



Strategic Framework For Achieving Cleanliness And Hygiene in Public Environments

A special report
by Delia Cannings,
Immediate Past
Chair of the British
Cleaning Council
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We welcome the release of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Handwashing Standards.

They are a firm foundation for providing safe and healthy facilities, though we need further steps to improve UK public health, save lives, protect the economy from billions of pounds lost every year in sickness absence and prevent thousands of school days being lost to sickness annually.

We at the British Cleaning Council (BCC) – the industry body representing the £67bn cleaning, hygiene and waste industry – and our industry partners believe that higher standards of cleaning across workplaces and public spaces, combined with the handwashing measures recommended by the WHO, are the best way of reducing the spread of common infections such as flu and protecting against another pandemic.

The benefits would include reducing the UK's huge bill for sickness absences from work (estimated by The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) at over £103 billion in 2023) and stopping thousands of pupils missing school through illness (GOV.UK statistics service indicate that as of autumn term 2024/25, 88,064 pupils (6.88 percent) were persistently absent due to illness).

We have published this Strategic Framework For Achieving Cleanliness And Hygiene in Public Environments to build on the WHO standards by giving expert guidance on the issues and methods to be considered when designing a regime of targeted hygiene for public spaces and workplaces, in order to create a cleaner, safer, and healthier environment for everyone.

We are now planning a pilot project which will see the framework implemented in one or more schools, with evidence being collected to demonstrate the impact of measures on reducing both absence rates and the spread of infection to families in the community.

It is hoped that the results of this trial will result in the wide adoption of the Strategic Framework For Achieving Cleanliness And Hygiene in Public Environments in other workplace situations and public spaces.

Delia Cannings,

Immediate Past Chair of the BCC and Director responsible for education and training,

Author of the Strategic Framework For Achieving Cleanliness And Hygiene in Public Environments.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE IN PUBLIC ENVIRONMENTS

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

FOR ACHIEVING CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE IN PUBLIC ENVIRONMENTS

This document is a guidance framework developed by the British Cleaning Council (BCC). The objective is to provide a framework of systematic guidance on how to develop cleaning and hygiene policies for public spaces aimed at preventing the spread of infectious diseases. The aim is to enable managers across a range of environments, for example leisure, retail, hospitality and public transport facilities, to develop a multimodal policy appropriate to the specific needs and challenges of the environment they are responsible for i.e. a policy that includes both cleaning and the subsequent measurement of outcomes.

A strategic framework involves a systematic approach to maintaining cleanliness and preventing the spread of infection. It includes:

- definition of hygiene and cleanliness
- assessing risks
- establishing cleaning and hygiene standards
- implementing cleaning and hygiene procedures
- continuously monitoring and improving the process.

This framework has been developed in a way that can be adapted/tailored to specific environments.

1. Key Components

1.1 A definition of cleanliness is freedom from visible dirt

This is important because it is the way that everyone judges, and is reassured, that the environment is safe and clean and contributes to the health and well-being of the public.

1.2 Hygiene is the prevention of the spread of infection

Reducing contamination on hands and environmental surfaces, etc, to reduce the risk of infection to an acceptable level/fit for purpose.

2. Risk Assessment and Risk Management:

The accepted format for assessing the level of infection risk associated with hands and environmental surfaces is as follows:

Risk of infection = Hazard

(Probability of occurrence of infectious agents)

x

exposure

(Probability of exposure to infectious agents)

x

susceptibility

(Vulnerability of population to infection)

Risk of infection from hands and surfaces in occupied spaces varies depending on several factors. Importantly it depends on the likelihood of hands or surfaces being contaminated with an infectious agent. Equally importantly, it depends on the likelihood of exposure to that contaminated surface. For this reason, hands are rated as high risk, because of the probability that they may be contaminated and also because, if contaminated, there is a high probability of exposure to infection by touching the mouth, eyes or nose, or handling ready to eat foods. By contrast, a visibly dirty floor is less likely to be contaminated by microbes that are pathogenic, and there is less opportunity for exposure, compared with a visibly clean surface that is touched by many people.

Risk assessment enables the identification of times and places (critical control points) where hygiene practices are needed. **Risk management** is a multibarrier approach which involves applying hygiene procedures at critical points (times and places) where they work together to reduce exposure to infection.

2.1 Identify functional areas within the total space (office/toilet/classroom, kitchen, etc)

This is important because it is the way that everyone judges, and is reassured, that the environment is safe and clean and contributes to the health and well-being of the public.

2.2 Assess potential sources of hazards in each space:

- people (density and distribution, health status)
- raw foods
- environmental sources, e.g. Legionella in water systems
- identify specific hazards such as bacteria, viruses, and other microorganisms that could pose a risk
- allergens that may be found in dust, fungal spores, pollen, nut-proteins, etc?

