

# CLEANING

Most commercial businesses use large volumes of water for cleaning. Re-evaluating your cleaning practices can save on cleaning time, chemical costs and unnecessary water use.



### Water use in cleaning

Commercial businesses have a variety of cleaning and rinsing applications that can consume large volumes of water. Often these cleaning practices and the chemicals used will be based on habit rather than an evaluation of what cleaning is necessary. Examine your cleaning practices to improve your water efficiency and save time and money.

### Behavioural change

#### Re-evaluate cleaning schedules

Reducing the frequency of cleaning in areas that are seldom used will ensure cleaning does not occur unnecessarily.

- For high use areas such as entrances, exits and walkways, a high frequency cleaning routine will prevent the build up of dirt and grime, and eliminate the additional effort required to remove ingrained dirt if it is left to build up. This involves regular sweeping of doorways and spot mopping if necessary.
- Evaluating the cleaning requirements of areas before undertaking tasks will ensure that cleaning occurs only as required. For example, if it has just rained, it may not be necessary to wash windows.
- For efficient after hours clean ups, focus on team cleaning rather than zone cleaning. When cleaners work together they can turn lights on and off as needed instead of lighting the whole building.





## Re-evaluate cleaning product use

**Match products and quantity used to the amount and type of dirt.**

Over-application of cleaning products is very common and does not aid the cleaning process. Ensure the correct quantity of cleaning product is measured out to reduce over-use and save on the cleaning time required to remove the excess product. Use dispensing systems where possible.

**Consider environmentally friendly cleaning products, especially for maintenance cleaning. Consider whether the product is:**

- 100% biodegradable
- phosphate free
- chlorine free
- vegetable based
- unscented
- dye free
- concentrated.

**Evaluate the need for the following products:**

- Antimicrobial products (or disinfectants) – these are appropriate for cleaning environments that need to be sterile, but overusing antimicrobial products can place an unnecessary load on sewage treatment systems.
- Abrasive products – extra time and water is required to clean off residual product.
- Solvents – over-use can create health and safety risks for sewerage system workers and contribute pollutants to the sewer which make water difficult to recycle. An evaluation of solvent use will ensure they are not being used unnecessarily.

## Re-evaluate cleaning procedures

Switching from wet carpet cleaning methods, such as steam cleaning, to dry powder or steam vapour machine methods will dramatically reduce the water use of the procedure.

Consult your carpet cleaner to ensure your carpet is suited to this change.

**With water use in cleaning, 'less is best'.**

The more water that is used, the more water is required to dry off. Using a spray bottle on wall and bench surfaces allows for the volume of water used to be better matched to the task at hand. The dirtier the surface, the more water is required. It is important to properly dry the surface after cleaning to avoid puddles, which can become a breeding ground for bacteria, especially in toilet areas.

## Try the CLEAR-WET-WAIT-WIPE technique

**CLEAR** dirty surfaces to reduce the amount of grime to be removed by mopping and wiping. Use brooms, brushes, vacuums, squeegees, scrapers and other utensils to clean surfaces before performing a wet clean. By collecting the majority of waste, residue or contaminants in dry form, you can avoid wasting large volumes of water. For example:

- Sweep floors instead of hosing with water.
- Vacuum or sweep dry material spills such as salt or dyes instead of using water.
- Use squeegees to collect food processing residue from the floor before hosing with water.
- Consider using a high pressure 'water broom' for large areas that will use water more efficiently than a mains pressured hose.

**WET** the surface. Pre-spray stubborn spots on floors and benches with water. Using too much water will make it difficult to spread the water around and will also increase drying times.

**WAIT** if the dirt is not removed after a few wipes. Let the water do the work. Begin another task if necessary. When you return, the dirt should wipe away easily.

**WIPE** the area dry to ensure no moisture is left for bacteria to grow in. Use squeegees on tables and bench top surfaces to eliminate the need for excessive water use.



## Staff education

One of the most effective ways to save water in cleaning procedures is to ensure cleaning staff are supervised and educated on water saving cleaning practices. Specific cleaning practices should be defined and reiterated over time as cleaning staff often change.



- Efficient trigger spray nozzles on hoses can cut down unnecessary water wastage.
- Consider high-pressure washers to clean more quickly and efficiently.
- Consider using low-flow 'fogging' nozzles to rinse parts efficiently.
- Installation of flow restrictors in water lines that supply hoses and pressure washers can be used to prevent excess water use.
- Change the window cleaning schedule from regular to 'as required' and use squeegees rather than hosing to save water and time.
- Wash vehicles only when needed unless necessary for operator safety. Use recycled water if possible, or go to a water efficient commercial car wash.
- Timers that shut off process water when a process is shut down will ensure water is not used unnecessarily.
- Checking and adjusting stationary spray nozzles so they are aimed properly will ensure the optimum application of jets.
- A review and adjustment of nozzles' spray patterns will assist with achieving the optimum application of spray.
- Equipment can be coated with a non-stick surface to allow for easier cleaning.

## Outdoors

Be mindful of ongoing Smart Water Choices when considering the following;

- Sweeping paved areas and parking areas (rather than hosing).
- Reconsider the need to wash building exteriors or other outside structures. If possible, source rainwater or recycled water for this purpose.
- Where possible, reduce the frequency of cleaning external equipment and flooring.

## Equipment modification

- Floor mats, 'clean zones', and other methods can be used to reduce the tracking of waste and dirt throughout a facility.
- Fitting washing equipment with aerated spray nozzles and shutoff valves will reduce water use.

## Saving water in business

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