



Long-Term Care Regulatory Technical Memorandum

Number: TM 2021-01 (ALF)
Title: Laundry Facility Requirements in Assisted Living Facilities
Provider Types: Assisted Living Facility (ALF)
TAC Reference: 26 TAC §§553.104(j)(1), 553.132(q), 553.142(q), 553.232(q), and 553.242(q)
Date Issued: August 31, 2021

1.0 Subject and Purpose

This technical memorandum (TM) provides guidance on the interpretation of, and compliance with, the requirements for preventing cross-contamination while processing laundry and for the design and construction of laundry facilities in large ALFs that co-mingle laundry and process all laundry in a central location, as established in Texas Administrative Code, Title 26 (26 TAC), Chapter 553, Licensing Standards for Assisted Living Facilities,¹ in §§553.104(j)(1), 553.132(q), 553.142(q), 553.232(q) and 553.242(q).

The guidance provided in this TM cannot address every unique condition or configuration related to the handling of laundry. Compliance can only be evaluated based upon the particular on-site conditions in each situation. This TM applies only to the provisions of 26 TAC §§553.104(j)(1), 553.132(q), 553.142(q), 553.232(q), and 553.242(q) specifically addressed herein. It does not constitute a substantive change to any provision of §§553.104, 553.132, 553.142, 553.232, or 553.242. Nor does it address or modify any other rule in Chapter 553 or other legal requirement to which an assisted living facility is subject, including requirements for approval by a local authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) for enforcement of its own standards.

Graphics included in this TM are for visual illustration only. They are not intended to show an “approved” or “recommended” condition.

2.0 Policy Details & Provider Responsibilities

This TM clarifies that all ALFs, including new and existing², small and large³, and Type A and Type B, must develop and follow procedures to avoid cross contamination between clean and soiled processes, including the handling of linens. Large ALFs that launder the apparel or linens of two or more individuals together in a central location must meet additional requirements, as described in sections [2.3](#) of this document.

2.1 Co-mingling Laundry

HHSC considers an ALF to be co-mingling laundry if the ALF launders the apparel or linens of two or more individuals together.⁴

When an ALF provides table linens in communal or private dining rooms, bed linens, or towels, and launders the table linens, bed linens, or towels together, HHSC also considers this co-mingling.

An ALF is not required to provide laundry services for residents, nor is it required to co-mingle laundry. An ALF can choose to provide laundry services for residents or to co-mingle laundry.

A small ALF that co-mingles laundry is not required to comply with sections [2.2](#), [2.3](#) or [2.4](#) of this document. However, an ALF that launders residents' apparel or linens must avoid cross contamination in the handling of laundry.

Residents and their families may launder the resident's apparel and linens with another resident's apparel and linens. HHSC does not consider this co-mingling for the purposes of the licensing standards for ALFs.

2.2 Processing Laundry in a Central Location

An ALF that provides laundry services and processes laundry in one location within the ALF is processing laundry in a "central location."

An ALF that provides laundry facilities for resident-use or that processes laundry for the facility or as a service to residents in laundry rooms distributed throughout an ALF are not processing laundry in a "central location."