2.3 Identify potential hazards (i.e. vectors of contamination)

E.g. hands, frequent hand contact surfaces, other contact surfaces, low contact surfaces, air, toilet aerosols, cleaning utensils, ready-to-eat foods.

Rate each “hazard” according to the level of risk (see equation above).

Within each area:

- a) Identify the sites and surfaces where the probability of contamination is highest and where there is the greatest risk of infection spread. This may include hands, high-touch surfaces such as door handles, light switches, and shared equipment, cleaning utensils, and surfaces where food is prepared or handled.
- b) Identify areas less vulnerable to contamination where sustaining visual cleanliness may be sufficient to maintain required levels of visual cleanliness and hygiene.

3. Hygiene And Cleanliness Standards And Procedures

3.1 Explain basic principles

What is meant by clean, hygienic, safe, fit for purpose?

How is this achieved:

Cleanliness:

- by physical cleaning methods and suitable cleaning agents until surfaces are free from visible dirt.

Hygiene, safe, fit for purpose:

- by removing contamination by industry standard cleaning methods and procedures to reduce it to a level deemed safe/fit for purpose
- removing some contamination by cleaning in a prescribed manner, followed by disinfecting with heat or chemical disinfectant. These work additively to reduce contamination to a level which is safe and fit for purpose
- using a cleaner/disinfectant product which combines removal and reduction to deliver a surface deemed safe/fit for purpose.

3a Establish clear standards

Define the standards for cleanliness which are to be implemented. (For the NHS these are The National Standards of Healthcare 2025. (NSoHC 2025) Identify and implement hygiene standards which are specific to the “hazards” identified in each area. Consideration should be given to the level of risk, type of environment and usage and density of occupation/ vulnerability of occupants, etc.

3b Develop cleaning protocols

Create detailed cleaning procedures for different areas and surfaces, including the frequency of cleaning, the types of cleaning products to use, and the proper techniques for application.

3c Implement disinfection strategies

Determine when and how to use disinfectants to eliminate or reduce harmful microorganisms.

3d Promote personal hygiene

Encourage and support consistent and disciplined personal hygiene practices among individuals, targeted at “risk moments”, e.g. handwashing before eating or after hand contamination.

4. Systems Thinking

Safety/protection against infection is dependent on the procedures carried out by staff and the public practising effective hygiene behaviour within the space. Managers of public spaces also need to adopt responsibility for enabling and encouraging effective behaviours by the public. This involves strategic placement of materials, soap, water, hand driers, hand rubs, and appropriate signage to encourage targeted hygiene behaviours.

5. Implementation And Training

5a Train staff

Provide systematic, industry-standard training to all personnel involved in cleaning and hygiene practices, ensuring they understand the protocols and their roles in maintaining a hygienic environment.

5b Implement cleaning schedules

Establish regular cleaning schedules and assign responsibilities to ensure consistent and thorough cleaning.

5c Communicate effectively

Clearly communicate the hygiene framework, procedures, and expectations to all relevant individuals.

6. Monitoring And Evaluation Of Cleanliness And Hygiene

Monitoring of cleanliness

6a Conduct regular audits

Perform routine audits to assess the effectiveness of cleaning procedures and identify areas for improvement.

6b Collect feedback

Gather feedback from staff, patients, or other stakeholders to understand their experiences and identify potential issues.

6c Review and update

Regularly review the hygiene framework and protocols based on audit results, feedback, and any changes in the environment or risk assessment.

Continuous improvement

6d Incorporate lessons learned

Use the results of audits and feedback to refine cleaning procedures, improve training, and enhance the overall hygiene framework.

6e Stay updated

Keep abreast of the latest scientific evidence and best practices in hygiene and infection control.

By implementing a strategic hygiene framework, organisations can create a cleaner, safer, and healthier environment for everyone.

Appendix 1

General Hygiene Practices

• Handwashing

Frequent and thorough handwashing with soap and water is crucial, especially before handling food, after using the restroom, and after coughing or sneezing.

In community settings, hand hygiene should be practised at key times when disease can be transmitted via the hands. Use plain soap and water for enough time to enable covering the entire hands with soap and thorough scrubbing.

Critical times are:

- before preparing food
- before eating or feeding/breastfeeding others
- after using the toilet or handling faeces
- after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose
- and when hands are visibly dirty.

Alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) is an effective alternative to soap and water when hands are not visibly dirty.

The core requirements for changing and/or sustaining the practice of hand hygiene, which must be collectively implemented, are:

1. access to the minimum material needs
2. access to information on why, when, how and where to clean hands
3. a conducive physical and social environment.

