

# Tina Stenzel:

## Housekeeping Management in the Middle East

*by Laura M. DiGiulio, Editor*



*Stenzel with Head Custodian at the Tanmiya office, Mubarak Basha. Tanmiya is Linc Facility Services' partner in Kuwait.*

As we all know, being in charge of the housekeeping department in a large facility can be a huge undertaking—but can you imagine being in charge of the housekeeping services at facilities in Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, and Yemen? Besides the language barriers you would encounter, and among other cultural differences, you would be faced with working in facilities that do not have the knowledge of JCAHO accreditation and other American cleaning standards. How would you handle this task?

IEHA member Tina Stenzel, CEH, asked herself this very same question earlier this year. After she joined the Linc Facility Services International Team based in the Middle East in January 2009, she was assigned to cover the territory of the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region made up of the 20 countries listed above. Stenzel is currently Linc's Senior Housekeeping Subject Matter Expert (SME) in the MENA region. She participates in business development activities, such as sales presentations, proposal development, training, and consulting. She is also responsible for the operational issues regarding the housekeeping components of their projects in the region.

“My job in the Middle East is to help managers and owners, real estate developers, consulting engineers, and architects of hospitals, health clinics, hotels and motels, mixed-use, and industrial facilities understand that proper planning in terms of housekeeping is absolutely necessary at all levels,” says Stenzel. “All stakeholders, but especially operations management, will have to know how to train and operate an efficient housekeeping department in order to survive and be competitive in their respective business.”

So how does she do it? Through a mixture of her experience and IEHA certification, Stenzel has been able to use her expertise in order to perform the assigned task effectively and successfully.

### **Background**

Stenzel was born in Montgomery, Alabama, and since her father was in the Army, her family moved around a lot, but Fayetteville, North Carolina, eventually became her home for many years. Stenzel started working at Cape Fear Valley Medical Center in Fayetteville, North Carolina, in the late 70s as a Maintenance Secretary. Eventually, the hospital contracted out the housekeeping and maintenance departments to ServiceMaster Industries. In the very early 80s, Stenzel's Regional Operations Manager suggested that she go into management

within the housekeeping field. She took his suggestion and started her training with ServiceMaster Industries.

“I have never regretted making this move to housekeeping management since it has brought me to where I am today,” says Stenzel.

A few years later, Stenzel was hired by Linc Facility Services and began her first job within the housekeeping management field at Womack Army Medical Center in Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, as the Executive Housekeeper responsible for 1.2 million square feet, which consisted of the medical center and several outlying clinics.

After Ft. Bragg, Stenzel moved to Mississippi for personal reasons, and unfortunately, there was not a contract in Mississippi with Linc Facility Services. Therefore, she entered the hospitality field and worked at the Horseshoe Hotel & Casino in Tunica, Mississippi as the Executive Housekeeper.

“After working so many years in healthcare, working in the hospitality field was a very helpful learning experience, which is helping me in my role here in the Middle East,” says Stenzel.

After working at the Horseshoe Hotel & Casino for about a year, a position became available in the Middle East with Linc Facility

Services, and Stenzel could not refuse the chance to travel to and see many different countries.

### Current Responsibilities

Linc Facility Services is a global provider of integrated facility management services, technical operations and maintenance (O&M), and other facility services. In the U.S., Linc Facility Services has served housekeeping departments of various industries, such as hotels and motels, including Holiday Inns, Hiltons, Sheratons, Howard Johnson's, Best Western's, and independents. Linc's solutions for healthcare facilities help hospitals, medical complexes, and life science organizations reduce costs, increase productivity and efficiency, and most important, improve the quality of patient care. Linc supports healthcare facilities such as the Womack Army Medical Center in Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, and Ibn Sina Hospital in Baghdad, Iraq. Linc's housekeeping solutions are also being employed in unique venues, such as the Palladium Performing Arts Center in Dubai, UAE.

Linc employs Certified Executive Housekeepers through IEHA whose experience and expertise are the culmination of many years experience in the field of housekeeping. Stenzel has 25 years of experience in the housekeeping field and has been associated with IEHA since 2000, when she obtained her certification as a CEH.

"IEHA has been a tremendous help to me by providing so much educational information," says Stenzel. "Anytime I have requested information by e-mail, the Association Office staff is quick to respond, which is very helpful, especially when you needed it yesterday."

Linc Facility Services' housekeeping senior staff works closely with management and owners to provide the best-known practices

employed in housekeeping industry. Stenzel is currently bringing those practices to Linc's clients in the Middle East.

According to Stenzel, Linc's Housekeeping Team is the custodian of upkeep and appearance of a facility. The housekeeping department can be described as the

"heart" of a facility and its success lies in coordinating with all departments to ensure that tenants, visitors, clients, and patients are  
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provided with a comfortable and pleasant stay.

Stenzel says the quality of a facility environment matters to everyone—from tenants, to staff, to patients, visitors and guests, and to maintenance staff. Linc forms a partnership with clients in order to tailor programs to the unique needs of the facility and priorities of administration. They manage all housekeeping services, staff, supplies, and equipment, which allows their clients to focus on their core business.