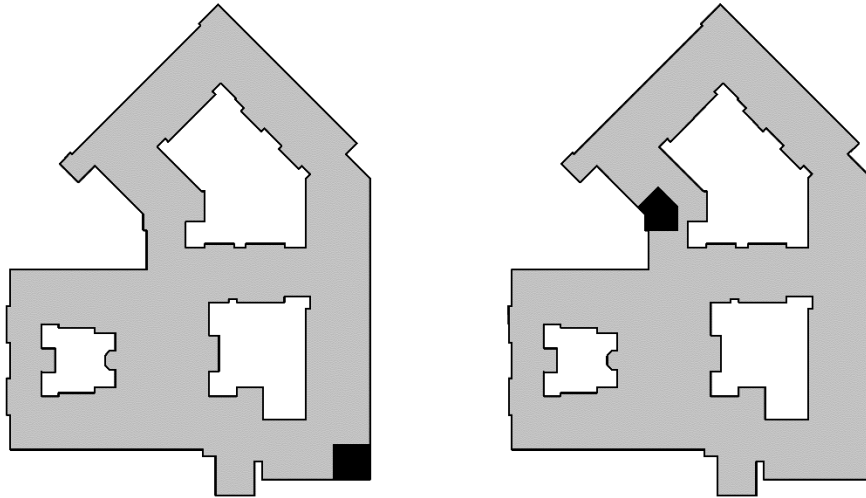


Figure 1 – Two examples of ALFs that process laundry in a central laundry facility, shaded in black.

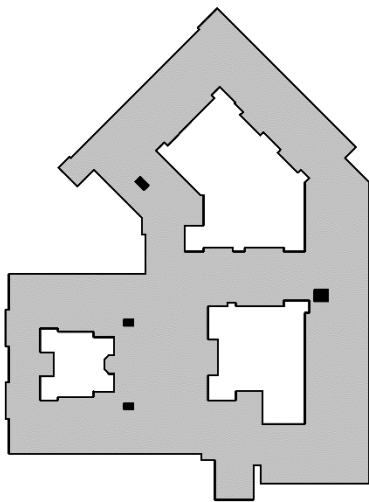


Figure 2 – Example of distributed laundry facilities. This facility has four individual laundry areas, shaded in black. This facility does not process laundry in a single central location.

2.3 Large ALF that Co-mingles and Processes Laundry in a Central Location

A large Type A or Type B ALF that both co-mingles laundry and processes all laundry in a central location must meet specific additional requirements. The additional requirements apply regardless of whether the ALF uses residential laundry equipment or commercial laundry equipment and regardless of whether the laundry is owned by the ALF or by residents.

These additional requirements are outlined in 26 TAC §§553.132(q), 553.142(q), 553.232(q), and 553.242(q). These sections are arranged by facility size and type but their contents are otherwise identical and are discussed in sections [2.3.1](#), [2.3.2](#), [2.3.3](#) and [2.3.4](#) of this document.

A large Type A or Type B ALF that provides laundry services to residents but processes resident laundry in more than one location within an ALF, whether the ALF co-mingles the laundry or not, does not have to meet the additional requirements discussed in sections [2.3.1](#), [2.3.2](#), [2.3.3](#) and [2.3.4](#) of this document.

2.3.1 Laundry Area Separated from the ALF

The laundry area must be separated from the rest of the ALF building by a fire barrier meeting the requirements of NFPA 101, 8.3, Fire Barriers⁵, and having a 1-hour fire resistance rating, with opening protectives.⁶

Door and window openings that open from a laundry area directly to the outdoors are not required to be protected as openings in fire barriers.

If a separation is required by NFPA 101, spaces located within the laundry area that are hazardous areas⁷ do not have to be further separated as long as they are located within a laundry area that is separated from the rest of the ALF building by a fire barrier.

2.3.2 Laundry Area Protected by a Fire Sprinkler System

The laundry area must be protected by a fire sprinkler system, even if the remainder of the ALF is not protected by a fire sprinkler system.⁸

2.3.3 Laundry Area Does Not Open Directly into the ALF

Doors from the laundry area must open directly to the outdoors or to a vestibule⁹ or service hall.

The laundry area must not open directly to a resident-use area or corridor. A resident-use area is an area intended for customary access by residents.

2.3.4 Laundry Area

The laundry area must meet the following additional space planning and heating, ventilating, and air conditioning requirements:

- There must be a soiled linen receiving, holding, and sorting room. The room can be combined with the clothes washer part of the general laundry work area. The room must have a floor drain and mechanical exhaust to the exterior that operates when soiled linen is being held in the area.
- There must be a general laundry work area separated into a washer section and a dryer section.
- There must be a storage area for laundry supplies.
- There must be an area for folding clean laundry.
- There must be enough conditioned air and ventilation for staff comfort while working in the laundry area without propping open doors to other interior parts of the ALF.
- Heat from dryers must be exhausted to the exterior.