1. Minimum material needs are hand hygiene facilities located on premises that provide reliable access to sufficient running or poured water and soap, or alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR), along with safe disposal for wastewater. For hand hygiene facilities to be reliable, they must consistently have water and soap or ABHR available, ensuring that hand hygiene materials are accessible whenever needed.

2. Information provided should cover the importance of handwashing (why), the key moments for hand hygiene (when), and the proper technique (how) for achieving effective hand hygiene.

3. A conducive environment is essential for encouraging consistent and sustained hand hygiene practices. A conducive physical environment not only facilitates equitable access to materials but also ensures that facilities are convenient, attractive, and easy to use. A conducive social environment utilises social norms, interpersonal dynamics, and routines to promote and reinforce regular and effective hand hygiene among individuals and groups.

• Personal Grooming

Regular showering or bathing, teeth brushing, hair washing, and nail trimming are essential for personal hygiene.

• Cleanliness

Keeping living and working spaces clean, including regular cleaning of surfaces and disposal of waste, is also important.

Specific Area Standards

Food Handling

Food handlers must adhere to strict hygiene standards, including handwashing, wearing clean clothes, and avoiding working when unwell.

E.g. washing hands after touching raw food, after handling waste, and after cleaning surfaces.

Healthcare

Healthcare settings have detailed standards for environmental cleanliness, infection control, and decontamination of medical equipment.

E.g. Implementing deep cleaning procedures and ensuring proper disposal of medical waste

Workplaces

Workplaces should maintain a clean and safe environment, with attention to high-traffic areas and touchpoints.

E.g. providing hand sanitiser, cleaning wipes, and ensuring proper ventilation.

Appendix 2

Cleaning Definitions

Handwashing

The main aim of handwashing is to remove dirt, viruses, and bacteria from your hands to prevent the spread of illness and infection to yourself and others. By washing your hands with soap and water, you eradicate germs that can cause various diseases, including food poisoning, flu, and diarrhoea.

Handwashing contributes to:

- **Preventing infections:** Handwashing is a vital step in preventing the spread of infectious diseases, such as gastrointestinal infections (like salmonellosis) and respiratory infections (like influenza and COVID-19).
- **Breaking the chain of transmission:** Germs can be transferred from your hands to your eyes, nose, or mouth, allowing them to enter your body and cause illness. Additionally, unwashed hands can contaminate food and drinks, leading to illness.
- **Reducing cross-contamination:** Germs on your hands can also be transferred to surfaces like doorknobs, handrails, and tables, potentially infecting others.
- **Overall health and well-being:** By practising good hand hygiene, you can improve your personal hygiene and contribute to preventing the spread of disease, ultimately leading to better overall health and well-being.

PPE: Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is provided without cost to employees to safeguard them from workplace hazards that could lead to injury, illness, or even death.

PPE serves as a last line of defence when other control measures, such as eliminating or substituting hazards, are insufficient to protect workers.

If provided, it must be worn.

The specific type of PPE required will be determined by a risk assessment.

PPE is designed to safeguard employees from a wide range of workplace hazards, including:

- **Physical hazards:** Such as sharp objects, falling objects, extreme temperatures, and noise.
- **Chemical hazards:** Including exposure to corrosive or toxic substances.
- **Biological hazards:** Such as infectious agents.
- **Electrical hazards:** Preventing shocks and burns.
- **Radiation hazards:** Minimising exposure to harmful radiation.

Types of personal protective equipment (PPE)

PPE can include items like:

- **Head protection:** Hard hats and helmets.
- **Eye and face protection:** Safety glasses, goggles, and face shields.
- **Hearing protection:** Earplugs and earmuffs.
- **Respiratory protection:** Masks and respirators.
- **Hand protection:** Gloves.
- **Foot and leg protection:** Safety shoes and boots.
- **Body protection:** Protective clothing such as overalls, aprons and tabards.

Legal requirement

Employers are legally required to provide PPE to employees when a risk assessment identifies a need for it.

Importance of proper use

Employees must be trained in the proper use of PPE provided. Understand how to properly select, use, and maintain their PPE to ensure it provides adequate protection.

Preparation To Clean

Preparing to clean involves gathering supplies, decluttering, and potentially addressing specific areas that need attention. This proactive approach ensures a more efficient and thorough cleaning process, whether it's for a professional service or a personal deep clean.

