation opposes home laundry of surgical attire and recommends that the attire is laundered in an accredited healthcare laundry or a healthcare approved laundry facility. Commercial laundry facilities are able to provide higher water temperatures, documentation of chemicals and temperatures and rinse cycles for their wash loads.

Transport of laundered items back to the facility must be accomplished in a manner that prevents contamination.

Recently there has been increasing attention in the news about research findings of the microbial contamination of health care worker attire.

The CDC Guideline for the Prevention of Surgical Site Infection very briefly addresses laundering of surgical attire. In the section of the guideline titled “recommendations” Section e, surgical attire and drapes it states: “No recommendations on how or where to launder scrub suits, on restricting use of scrub suits to the operating suite, or for covering scrub suits when out of the operating suite. Unresolved issue”

Based on the recommendations of professional organizations such as AORN, and the published research about the microbial burden on the attire of health care workers, the option of home laundered surgical attire may be short lived.

If your facility does home laundering of surgical attire, your policy should address the parameters of the laundry process such as temperature, bleach use etc and the requirement that the attire is returned to the facility in a manner that prevents contamination. Very few home washing machines have the capability of providing the water temperatures found in commercial laundry facilities.

For your policy, you would not reference AORN, since AORN is on the record for being opposed to home laundry. Citing the CDC Guideline for Prevention of Surgical Site Infection would be your best option.