- The volume of air exhausted from the dryer section of the work area must be made up with fresh air from the exterior and not from other parts of the ALF.

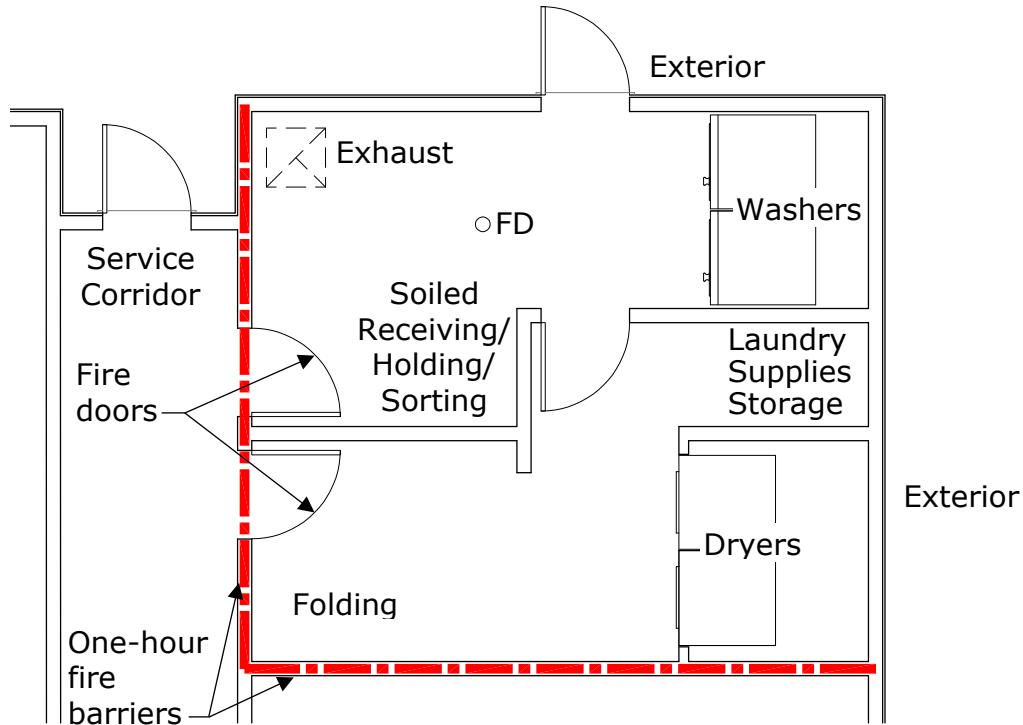


Figure 3 – Example of a laundry facility in a large ALF that co-mingles and processes laundry in a single central location.

In this example, the laundry area opens into a services corridor¹⁰ and is separated from the remainder of the facility by a one-hour fire barrier and 45-minute fire doors. Exterior walls and the door directly to the outside do not have fire resistance ratings.

The clothes washer area is part of the soiled receiving, holding and sorting room.¹¹ The room has exhaust and a floor drain (FD).

The laundry area is separated into a washer section and a dryer section¹² and includes storage for laundry supplies and an area for folding clean laundry.

2.4 Large ALFs that Process Linen Off Site

An ALF that has a laundry area located in another building that does not include other parts of the ALF, in an outbuilding, or in a building at a different location than the ALF or ALF campus, is considered to be processing linen off site. The location is considered off site even if it is located on a campus along with the ALF.

An ALF that processes laundry off site does not have to meet the requirements addressed in section [2.3](#) of this document, even if the ALF co-mingles laundry.