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1. Assemble cleaning equipment

- **Cleaning products:** Assemble cleaning agents, check safety data sheets (SDS) and prepare solutions (detergents, disinfectants, etc.) according to the manufacturer's recommended dilution ratio. Check that they are appropriate for the surfaces to be cleaned.
- **Cleaning tools:** Collect items such as colour-coded cloths, buckets and mopping systems, dust control mops, suction cleaners etc, and any specialised tools needed for the task.
- **Prepare cleaning machines:** Check they have an in-date PAT test labelled properly and signed. Check cables, handles, hoses, tanks, wheels, and attachments are clean, free-moving and ready for use.
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** Select hand protection, aprons, masks, and eye protection to ensure your safety.
- **Colour-coded waste bags and containers:** Have these on hand to collect, segregate and dispose of waste and debris.

2. Prepare to clean

- **Provide access:** Remove items from all surfaces, such as, floors, tables, to allow for easy access and thorough cleaning.
- **Clear surfaces:** Clear away items e.g. paper, and large objects such as used drink cans.

3. Prepare for specific areas

- **Kitchen:** Clear countertops, empty rubbish bins, and clean dirty dishes before the cleaning begins.
- **Bathroom:** Remove personal items and check the cleanliness of the WC.
- **Floors:** Suction-clean dust control mop/dustpan and brush to remove loose debris and prepare for mopping.

4. Communication and scheduling

Communicate expectations

- Understand the cleaning specification so you are clear about what has to be cleaned, the standards required, and the frequency of cleaning needed to achieve this.
- A cleaning schedule will ensure all areas are cleaned in a timely manner.

Cleaning Schedule

A cleaning schedule is a plan that outlines the tasks needed to maintain cleanliness, specifying what, when, and how often cleaning should be done, and who is responsible for each task. It's a way to organise and manage cleaning operations, ensuring regular upkeep and preventing the buildup of dirt and grime.

Reasons for having a plan include:

- **Organisation:** A cleaning schedule helps structure and organise cleaning tasks, making it easier to maintain a clean environment.
- **Efficiency:** By outlining tasks and their frequency, it helps optimise cleaning efforts and time management.
- **Consistency:** Regular cleaning, as per the schedule, ensures a consistently clean space.
- **Accountability:** It clearly defines who is responsible for which tasks, promoting accountability and making it easier to track progress.
- **Preventing buildup:** A schedule helps prevent the accumulation of dirt, grease, and bacteria by addressing cleaning tasks regularly.
- **Health and safety:** In environments like commercial kitchens, a cleaning schedule is essential for maintaining hygiene and preventing contamination.

Elements of a cleaning schedule

These include:

- **Task list:** Specifies the cleaning activities to be performed, such as dusting, suction cleaning, damp-mopping, etc.
- **Frequency:** Indicates how often each task needs to be done (hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, etc.).

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- **Areas of responsibility:** Identifies who is responsible for each task.
- **Time allocation:** Estimates the time required for each task or area, helping with scheduling.
- **Cleaning methods:** Details the specific methods and products to be used for each task.
- **Review dates:** Provides a timeline for reviewing and adjusting the schedule as needed.
- **Relevant factors:** Includes any other important considerations, like specific equipment or safety precautions.

Examples of frequencies used in cleaning schedules

- **Hourly:** Checking WCs in public areas.
- **Daily:** Emptying bins, wiping down surfaces, cleaning restrooms.
- **Weekly:** Vacuuming, dusting, cleaning bathrooms, and changing bed linens.
- **Monthly:** Cleaning windows, deep cleaning carpets, servicing appliances.

Benefits in different settings:

- **Residential:** Keeps homes clean and organised, promoting a comfortable living environment.
- **Commercial:** Ensures a clean and safe environment for employees and customers, and can be crucial for maintaining health and safety standards.

Work Surfaces

In the workplace, surfaces are critical for safety and efficiency. These include walking surfaces like floors, stairs, and platforms, as well as work surfaces such as worktops and tables. Specific materials and features are chosen based on the type of work and potential hazards. For example, floors should be slip-resistant, and work surfaces in laboratories or food processing areas need to be easy to clean and sanitise.

Walking and working surfaces

- **Floors:** Must be suitable for the type of work, in good condition, and free from obstructions to prevent slips, trips, and falls.
- **Stairs:** Should be solid, have handrails, and have non-slip coverings.
- **Platforms:** Raised surfaces that need guardrails and proper support.
- **Walkways:** Paths and corridors that should be obstacle-free and well-lit.
- **Ramps and slopes:** Should be designed to prevent slips and falls, especially when wet or icy.

Work surface types

- **Work surfaces and tables:** Should be durable, easy to clean, and resistant to chemicals and heat, especially in laboratories or food processing areas.
- **Specialised surfaces:** Depending on the industry, surfaces may need to be conductive, non-conductive, or resistant to specific chemicals or temperatures.
- **Outdoor surfaces:** May need to withstand weather conditions and be designed for vehicle traffic.

