



<b>Department:</b>	Infection Prevention and Control Department		
<b>Document:</b>	Multidisciplinary Policy and Procedure (MPP)		
<b>Title:</b>	Guidelines for Laundry		
<b>Applies To:</b>	All MCH Department		
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## 1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide the infection control standards for the hospital laundry to reduce the risk that may be associated with contaminated linen.
- 1.2 Provide advice on appropriate safety practices to protect the worker from exposure to potentially infectious materials during collection, handling, and sorting of contaminated linens through proper infection control precautions.

## 2. DEFINITIONS:

- 2.1 Cleaning: A process that uses a cleaning agent and physical action, such as scrubbing or wiping, to remove visible soil, organic matter, and bioburden from a surface or object. This renders the surface of object safe to handle. The cleaning agent may be a wet or dry chemical. The specifics of a cleaning process are affected by factors associated with the item to be cleaned, e.g., chemical compatibility, wetness tolerance, surface topography and complexity etc.
- 2.2 Decontamination: The use of physical or chemical means to remove, inactivate, or destroy blood borne pathogens on a surface or disinfecting the item to the point where it is no longer capable of transmitting infectious particles and the surface or item is rendered safe for handling, use, or disposal.
- 2.3 Washing (Processing) area: An area where soiled textiles are washed and in which such equipment as washers, extractors, washer-extractors, continuous-batch washers and/or continuous processing systems is located.
- 2.4 Clean linen-Linens that had gone through the proper laundry processing.
- 2.5 Soiled linen- Linens that had been used, dirty and soiled by, vomit, feces, blood and other bodily secretions.

## 3. POLICY:

- 3.1 Laundry services play a critical role in a healthcare facility's infection prevention and control program. Contaminated textiles often contain large numbers of microorganisms from body substances; thus, it is important to ensure that pathogens are not transferred to patients or healthcare workers.
- 3.2 Infection control practices need to be fully implemented for the hospital laundry to protect workers from exposure to potentially infectious materials during the collection, handling and sorting of soiled linen, which may be contaminated with blood and body fluids or other infectious material.
- 3.3 Strict implementation of infection control standards for the laundering process to restore soiled linen to a usable condition.
- 3.4 Work flow is unidirectional from a soiled area to a clean area with complete physical separation between them.
  - 3.4.1 Different zones of the laundry and the flow of work:
    - 3.4.1.1 1) Workflow should be unidirectional from soiled areas to clean areas (Receiving & Sorting > Washing & Extraction > Condition/Drying & Folding > Storage & Dispensing)
    - 3.4.1.2 2) Soiled areas should be physically separated from clean areas (complete physical separation is required, i.e., using double doors washing machines or installing walls or partitions)



- 3.4.2 Functional separation/barrier: An activity or structure that separates one movement, action, or space from another
- 3.5 The laundry staff maintain functional separation of soiled from clean textiles in carts and/or vehicles at all times during the collection and transportation
- 3.6 Receiving area where soiled textiles are sorted, usually by textile category and sometimes by degree of soiling or color. Warning signs about the presence of contaminated textiles and the need to follow Universal Precautions must be posted in this area.
- 3.7 Personnel who handle soiled healthcare textiles apply Standard Precautions at all times.
- 3.8 **Laundry bags used for isolation rooms do not need to be color-coded or labeled.**
- 3.9 Hand hygiene facilities and supplies are available & easily accessible and availability of all required PPE in patient-care areas and the laundry areas.
  - 3.9.1 Adequate hand washing facilities equipped with all required supplies (soap, water, paper towels etc)
  - 3.9.2 Availability of Alcohol Based Hand Rub (ABHR) dispensers in all working areas and in personnel support areas.
  - 3.9.3 Availability of hand hygiene facility within or around the working area
  - 3.9.4 All workers who handle the soiled textiles follow Standard Precautions (i.e., handled as little as possible, practicing hand hygiene using appropriate PPE, leak-proof laundry bags and containers for collection).
- 3.10 Zones:
  - 3.10.1 Dirty Zone
    - 3.10.1.1 A special area to receive and sort soiled linen and an area for loading washing machines (washers should pass-through double door types).
    - 3.10.1.2 This section must be connected to areas used for storage of chemicals and cleaning agents, also areas used for cleaning and disinfecting dirty laundry carts.
  - 3.10.2 Clean Zone
    - 3.10.2.1 An area for receiving/accepting clean linen from the washing machines, drying, inspecting, sewing, ironing, folding, packaging and storing clean linen.
    - 3.10.2.2 It is essential to have definite physical separation between the dirty zone and the clean zone and restrict movement of laundry personnel from clean to dirty zone (unidirectional flow).
    - 3.10.2.3 The area contains administrative & supporting areas, lockers, changing room for employees, supervisor's office, files and space for holding housekeeping supplies.
    - 3.10.2.4 Following conditions should be available for clean linen storage areas:
      - 3.10.2.4.1 Preferred to be positive pressure in relation to the adjacent areas.
      - 3.10.2.4.2 Good ventilation system to prevent accumulation of dust and linen dust.
      - 3.10.2.4.3 Absence of sewage apertures or water pipes.
      - 3.10.2.4.4 Storage shelves should be 15-20 cm above the floor 2.5-5 cm away from walls, and 25 cm below ceiling.
      - 3.10.2.4.5 Used only for storage of clean textiles.
      - 3.10.2.4.6 The door of the storage area should always be closed.