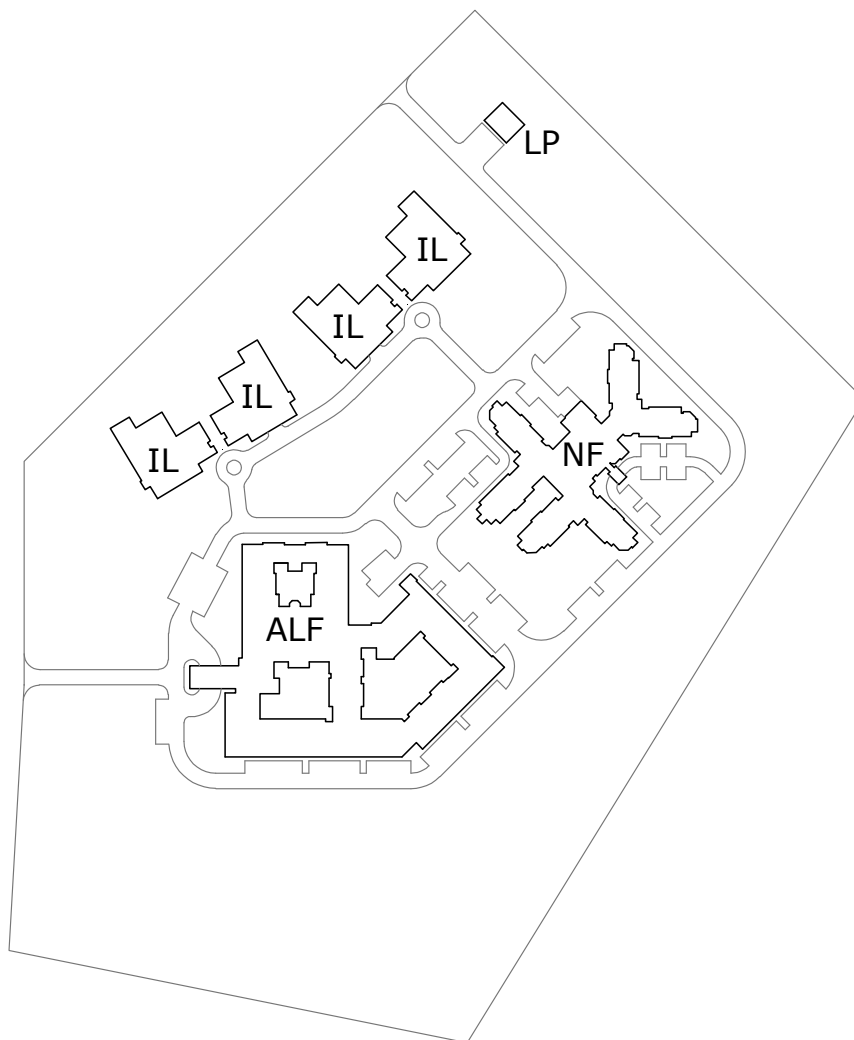


Figure 4 – Example of ALF that processes linen off site. In this example, if the ALF does not process laundry in the ALF building, but sends linen to be processed in the nursing facility (NF), one of the

independent living (IL) buildings or a central laundry plan (LP), the ALF is processing linen off site.

An ALF that processes laundry in an off-site location that is under the control of the ALF must meet the following additional space planning requirements:

- There must be a soiled linen holding room with mechanical exhaust to the exterior. The exhaust volume must be enough to prevent odors produced by soiled linen from spreading into the ALF building when doors to the soiled linen holding room are open or closed.
- There must be a clean linen receiving, holding, sorting, or folding, and storage room.

2.5 Resident-Use Laundry

An ALF may have a laundry area or laundry areas for use by residents and their families.

A laundry area for resident-use can only use residential-type washers and dryers.

A resident-use laundry area can be in a resident's living unit or in any part of an ALF that is accessible to residents.

If a resident-use laundry area contains more than three washers and three dryers in one area, the laundry area must have one of the following additional protections from fire.