Material considerations

- **Flooring:** Can be made of quarry tiles, terrazzo, vinyl, concrete, epoxy resin, rubber or other materials, depending on the needs of the workplace.
- **Work surfaces:** Common materials include stainless steel, phenolic resin, high-density polyethylene (HDPE), wood, and engineered stone. Wood and wood veneer tables of variable quality will be found in office suites where appearance is important.
- **Considerations:** Durability, resistance to chemicals, heat, and moisture, ease of cleaning, and slip resistance are all important factors when choosing materials.

Key safety considerations

- **Slips, trips, and falls:** These are a major cause of workplace accidents, so floors and other walking surfaces must be designed to minimise these risks.

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- **Fall protection:** Scaffolds, platforms, and roofs must have appropriate fall protection systems in place.
- **Obstructions:** Walkways and traffic routes must be kept clear of obstacles.
- **Lighting:** Adequate lighting is essential for safe movement around the workplace.
- **Maintenance:** Surfaces should be regularly inspected and maintained to ensure they remain safe and functional.

Soil

In cleaning science, soil is often described as matter in the wrong place. Soil for cleaning purposes may be classified based on its composition, such as organic matter, bacteria, viruses, oil, grit and dust.

The nature of the building and its purpose will have an impact on the type of soil, e.g. a garage, hospital or bakery.

Soil may be categorised as either hazardous or non-hazardous.

Hazardous soils contain harmful substances like infectious micro-organisms, heavy metals or hydrocarbons, while non-hazardous soils have lower levels of these contaminants or are considered inert.

Chemical Competence

In cleaning, chemical competence refers to the knowledge and skills required to safely and effectively handle, use, and dispose of cleaning chemicals, while also understanding the associated risks and regulations. It encompasses understanding the types of chemicals used, their potential hazards, and how to mitigate those hazards through proper procedures and personal protective equipment.

1. Understanding chemical properties

- **Types of chemicals:** Knowing the difference between acids, alkalis (bases), and neutral cleaners, and how their pH levels affect their cleaning ability and safety.
- **Chemical reactions:** Recognising that even seemingly simple cleaning products involve chemical reactions to achieve their cleaning action.

- **Hazard identification:** Being able to identify potential hazards associated with cleaning chemicals based on labels and Safety Data Sheets (SDS).
- **Safe storage:** Understanding how to properly store cleaning chemicals to prevent accidents and maintain their effectiveness.

2. Safe handling practices

- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** Knowing when and how to use appropriate PPE, such as gloves, aprons, and eye protection.
- **Proper mixing and dilution:** Understanding how to correctly prepare and dilute cleaning agents according to the manufacturer's instructions and safety guidelines.
- **Safe application:** Using the right cleaning agent for the right task and applying it safely to avoid damage to surfaces or harm to oneself or others.
- **Safe disposal:** Knowing how to dispose of spent or unused cleaning solutions and their containers according to regulations to prevent environmental contamination.

3. Regulatory compliance

- **COSHH regulations:** Understanding and adhering to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations, which are crucial for managing risks associated with hazardous substances.
- **Safety Data Sheet (SDS) interpretation:** Being able to understand and interpret the information provided on Safety Data Sheets.
- **Legal requirements:** Being aware of and complying with relevant laws and regulations related to the use of cleaning chemicals.

4. Importance of chemical competence

- **Safety:** Protecting the health and safety of cleaning staff and others in the environment.
- **Effectiveness:** Ensuring that cleaning chemicals are used effectively to achieve the desired cleaning results.
- **Environmental protection:** Preventing environmental contamination from improper disposal of chemicals.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Avoiding legal issues by adhering to relevant regulations.

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Colour Coding In The Cleaning Industry

The primary purpose of colour-coding in cleaning is to prevent cross-contamination by visually differentiating cleaning equipment and assigning specific colours to different areas or tasks. This helps minimise the risk of transferring bacteria, viruses, and allergens from one area to another, leading to a safer and more hygienic environment.

Here's a more detailed breakdown:

- **Red:** Often designated for washrooms, toilets, and other sanitary areas.
- **Blue:** Typically used for general cleaning in low-risk areas such as offices or common areas.
- **Green:** Commonly used in food preparation and dining areas to maintain hygiene standards.
- **Yellow:** Often used in clinical settings or areas with a higher risk of biological contamination.

Preventing cross-contamination

By assigning specific colours to cleaning tools, the risk of transferring harmful pathogens from one area to another is significantly reduced.

Streamlining the cleaning process

Colour-coding can also make the cleaning process more efficient by quickly identifying the correct equipment for each task.