#### 4. PROCEDURE:

- 4.1 Steps of Textiles Processing Cycles
  - 4.1.1 Collecting Contaminated Textile/Linens
    - 4.1.1.1 Carts used for collection & transport of dirty linen are clearly identified from those used of clean linen i.e. **appropriately labeled with clear signage.**
    - 4.1.1.2 Personnel who handle soiled healthcare textiles apply Standard Precautions at all times:
      - 4.1.1.2.1 Soiled textiles are handled as little as possible in both patient-care areas and laundry areas (i.e., only as necessary to complete the defined task, and in such a way as to minimize microbial contamination of the environment and the personnel handling the textiles).
      - 4.1.1.2.2 Soiled textiles are not sorted or rinsed in patient-care areas.



- 4.1.1.2.3 Appropriate PPE are used properly during handling soiled textiles in both patient-care areas and laundry areas.
- 4.1.1.3 Staff Nurses: Contaminated linen should be bagged (yellow hazard bag) at the site of generation in a manner that minimizes agitation and prevents contamination of the environment and personnel. Do not shake contaminated linen when removing it from the bed.
  - 4.1.1.3.1 Collect soiled linen in such a fashion as to keep the heavily soiled portion contained in the center by folding or rolling the soiled spot into the center. To reduce the risk of contamination and prevent leakage from soaking through.
  - 4.1.1.3.2 Care should be taken before placing soiled linen in a laundry bag to ensure that all non-textile items, including instruments, needles or plastic single-use under pads are removed. These items can cause extensive damage to laundry equipment
  - 4.1.1.3.3 Ensure that the patient's items (e.g., dentures, eyeglasses, hearing aids etc.) are not left in the linen.
  - 4.1.1.3.4 Care must be taken before collection to make sure that there are no foreign or sharp objects such as gloves, syringes, needles, dressings...etc.
  - 4.1.1.3.5 Used linen should not be carried across the department as it increases the risk of spread of microorganisms into the air, on the floor, staff uniforms, bodies or bedside tables linen. Dirty bags should be brought to the bedside.
  - 4.1.1.3.6 Soiled linen shall be collected at regular intervals. During linen changing – activities, hampers should be convenient to patient's room.
- 4.1.1.4 Quality of the laundry bags or containers:
  - 4.1.1.4.1 The laundry bags or containers are leak-proof, not torn when loaded to capacity and can be closed securely to prevent textiles from falling out (i.e., laundry bags or containers functionally contain wet or soiled textiles and prevent contamination of the environment during collection, transportation and temporary storage prior to processing).
  - 4.1.1.4.2 Laundry bags or containers do not need to be color-coded or labeled, as hospital's laundry only receive soiled healthcare textiles, and all personnel should follow Standard Precautions when handling these textiles.
- 4.1.2 Bagging of contaminated linens:
  - 4.1.2.1 The contaminated linens should be placed once collected in leak-proof laundry bags located at the bedside.
  - 4.1.2.2 There is no infection prevention advantage of double bagging except in certain isolated cases e.g. EBOLA and in case of leakage of primary bag.
  - 4.1.2.3 Contaminated linen and linens full of blood or other body fluid or those collected from isolation rooms should be collected in water dissolvable laundry bags before placing it in the usual laundry bags.
- 4.1.3 Transit storage:
  - 4.1.3.1 The temporary linen storage is the area where the soiled linen is stored for a short time before it is transported to the central laundry.
  - 4.1.3.2 This area could take the form of a dirty utility room in each hospital ward.
  - 4.1.3.3 Soiled linen should only be stored in sealed containers or in sealed liners.
  - 4.1.3.4 Regular collection of the soiled linen from the temporary storage areas is essential to prevent any build-up of linen in these areas.
  - 4.1.3.5 The daily cleaning of the storage area and all containers or stands used for linen is essential.
- 4.2 Transportation of Contaminated Textile/Linens
  - 4.2.1 Soiled linen shall be transported promptly in covered carts or closed linen hampers to linen collecting area (sorting room).



