





CLEANING IN THE POST-CORONAVIRUS ENVIRONMENT

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White Paper

The professional cleaning industry has never been in the forefront of people's minds. Most cleaning work is performed after hours or on weekends, so cleaning professionals are mostly "out of sight, out of mind."



But the coronavirus has changed all that. Whether in schools, commercial facilities, buses, and trains, or at home, effective - infection preventing - cleaning is now on everyone's mind.

While there are still many unknowns about the coronavirus, one thing is certain: professional cleaning is now viewed as essential in keeping people healthy and facilities operating.

This White Paper will discuss some of these issues, with a focus on the following:

1. Why building owners and managers can no longer accept "good enough" cleaning of their facilities
2. Why we can no longer select cleaning contractors based on price alone
3. Why cleaning procedures, methods, and products used need a complete review

The End of "Visible" Cleaning

For decades, judgments about cleaning have always been based on appearances. "If it looks clean, it is clean," has always been the standard. In all too many cases, building owners and managers may not be that happy with the cleaning they are

being provided, but determine, usually based on price considerations, that it is "good enough."

Today, primarily because of COVID, we know that how a surface looks has little or nothing to do with how healthy that surface is. A healthy surface is free of soils and contaminants that could negatively impact human health. "Good enough" cleaning rarely makes the grade when cleaning is viewed in this light.

Further, the superficial appearance of a clean facility is no longer enough; cleaning has become a C-suite issue. Top executives are now responsible for their staff's health and welfare, continued business operations, brand reputation, and the bottom line. Whereas effective cleaning has played a relatively minor role in C-suite responsibilities in the past, it now has a commanding position.

Business leaders now view effective cleaning as one way to minimize company risks. This means effective cleaning is now a *risk prevention strategy*, helping to protect a company's operations, profitability, worker morale, and brand reputation.

In May 2020, when COVID-related cleaning and safety concerns surfaced at some Amazon locations around the world, employees threatened to stop working and organizations urged buyers to boycott the company. The result is the company invested $4 billion in employee safety measures and began an extensive – and expensive - advertising and public relations campaign to win customers back.

The End of Price-Based Cleaning

Cleaning has always been viewed as both a necessity and a commodity. By this we mean that every building owner and manager knows they must take steps to keep their facilities clean.

But, because it is also viewed as a commodity, this means these same building owners and managers have invariably considered most cleaning contractors - and the cleaning services they provide their customers - to be interchangeable.

The result is, when hiring a cleaning contractor, the deciding factor is price. If one contractor says they would charge $10,000 per month to clean a facility and another says they would only charge $6000, it is pretty easy to guess which one is hired.

But that is over with COVID. We have transferred from price-based cleaning to quality-based cleaning. Many building owners and managers have already concluded from experience that hiring a cleaning contractor based on a low price can be the start of an array of problems. But now, again due to COVID and the need to stop the spread of infection, we just cannot take the chance.

View quality cleaning as an investment. It pays dividends by protecting the health of building users and by keeping businesses and facilities functioning.

Supply Stability

Having the necessary supplies to address an emergency, especially one as serious as COVID, is now mandatory. We learned in this emergency that some of the supplies we suddenly needed could be exceedingly difficult to acquire. Further,

emergencies can result in a higher demand for the supplies we do have in stock. This can rapidly result in product shortages, which can negatively impact cleaning effectiveness.

Additionally, as the pandemic spread, there were also many weaknesses in the entire cleaning supply chain. Some manufacturers found they were in short supply of the raw materials they needed to make such things as disinfectants and sanitizers, further delaying the transport of these needed supplies to distributors and their customers.

Typically, when it comes to purchasing janitorial supplies, products are purchased on an as-needed basis. Moving forward, we must protect ourselves from supply chain shortages, and have more than enough products on hand and in stock should an emergency occur.

The final point, regarding the need to review cleaning procedures, methods, and products is a bit more involved. Because of this, we will focus on each issue individually.

Product Analysis

Along with ensuring we have enough products on hand for an emergency, we must also be sure we have the *right products* in stock to address a crisis and know how to use them. Disinfectants, for instance, can be complicated cleaning solutions. These products often differ as to application, dilution, what pathogens they kill or do not kill, how long they must dwell on surfaces, and other factors.

Making matters worse, manufacturers do not always communicate this information in an easy to understand format. This is something that needs to be addressed now

by manufacturers. Further, cleaning professionals as well as building managers must be educated on the use of disinfectants, sanitizers, and similar cleaning solutions.

Due to COVID, they must be able to easily select disinfectants that meet criteria established by the Environmental Protection Agency for use against viruses that can cause COVID-19.

Credential Analysis

Even with the right cleaning solutions and equipment available, without highly competent cleaning workers, these products will still not protect health and stop the spread of infection. Going forward, training and education of cleaning workers will become imperative, and when hiring a cleaning contractor, building

owners/managers must be sure their workers have the credentials and certifications necessary to prove they have undergone proper training.

Among these credentials and certifications are the following:

- CIMS. This refers to the Cleaning Industry Management Standard, operated by ISSA, the worldwide cleaning association, which teaches cleaning workers "best practices" to ensure surfaces are cleaned properly and efficiently.

- CMI. The Cleaning Management Institute is also operated by ISSA. This is the oldest instructional program for cleaning workers and is still considered one of the best. The program has trained more than 250,000 people in the professional cleaning industry.

- GBAC. This is the newest program for cleaning workers. The Global Biorisk Advisory Council teaches cleaning workers how to prepare for and respond to biohazardous emergencies, such as COVID.

- IICRC. The Institute of Inspection, Cleaning, and Restoration certifies cleaning workers on such things as carpet and upholstery care, as well as clean-up operations after a fire, flood, or similar disaster.

Frequency Analysis

Finally, building owners/managers must evaluate the cleaning frequencies they now have in place for their facilities. All too often, facilities that should be cleaned five nights per week are only cleaned two or three times per week. This reduces cleaning effectiveness and with it puts building users at risk.

As a result of COVID, building owners/managers may need to increase cleaning frequencies to ensure surfaces are cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected as often as they should be.

This will have cost implications. But as mentioned earlier, cleaning should no longer be viewed in terms of costs… it is now very apparent that cleaning is an investment.

The final issue to address is the need for flexibility on the part of both cleaning contractors and building owners/managers. We keep hearing talk of the "new normal."

We may have several new normals over the next few months and years that we must grapple with. This calls for us all to stay ever aware of changing conditions and have the flexibility to make changes as soon as they are deemed necessary. This flexibility also requires cleaning contractors and building owners/managers to realize they are now partners. Working together as partners has never been more necessary.



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