Improved hygiene

Implementing a colour-coded system ensures that cleaning practices are consistent and thorough, leading to a cleaner and healthier environment overall.

Public health benefits

Colour-coded cleaning is particularly important in healthcare settings, food service, and environments with vulnerable individuals to reduce the spread of infections.

Cleaning Techniques

The main cleaning techniques can be broadly categorised into mechanical and chemical methods.

Mechanical cleaning involves physically removing dirt and debris, while chemical methods utilise cleaning agents to break down, dissolve and suspend soil.

Common mechanical techniques include dusting, suction cleaning, mopping methods, and scrubbing.

Chemical methods involve using detergents, degreasers, acids, and abrasives to achieve different cleaning goals.

Mechanical cleaning techniques

- **Dusting:** Removing loose dust and debris from surfaces using a correctly folded colour-coded cloth.
- **Suction cleaning:** Removing dirt, dust, and debris from carpets and hard floors using a suction/vacuum cleaner.
- **Mopping - dust control:** Using a dust control mop working to a specified technique to collect and retain the soil, keeping the mop head in contact with the surface at all times to prevent an increase of airborne dust.
- **Damp mopping:** Using a bucket system and damp mop to collect and retain loosely adherent soil.
- **Wet mopping:** Using a bucket system and mop(s) to apply, collect and retain ingrained or heavy soiling. Avoidance of double dipping is critical in healthcare environments. Cleaning may be followed by rinsing.
- **Scrubbing:** A scrubbing machine with colour-coded pad or brush, often together with a wet-pickup to remove ingrained soil and collect residues.

Chemical cleaning techniques

- **Detergents - surfactants:** neutral, alkali, acidic. May also be referred to as anionic, cationic, non-ionic or amphoteric. Neutral/anionic detergents are used for a range of general cleaning and breaking down dirt and grease.
- **Degreasers:** Often alkali. Specifically designed to remove grease and oils from surfaces
- **Acids:** Used to remove mineral deposits e.g. toilet descalers, and rust.

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- **Abrasives:** Detergents combined with fine powders such as China clay used to scrub and remove tough stains and dirt.

Other important techniques

- **Disinfecting:** Reducing the number of microorganisms on surfaces, often using chemicals like bleach (hypochlorite) or specialised sanitising sprays containing quaternary ammonium compounds.
- **Sanitising:** Reducing germs to levels considered safe by public health standards.
- **Steam cleaning:** Using high-temperature steam to clean and sanitise surfaces, often without chemicals.
- **UV light:** Emitters may also be used by robotic cleaning machines to autonomously clean specific areas.

Additional considerations

- **Preparation:** Clearing clutter and debris before cleaning helps improve efficiency.
- **Top-to-bottom approach:** Cleaning from top to bottom prevents dust and debris from falling onto already cleaned areas.
- **Consistent direction:** Cleaning from left to right (or vice versa) ensures thoroughness and avoids missed spots.
- **Following instructions:** Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning products and equipment.
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** Wear appropriate PPE, like gloves and aprons, to protect yourself.

Safe Use And Care Of Cleaning Equipment

Safe and proper use and care of cleaning equipment is essential for both worker safety and maintaining the equipment's effectiveness. This includes regular cleaning, proper storage, and adherence to safety guidelines.

Considerations for safe use include:

- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** Always wear appropriate PPE, such as gloves, masks, and eye protection, when handling cleaning chemicals or equipment that may cause splashes or inhalation hazards.
- **Read labels and instructions:** Carefully read and follow the manufacturer's instructions and safety data sheets (SDS) for all cleaning products and equipment.
- **Proper techniques:** Use correct techniques for cleaning tasks, such as moving from top to bottom, to avoid spreading dirt and germs.
- **Ventilation:** Ensure adequate ventilation when using cleaning chemicals, especially in enclosed spaces, to prevent inhalation of fumes.
- **Do not mix cleaning chemicals:** Never mix different cleaning chemicals, as this can create hazardous fumes or reactions.
- **Prevent slips and trips:** Keep work areas tidy, clean up spills immediately, and use non-slip cleaning agents on floors.
- **Check equipment:** Inspect equipment for damage or wear before each use and report any issues to a supervisor. Ensure any PAT certificate is in date.
- **Proper storage:** Store cleaning chemicals and equipment safely. Where it is not practical to store the heaviest items at waist level, store them at lower levels.
- **Expiry dates:** Use an effective stock rotation system and ensure cleaning agents are in date for use.
- **Segregate equipment:** By type and organise the storeroom for access and return.
- **Training:** Ensure all users are properly trained on the safe use of cleaning equipment and chemicals.