- 4.2.2 Linen hampers shall be laundered daily. Linen carts lined with linen hampers should NEVER BE FILLED OVER 2/3 full before being tightly closed from transmittal to the collecting area before (sorting room).
- 4.2.3 Linen can be collected more than once daily. Soiled linen is transported within a healthcare facility by means of wheeled trolleys. The trolleys or wheeled containers should be cleaned and disinfected daily with an appropriate MOH disinfectant.
- 4.2.4 There should be a cart washing station. Requirement of the trolley washing area:
  - 4.2.4.1 Smooth, waterproof and easily cleanable surfaces of the walls and ceiling.
  - 4.2.4.2 Non-slip, waterproof floors.
  - 4.2.4.3 Hot and cold-water outlets.
  - 4.2.4.4 Drainage to the floor.
  - 4.2.4.5 An area for manual drying of trolleys, and space for holding cleaned trolleys awaiting transport to clean holding areas.
- 4.3 Sorting Soiled Linen
  - 4.3.1 Make sure that no foreign objects (e.g. Needles, scissors, catheter bags etc.) are contained within the used linen. Failure to remove foreign objects presents unnecessary risks to laundry personnel and other members of the staff.
  - 4.3.2 Laundry staff should wear PPE during sorting of used linen, that should include plastic aprons and heavy duty gloves. Gloves used during sorting process should be thick, water proof and puncture resistant to protect employee from sharp injuries.
  - 4.3.3 Sharp boxes and medical waste bags (yellow) should be available at the sorting area in the laundry.
  - 4.3.4 Disposable laundry bags should be disposed of as medical waste, reusable cloth laundry bags should be washed and disinfected as contaminated linen.
  - 4.3.5 Adequate access to hand washing facilities with supervision of the staff to make sure
  - 4.3.6 The textiles are sorted according to degree and type of soiling.
    - 4.3.6.1 Advantages of sorting before laundering process:
      - 4.3.6.1.1 Decrease chemical use to increase life span of the linen.
      - 4.3.6.1.2 Decrease damage to laundry machines and linen by removing needles and surgical instruments that are accidentally left during the collection process.
      - 4.3.6.1.3 Identify hospital area with misuse of linen.
    - 4.3.6.2 Disadvantages of sorting before laundering process:
      - 4.3.6.2.1 Increase risk of needle stick injury.
      - 4.3.6.2.2 Fear of employee exposure to infection
- 4.4 Laundering Process (washing i.e different washing cycles in terms of temperatures, times and used chemicals.
  - 4.4.1 **During high temperature washing cycle, water temperature is at a minimum of 71°C (159.8°F) for 25 minutes (heat disinfection), and must be recorded.**
  - 4.4.2 **During low temperature washing cycle water temperature is at 22°C - 25°C (71°F-77°F),** sodium hypochlorite is added as a chemical disinfectant during the bleach wash cycle with residual bleach 50 - 150 ppm and is monitored.  
 Note: If sodium hypochlorite is not appropriate for the fabrics or not recommended by manufacturer's, Chlorine alternatives (e.g., activated oxygen-based detergents) may be used to ensure adequate disinfection of laundry during low temperature washing cycle.
  - 4.4.3 Documents that demonstrate proper application of these two sub-standards:
    - 4.4.3.1 Records of high temperature washing cycles including monitoring and control of washing cycles (i.e., recording processed loads / selected washing cycles / temperatures and times)
    - 4.4.3.2 Records of low temperature washing cycles including monitoring and control of used chemicals (i.e., chemical types / preparations method / effective concentrations and contact times)
    - 4.4.3.3 Planned Preventive Maintenance (PPM) for washing machines with Quality check for different parameters of washing cycles
    - 4.4.3.4 Intervention records for abnormal temperatures and failure situations.
  - 4.4.4 Laundry process:



- 4.4.4.1 If hot water laundry cycles are used, wash with detergent in water  $\geq 71^{\circ}\text{C}$  for  $\geq 25$  minutes .
- 4.4.4.2 Adding proper amount of chlorine bleach to low temperature cycles ( $49^{\circ}\text{C}$  -  $60^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) for heat sensitive fabrics.
- 4.4.4.3 **The amount of residual chlorine (bleach) should be between 50 and 150 ppm and must be monitored and controlled.** Chlorine bleach becomes activated at water temperatures of ( $57.2^{\circ}\text{C}$ – $62.7^{\circ}\text{C}$ ).
- 4.4.4.4 **N.B.- Never mix soap and chlorine bleach or any other chemicals.**
- 4.4.5 Routine inspection for blood and body fluid stains is conducted after washing.
  - 4.4.5.1 The end product: the washed textiles are properly processed without any stains or damage.
  - 4.4.5.2 Ongoing inspection process of washed textiles during the visit time.
  - 4.4.5.3 Availability of appropriate table with light source for routine inspection of processed textiles
  - 4.4.5.4 The presence of textiles with blood or/and body fluid stains or damaged textiles that are segregated after processing to be re-washed, repaired or disposed of.
- 4.4.6 Laundering cycles consist of flush, main wash, bleaching, rinsing, and souring. The antimicrobial action of the laundering process results from a combination of mechanical, thermal, and chemical factors as follows: -
  - 4.4.6.1 Dilution and agitation in water remove significant quantities of microorganisms.
  - 4.4.6.2 Soaps and detergents function to suspend soils and exhibit some micro biocidal properties.
  - 4.4.6.3 Hot water provides an effective means of destroying microorganisms.
  - 4.4.6.4 The use of chlorine bleach assures an extra margin of safety.
  - 4.4.6.5 The last series of rinse cycles is the addition of a mild acid (i.e., sour) to neutralize any alkalinity in the water supply, soap, or detergent.
  - 4.4.6.6 The rapid shift in pH from approximately 12 to 5 is an effective means to inactivate some microorganisms.
  - 4.4.6.7 Factors affecting cleaning and disinfection of textiles include:
    - 4.4.6.7.1 Used chemicals (chlorine bleach, soap), their concentration, time of adding to washing and rinsing cycles.
    - 4.4.6.7.2 Load.
    - 4.4.6.7.3 Degree of linen soiling.
    - 4.4.6.7.4 Mechanical action.
    - 4.4.6.7.5 Water temperature.
    - 4.4.6.7.6 Time.
- 4.4.7 Unloading
- 4.4.8 Inspection
- 4.4.9 Drying and Ironing provide additional significant microbicidal action.
- 4.4.6 Folding and repairing
- 4.5 Rinsing, drying
- 4.6 Packaging and Storing
  - 4.6.1 Packaging and storage must maintain the clean state of the linen for delivery.
  - 4.6.2 The linen should be wrapped in fluid-resistant securely sealed plastic bags or placed unwrapped into fluid-resistant covered carts.
  - 4.6.3 Unwrapped clean linen must be stored in a designated, controlled-access, clean storage area, with a closed door at all times.
- 4.7 **Delivery / Disposing of Clean Linens**
  - 4.7.1 Clean linen must be covered during transport and storage to prevent contamination; transportation carts should be routinely washed.
  - 4.7.2 If carts are used for transportation of linen, there should be separate carts for clean and used linen **(label carts properly)**. Used linen must be placed in bags to avoid spills before putting them in carts.