- The resident-use laundry area must be protected by a fire sprinkler system, even if the remainder of the ALF is not protected by a fire sprinkler system; or
- The resident-use laundry area must be separated from the rest of the ALF building by a fire barrier meeting the requirements of NFPA 101, 8.3, Fire Barriers, and having a 1-hour fire resistance rating, with opening protectives.

A resident-use laundry area, regardless of the number of washers and dryers it contains, can open directly to the outdoors or directly into the

ALF building, including directly into a corridor. A vestibule is not required.

3.0 Background/History

Health and Safety Code §247.0263 requires HHSC to provide “guidance on the interpretation of minimum life safety code standards” prescribed under Health and Safety Code, Chapter 247, Assisted Living Facilities, and ALF rules, in 26 TAC Chapter 553. The statute requires a TM to be published at least twice a year.

4.0 Resources

None

5.0 Contact Information

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact the Policy and Rules Section by email at LTCRPolicy@hhs.texas.gov or call (512) 438-3161.

Endnote References

¹ All references to Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Part 1, Chapter 553, Licensing Standards for Assisted Living Facilities, can be viewed at the [Texas Office of the Secretary of State website](#).

² An existing facility is one that operated with a license as an ALF before August 31, 2021, and that has not subsequently become unlicensed. A new facility is one that became licensed as an ALF on or after August 31, 2021.

³ A small ALF is a facility licensed for 16 or fewer residents. A large ALF is a facility licensed for 17 or more residents.

⁴ 26 TAC §553.101(6).

⁵ NFPA 101, Life Safety Code, 2012 edition
National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)
1 Batterymarch Park
Quincy, Massachusetts 02169-7471

To review NFPA codes and standards online:

- [View the list of NFPA's codes and standards](#).
- Select the document you want to review.
- Click the "Free access" link (under the document title)
- Select the edition of the document you want to review.
- Click "View."
- You will be asked to "sign in" or create a free profile to access the document in read-only format.

NFPA 101 references related to guidance provided in this document:

- 8.3 – Fire Barriers
- 18.3.2 – Protection from Hazards
- 19.3.2 – Protection from Hazards
- 32.3.3.2 – Protection from
- 33.3.3.2 – Protection from Hazards

⁶ An opening protective is a device for protecting an opening from the passage of flame, smoke, or hot gases, such as a fire door assembly, fire shutter assembly, fire window assembly or glass-block assembly in a fire-resistance-rated wall or partition.

⁷ Hazardous Area Protection requirements in NFPA 101 are found in the following sections:

- Existing Large Type A ALFs - 33.3.3.2 – Protection from Hazards (Existing Large Residential Board and Care Occupancies.)
- Existing Large Type B ALFs - 19.3.2 – Protection from Hazards (Existing Health Care Occupancies)
- New Large Type A ALFs - 32.3.3.2 – Protection from Hazards (New Large Residential Board and Care Occupancies)
- New Large Type B ALFs - 18.3.2 – Protection from Hazards (New Health Care Occupancies)

⁸ Fire sprinkler system requirements for large ALFs are found in the following sections in the TAC:

- Existing Large Type A ALFs – 26 TAC §553.135(b)
- Existing Large Type B ALFs – 26 TAC §553.145(b)
- New Large Type A ALFs – 26 TAC §553.235(b)
- New Large Type B ALFs – 26 TAC §553.245(b)

⁹ A vestibule is a room between the laundry area and the rest of the facility.

¹⁰ In this example, the laundry could instead open into a vestibule or directly to the outside.

¹¹ There must be a soiled receiving, holding and sorting room. In this example the washer section is part of the soiled receiving, holding and sorting room, but it could be a separate room.

¹² The laundry area must be separated into a washer section and dryer section. In the example, the separation is created by a wall and door. A separation does not have to be a physical separation such as a wall, but the two sections must be clearly delineated, and any separation must ensure there is no cross contamination between clean and soiled processes.