Care and maintenance

- **Clean after use:** Clean all equipment after each use, including mop heads, buckets, and vacuum cleaners.
- **Dry thoroughly:** Ensure all equipment is thoroughly dried before storage to prevent rust and bacterial growth.
- **Proper storage:** Store equipment in designated areas, organised and easily accessible.

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- **Regular maintenance:** Check equipment regularly for damage, wear, and proper functioning.
- **Replace worn parts:** Replace worn or damaged parts, such as vacuum bags, filters, and spray bottle triggers, as needed.
- **Empty and rinse:** Empty and rinse mop buckets, vacuum tanks, and other equipment after each use to prevent odours and bacterial growth.
- **Maintain chemicals:** Keep chemical containers closed and store them properly, following manufacturer guidelines.
- **Dispose of properly:** Dispose of old or damaged equipment and chemicals according to local regulations.
- **Follow manufacturer instructions:** Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and maintaining equipment.

Storage Of Cleaning Materials

Steps to take include:

- Keep cleaning products in their original containers.
- Store incompatible chemicals and flammable substances separately.
- Place them in a cool, dry, and well-ventilated area, away from heat sources and direct sunlight.
- Use a dedicated storage space, such as a locked cupboard, for added safety.
- Ensure that all containers are properly labelled.

By following these practices, you can help ensure safer storage of cleaning materials.

1. Original containers and labels

- Always store cleaning products in their original containers to prevent accidental mixing or misidentification.
- Ensure labels are intact and legible for easy identification of contents and potential hazards.
- Avoid transferring cleaning products to unlabelled or different containers, especially food containers.

2. Separate storage

- Store incompatible chemicals like acids and bases separately to prevent dangerous reactions.
- Keep flammable substances away from ignition sources and in a flameproof cupboard or separate store.
- Consider segregating cleaning products by type (e.g., bathroom cleaners, kitchen cleaners).

3. Storage environment

- Choose a cool, dry, and well-ventilated area for storing cleaning chemicals.
- Avoid storing chemicals near heat sources like radiators or direct sunlight.
- Ensure adequate ventilation to prevent the buildup of fumes.

4. Secure storage

- Use a dedicated storage area like a locked cupboard or a separate storage room.
- Keep cleaning supplies out of reach of children and pets.
- Consider using childproof locks on cabinets storing hazardous materials.

5. Other considerations

- Store dry goods on shelves at least six inches off the floor to prevent contamination from the floor.
- Conduct regular checks of storage areas and chemicals for any signs of damage or leaks.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for specific storage requirements.

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Safe Disposal Of Cleaning Solutions

Safe disposal of unused or spent cleaning solutions depends on their contents and volume. For small amounts of general cleaning water, rinse down a dedicated sluice sink. For larger quantities or water with potentially hazardous chemicals, it's best to contact your local council or a licensed waste carrier for proper disposal.

For small amounts of general used/spent cleaning solutions

In most cases, disposing spent and unused cleaning solutions down a dedicated sluice sink or drain is acceptable.

- **Consider the chemicals:** If the cleaning solution contains harsh chemicals, it's best to check the product label for specific disposal instructions. Some chemicals may require special handling.

For larger volumes of cleaning water, or water containing hazardous substances:

- **Contact your local council:** They can advise on appropriate disposal methods, including whether they offer a special collection service for hazardous waste.
- **Use a licensed waste carrier:** If your local council doesn't handle it, a licensed waste carrier can collect and dispose of the water properly.
- **Reuse or recycle:** If possible, explore options for reusing or recycling the water, especially if it's not heavily contaminated.

Important considerations

- **Waste duty of care:** If you're a business, you have a legal duty to ensure your waste is handled and disposed of responsibly.
- **Environmental permits:** Some disposal methods, like land-spreading, may require an environmental permit.
- **Specific chemicals:** Some cleaning agents, e.g. organic solvents used for graffiti removal, will require specific disposal methods.

Cleaning

Cleaning is the process of removing visible dirt, soil, and debris from surfaces. It involves physically eliminating unwanted materials like dust, food particles, and spills, often using methods like wiping, suction cleaning, or scrubbing. Cleaning is a crucial step in maintaining hygiene and can be done with or without the use of cleaning agents like soap or detergents. While cleaning removes visible contaminants, it may not necessarily kill all bacteria or viruses.