- 4.7.3 Unnecessary touching of clean linen shall be minimized. Clean linen shall be transported in covered carts.
- 4.7.4 Employees must wash their hands thoroughly before handling clean linen.
- 4.8 Storage of clean textiles
  - 4.8.1 Storing of clean linen could be done in closed carts or covered carts to prevent contamination.
- 4.9 Important notes:
  - 4.9.1 Wash contaminated linen as soon as possible
    - 4.9.1.1 In case the facility adopts a policy of not sorting linen before washing it, all contaminated linen should be put in water dissolvable bags to be loaded directly into the washing machine.
    - 4.9.1.2 Never sort the linens from isolation rooms, it should be collected in water dissolvable bags to be put directly into washing machine.
    - 4.9.1.3 Temperature used for drying or/and ironing gives additional effect against microorganisms.
- 4.10 Needle/Sharps Injuries etc
  - 4.10.1 In the event of needle stick injury the employee report to EHC within 24 hours or in emergency room during weekends.
- 4.11 Management of on – Site Laundry Department
  - 4.11.1
    - a) Food and drinks should never be allowed in the laundry.
    - b) Washing machines should be checked regularly to make sure that they meet disinfection standards.
    - c) Washing machines should be capable of raising decontamination temperature to the suitable temperature needed.
    - d) Washing machines should contain drainage holes and a cycle for decontamination.
    - e) Washing machines must have temperature recording equipment that can be monitored (every 4-6 weeks). Records should be monitored by the laundry supervisor.
    - f) Periodic maintenance of the equipment should be recorded by the laundry supervisor.
- 4.12 Healthcare Worker Uniform
  - 4.12.1 All healthcare workers should use the central laundry services of the healthcare facility. As their uniform could be directly contaminated by infectious agent / body fluids during their work time.
  - 4.12.2 Workers should change their hospital uniform daily except if it became contaminated, it should be changed immediately and placed into a laundry bag and sent to laundry.
  - 4.12.3 It is not allowed for the health care workers to take their uniform to be washed at home.
- 4.13 Safe Practices
  - 4.13.1 Apply standard precautions while dealing with all used linen in the same way as if it is contaminated, to prevent transmission of infections.
  - 4.13.1 Hand Hygiene:
    - 4.13.2 Cover any skin wounds by fluid resistant gauze at the beginning of the work shift.
    - 4.13.3 Enough stocks of hand hygiene products should be available and placed in a suitable place
    - 4.13.4 Perform hand hygiene especially after dealing with contaminated linen.
    - 4.13.5 Perform hand hygiene after taking off PPEs and before conducting another work.
    - 4.13.6 All laundry staff should be compliant with hand hygiene practices.
- 4.14 Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs):
  - 4.14.1 Personal protective equipment should be worn while dealing with used linen.
  - 4.14.2 Apply the standard precautions and wear fluid resistant aprons and other PPEs when required.
  - 4.14.3 Wear multiple use heavy duty gloves for protection of workers instead of a single use gloves that cannot withstand the process of sorting.
- 4.15 Occupational safety (Vaccinations, sharp injuries incident reports):
  - 4.15.1 Vaccination of all laundry workers with HBV vaccine& tetanus.
  - 4.15.2 Dealing with all incidents of sharp injuries at occupational health clinics.
  - 4.15.3 Smoking and /or eating and drinking is not allowed in the laundry area.
  - 4.15.4 Careful dealing with contaminated linen with blood or body secretions.
- 4.16 Transport of used linen in appropriate bags placed in a specific container.
- 4.17 Laundry workers:



