



Housekeeping

By Gail Edwards, CHHE

Remembering to clean those often-missed spots in guestrooms

*Another great article from The Rooms Chronicle, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! ***Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.*** College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com*

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There is no doubt that guests insist upon clean guestrooms during their hotel stay. Research studies continually prove this, guest advocacy groups keep preaching this, and even as hotel managers ourselves we check for evidence of cleanliness when we arrive in our guestroom as part of our vacation or business trip. And it is no surprise that the most common places guests initially check for cleanliness are the bathtub, toilet and sink, the bed linens, and the mirror and counter surfaces.

With this being common knowledge in the hotel housekeeping profession, why is it that so many housekeeping managers fail to maintain cleanliness standards in various trouble spots of the guestroom? This article serves as a reminder about the need to attend to those areas that room attendants frequently miss when servicing a guestroom.

Shower curtains and liners

It is easy to understand why many room attendants fail to properly clean bathtub shower curtains. Unless the housekeeper stands inside the bathtub to wash and wipe down the tub walls and surfaces, she will probably never see the inside of the shower curtain liner. Aside from the hair, soap and shampoo buildup that accumulates on the liner, a major concern is mildew growth.

To prevent mildew it is essential that the room attendant spray the liner with a bleach disinfectant and wipe it down with a damp rag to remove unwanted debris and prevent scum buildup. ProGel is a gelatinized bleach solution that can be substituted for spray disinfectant. Squeeze a dollop of ProGel on a sponge and wipe down the inside of the liner. Next, the shower curtain liner should be rinsed clean with water and then wiped dry with a different but clean housekeeping rag. Mildew growth is a result of moisture being left on the liner.

Based on occupancy levels, shower curtains and liners should be laundered on a rotational basis. During high occupancy periods, each shower curtain and liner should be removed from the shower curtain rod for laundering. Every day, each room attendant should replace three shower curtain setups as part of her 16 guestroom-cleaning requirement. Maintaining extra par stock to swap out the liner and curtain will prolong the use life of these items in the long run.

Pulled and dirty shower curtains and liners should be sent to the hotel's on-premise laundry. Shower curtains should be laundered separately from their respective liners using a non-chlorinated laundry detergent. If possible, launder eight curtains or liners at a time in a household-type washing machine using one cup of detergent (I like to use Tide) on the delicate cycle for 10-17 minutes. Unfortunately, the centrifugal force of large, drum-style commercial extractors is too forceful and tends to deteriorate the structural integrity of the liner and curtains.

After laundering, shake the excessive water from the curtains or liners and place in the dryer for a maximum of 25-30 seconds, set at medium temperature. This will sufficiently dry the curtains or liners without melting or scorching them. Immediately pull from the dryer while still warm and place flat on a six-foot folding table. Smooth out any wrinkles by hand and fold into a six square for storage. Curtains and liners must be folded while still warm to prevent wrinkling.

Dust, then vacuum

Too often it seems that room attendants fail to dust the guestroom from top to bottom. Synthetic and feather dusters are fine for high areas and for lamps, but a diaper-style rag dampened with water works well for most hard surfaces other than glass. Damp rags pick up the dust instead of spreading it onto another surface.

Hot tip

Train room attendants to pull open the draperies, turn on all lights, lamps, and televisions, and to turn off the alarm mode of any alarm clocks after they enter a guestroom. This will allow them to inspect for any window damage, ensure that no bulbs are burnt out or lamps are unplugged, and prevent an unoccupied room's alarm clock from waking others in the middle of the night.

To prevent injury to herself, a housekeeper should never use a damp rag to dust light bulbs, lamp shades or televisions; use a feather duster only after turning off the appliance.

All dusting should be done starting with the highest surfaces and working down after the guestroom has been serviced. Don't forget to dust exposed pipes under the bathroom sink, as this is another area that is often overlooked. Finally, the room attendant should vacuum the guestroom carpet starting at the farthest edge and working her way out the guestroom door.

Other overlooked tasks

There are four other cleaning tasks that many room attendants fail to properly complete. First, the ice bucket should be emptied and rinsed if it has been used. Always replace with a fresh plastic liner; never leave a used ice bucket liner for the guest to reuse.

Next, if the guestroom is so equipped, unplug and thoroughly clean the coffee pot and rinse out its water reservoir. Pull the coffee maker from the corner of the counter or table and clean under and behind where it sits. Unfortunately, some in-room coffeemakers are prone to overflow if they get too hot. But many housekeepers do not realize this and fail to ever pull the coffeemaker away from the spot it occupies on a counter. Hence, they never clean under or behind it.

This same rationale applies to amenity baskets and trays typically found on bathroom vanities. It is easy for water, soap, and other oversprays to leach underneath and discolor countertop surfaces if left unchecked.

Finally, in-room microwaves and refrigerators (to include the icebox section) should be cleaned thoroughly both inside and out with every room turn. No one wants to open the door to these appliances and find remnants of the previous guests' stay staring them in the face. ✧

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