“Housekeeping plays a vital role in the upkeep of multi-industry facilities, wherein the first impression normally turns out to be the last impression as far as hygiene and cleanliness of the property is concerned,” says Stenzel. “Your facility’s appearance is your first opportunity to make a positive impression on potential clients and visitors. Creating a clean and safe environment builds confidence in your specific services, which leads to improved satisfaction.”

According to Stenzel, the Middle East is currently experiencing tremendous growth in both government and commercial sectors, and there are billions of dollars being invested in new infrastructure, including healthcare, retail,



*Linc’s International Management Team. From left to right: Tom Poulos, Director of Operations; Tina Stenzel, CEH; Joe Webb, Facility Manager; and Michael Scott, Vice President International.*

commercial, and residential projects. Every country in the MENA region is going through the same housekeeping “learning curve” we experienced in the U.S. The issues they face need to be addressed throughout all industries, but even more so in healthcare, hospitality, and mixed-use facilities.

“The housekeeping industry is one plagued by a lack of knowledge—the end result being that millions of dollars are being ‘flushed’ down the drain every day,” says Stenzel. “This tremendous increase in costs, loss of potential profits, and decrease in productivity continues in many industries because most managers and owners are unaware of the fact that housekeeping is ‘like a science,’ and that there are various formulas, techniques, and systems that if properly utilized, can save millions of dollars and increase the facility’s bottom line.”

In her current position, Stenzel follows local housekeeping guidelines in the Middle East and is also introducing U.S. standards in locations where local standards have not been developed. Her focus in healthcare services is as follows:

- Assure subject matter experts that support on-site teams have proven credentials and industry leading skills and

knowledge.

- Knowledge of the levels of hospital cleanliness in order to maintain a safe environment as mandated by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) standards.

- Knowledge of governmental regulations in order to maintain a safe and pleasing environment for patients, staff, and visitors.

- Knowledge of Occupational Safety, Health and Environmental guidelines for using cleaning chemicals within a medical setting in order to maintain a clean and safe environment.

- Knowledge of various training methods in order to ensure housekeeping staff are properly trained in infection control, bloodborne pathogens, fire and safety, etc. as they apply to hospital housekeeping techniques.

- Knowledge of Hazardous and Regulated Medical Waste Programs in order to provide guidance and information to the various organizations throughout the Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) and ensure the compliance of the housekeeping and waste management with the hospital infection control policy.

- Meticulous attention to detail and ongoing performance measurement to ensure quality, value, and customer satisfaction.

- Knowledge of LEED guidelines for using Green cleaning chemicals to maintain a clean and safe environment.

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*Stenzel with Fahad A.K. Jafar, Vice Chairman Managing Director of Tanmiya, Linc’s partner in Kuwait.*

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In regard to the hospitality sector, Stenzel says, "Hotels and motels are not only about facilities and visible staff, but also the staff that are behind the scenes. While housekeepers are rarely seen, good housekeeping is visible. Room presentation and consistent uniformity is essential, and housekeeping staffs need to have an 'eye for detail.' Housekeeping is a lot more visible and needs to maintain flexible schedules."

Stenzel also points out that the hotel industry, in an endeavor to keep ahead of competition, is increasingly opting for the "mixed-use" development route. This new development offers multiple environments to in-house guests, who may be attending weddings, conferences, as well as walk-in clients, who can enjoy an all-in-one experience of stay, wine and dine, business meetings, or the convenience of shopping. A large number of future and upcoming projects are mixed-use, and more facility owners and real estate developers are looking to integrate service apartments, retail outlets, convention centers, etc., under "one roof."

### Challenges

Stenzel says that so far, her time spent in the Middle East has come with many challenges; for example, language barriers. The majority of her employees are from Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, and although some can speak a little English, it is still a challenge to understand and help them to understand what you are saying. Furthermore, on a daily basis, Stenzel works with people from Egypt, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and the local nationals of Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai, etc. Many languages are used in the workplace and she often requires a translator to communicate effectively with her

colleagues.

In addition, "Cleaning standards are not the same here in the Middle East as they are in the United States," says Stenzel. "The hospitals are not JCAHO accredited and many would have a lot of work to do to acquire accreditation. In one of the facilities I toured, it was very obvious the housekeeping staff was not properly trained on cleaning procedures, as they were cleaning a discharged patient room with water."

Another challenge for Stenzel has been driving in the Middle East, as it is very different from the United States in reference to enforcement of laws. Stenzel says it is not uncommon to see a vehicle with children not wearing a seat belt and sitting on drivers' laps while driving. They do not abide by traffic rules, drive well over the posted speed limit, and are very reckless, which results in fatal traffic accidents on a daily basis.

According to Stenzel, the water and electricity are another challenge, as it does not matter if you boil the water in some areas, it is still not safe to drink. She says trying to adapt to the electrical outlets with American appliances is a challenge all of its own. It's just a whole lot easier to buy new appliances with the proper plug than to try and use receptacle adapters.

Stenzel says that although the places she has been are pretty safe for expatriates, you still need to be cautious wherever you go. However, "working with the Linc Facility Services International Team has allowed me to travel to places that I may not have traveled to before. It has been a very rewarding experience." ♦

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