- 4.17.1 They should not work at clean and dirty area at the same shift.
- 4.17.2 They can deal with dirty linen after clean linen in the same shift but should not be allowed to return to work in the clean area during that shift.
- 4.18 Training
  - 4.18.1 Laundry workers should be trained on appropriate standard precautions when handling contaminated linen. Records for the training done for the workers must be kept by the head of laundry department.
  - 4.18.2 Laundry workers should receive job-specific training upon hiring and at least once annually.
  - 4.18.3 Training should include :
    - 4.18.3.1 Safe practices (Standard precautions, isolation precautions, principle of safe laundry handling, correct and safe use of personal protective equipment).
    - 4.18.3.2 Hand hygiene and personal cleaning practices.
    - 4.18.3.3 Occupational health program (vaccination/sharp injuries incident reports/chemical exposures).
    - 4.18.3.4 Waste disposal and dealing with blood spills policy.
    - 4.18.3.5 Ideal application of housekeeping policy
- 4.19 Infection control documents
  - 4.19.1 There should be an infection control policy and procedures covering all areas related to laundry services. It should contain a policy for reporting of foreign and sharp objects.
  - 4.19.2 There should be records for all laundry processes and documentation of all washing cycles for every machine. The records should document all process monitoring which include:
    - 4.19.2.1 Cycle time: prewash, wash, rinse, and final rinse time.
    - 4.19.2.2 Temperature: wash cycle, bleach cycle, and rinse cycle temperatures.
    - 4.19.2.3 Chemical usage: chemical types and usage level for every step in the washing process.
    - 4.19.2.4 Every chemical must have a material safety data sheet, and copies must be available at the point of use.
- 4.20 Management of Off-site (out-sourced) laundry
  - 4.20.1 In the event no laundry services inside the facility, the contaminated textiles are collected and transported to be reprocessed in an outside laundry, in another healthcare facility or contracted laundry.
  - 4.20.1 Process of collection, transit storage, transport of the contaminated textiles, back transport of clean reprocessed textiles to the healthcare facility and distribution to the clinical departments should be under the supervision of infection control department.
  - 4.20.2 Transportation vehicles should contain sealed containers.
  - 4.20.3 Mixing of clean and dirty textiles in one transportation cycle is not allowed.
  - 4.20.4 Cleaning and disinfection of transportation vehicles after each cycle is done and documented.
- 4.21 Ventilation & Temperature Control:
  - 4.21.1 The dirty area should be under negative pressure with exhaust to the outside.
  - 4.21.2 Humidity should not be out of range 30-60% and temperature must be within safe limits from 21°C to 24°C.
  - 4.21.3 Laundry exhaust vents should be provided with filters to capture dust and linen lint. These filters should be repeatedly cleaned and washed by the maintenance staff with supervision of infection control personnel.
- 4.22 Microbiological Samples:
  - 4.22.1 It is only done if there is epidemiologic evidence suggesting a role of linen in disease transmission in health care facilities, it should be done in consultation with infection control department.
- 4.23 Linen, pillows and mattresses:
  - 4.23.1 All bedding materials may become colonized with bacteria and become a reservoir of infection.
  - 4.23.2 Maintain integrity of linen, pillows and mattresses and their covers.
  - 4.23.3 All mattresses and pillowcases that are torn or have blood stains that cannot be removed should be disposed of.
  - 4.23.4 All mattresses and pillows used in clinical areas must have sealed intact impermeable covers which can be cleaned and disinfected between patients.

- 4.23.5 All mattresses and pillows which are not covered should be washed between patients and when soiled if they are washable.
- 4.23.6 Wash all linens made of cloth and washable pillows at hot water cycles.
- 4.23.7 Non washable pillows should be disposed of after each patient.

## **5. MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT:**

- 5.1 N/A

## **6. RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- 6.1 Responsibilities of laundry supervisor:
  - 6.1.1 Facilitate, monitor and supervise the application of these guidelines.
  - 6.1.2 Create open communication channels between laundry department and users (nursing staff).
  - 6.1.3 Ensure every worker in laundry have received training on these guidelines.
  - 6.1.4 Ensure correct and safe handling of linen.
- 6.2 Responsibilities of Laundry Workers
  - 6.2.1 Collection and transport of used linen from departments to the laundry.
  - 6.2.2 Sorting and dealing with used linen using impermeable apron, gloves and practicing standard measures while dealing with the used linen.
  - 6.2.3 Transportation of clean linen to departments in a safe way using closed carts.
- 6.3 Responsibilities of Infection Control Department
  - 6.3.1 Supervise the process of collection and transportation of the used linen in the healthcare facility.
  - 6.3.2 Supervise the infection control requirements in central laundry with documented tools.
  - 6.3.3 Training and supervision of the central laundry workers for proper infection control precautions. N.B training should be done before joining the work and once annually.
  - 6.3.4 Participate in any project for renovation of the central laundry department.

## **7. APPENDICES:**

- 7.1 N/A

## **8. REFERENCES:**

- 8.1 General Directorate for Infection Prevention and Control (GDIPC) Infection Control Guidelines for Reprocessing of Linens in Healthcare Settings (Central Laundry) December 2020 V.1.0



## 9. APPROVALS:

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