- **Removal of visible dirt and debris:** Cleaning generally focuses on removing visible soil from surfaces.
- **Methods of cleaning:** Cleaning can be accomplished through various techniques, including:
 - **Wiping:** Using a colour-coded cloth or paper towel to remove surface dirt.
 - **Vacuuming/suction cleaning:** Using a vacuum/suction cleaner to remove loose dirt and debris from carpets and floors.
 - **Scrubbing:** Using a brush or graded abrasive pad to remove stubborn dirt and stains.
 - **Mopping:** Using a mop to clean floors and can be subdivided into:
 - **Dust control mopping**
 - **Damp mopping**
 - **Wet mopping**
- **Cleaning agents:** Cleaning can be done with or without the use of cleaning agents such as detergents or other specialised cleaning products. Water is the common solute. Temperature is often a key factor to consider.
- **Hygiene and health:** Cleaning is essential for maintaining hygiene and preventing the spread of germs and bacteria.
- **Distinction from sanitising, disinfecting and sterilisation:** While cleaning removes visible dirt, sanitising reduces the number of microorganisms, disinfecting reduces them to a specified low level, and sterilisation kills them entirely.

Appendix 2 continued

Disinfection

Disinfection is the process of eliminating or reducing harmful microorganisms, like bacteria, viruses, and fungi, on inanimate objects or surfaces to a level that is no longer immediately harmful. It typically involves using chemical or physical methods, such as heat, to destroy or inactivate these pathogens. Disinfection differs from sterilisation, which aims to eliminate all microorganisms, including bacterial spores.

- **Target:** Disinfection primarily targets pathogens that can cause disease, but it may not eliminate all microorganisms, particularly bacterial spores.
- **Methods:** Disinfection can be achieved through various methods, including:
 - **Chemical disinfection:** Using chemical agents like bleach (sodium hypochlorite), alcohols, or quaternary ammonium compounds to kill or inactivate microorganisms.
 - **Physical disinfection:** Employing methods like dry heat, wet heat (pasteurisation) or UV radiation to disinfect surfaces.
- **Purpose:** The main goal of disinfection is to reduce the risk of infection and disease transmission by minimising the presence of harmful microorganisms on surfaces and objects.
- **Difference from sterilisation:** Sterilisation is a more thorough process that eliminates all forms of microbial life, including bacterial spores, while disinfection may not.

Infection prevention and control (IPC)

This is a practical discipline focused on preventing healthcare-associated infections. It's a key component of public health and involves interrupting the chain of transmission of infectious agents. Central to IPC is hand hygiene, which is a cornerstone in controlling the spread of infections, especially in healthcare settings.

- **Preventing infections:** IPC aims to minimise the risk of patients, healthcare workers, and the wider community acquiring infections in healthcare settings and other environments.
- **Interrupting transmission:** A core principle is to break the chain of infection. This involves identifying and controlling the source of infection, interrupting the route of transmission, and protecting susceptible individuals.

- **Hand hygiene:** This is a crucial aspect of IPC, emphasising the importance of frequent and effective handwashing with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitisers.
- **Other measures:** IPC also includes practices like proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), sterilisation and disinfection of equipment, waste management, and surveillance of infections.
- **Public health significance:** IPC is a vital part of public health, helping to reduce the burden of infections and promote overall well-being.

Auditing Cleaning Standards

Auditing cleaning standards involves evaluating the effectiveness and compliance of cleaning practices against established criteria. These standards assess various aspects like surface cleanliness, proper use of cleaning equipment, adherence to health and safety protocols, and overall hygiene levels. They aim to identify areas for improvement, ensure consistency, and maintain a clean and healthy environment. They will often require sampling a statistically viable selection of rooms, each of which is deemed to have passed or failed.

Key aspects of cleaning auditing standards

- **Visual cleanliness:** Assessing the general appearance of surfaces and areas for cleanliness, including dust, dirt, and clutter.
- **Surface cleanliness:** Checking for the thoroughness of cleaning on various surfaces, such as floors, walls, and furniture.
- **Equipment and materials:** Evaluating the condition, proper use, and maintenance of cleaning equipment and materials.
- **Cleaning procedures:** Ensuring that cleaning staff follow established procedures and protocols for different areas and tasks.
- **Health and safety:** Verifying compliance with health and safety regulations, including proper use of chemicals, waste disposal, and infection control.
- **Consistency:** Assessing the consistency of cleaning practices across different areas and during different shifts.

Appendix 2 continued

- **Effectiveness:** Evaluating the effectiveness of cleaning in reducing risks of contamination, infection, and spread of germs.
- **Training and staffing:** Assessing the training and knowledge of cleaning staff regarding cleaning procedures and hygiene standards.
- **Compliance with standards:** Ensuring that cleaning practices align with relevant standards, such as the National Standards of Healthcare Cleanliness.

Examples of cleaning auditing standards

- **Healthcare settings:** Audits may focus on ensuring compliance with infection control protocols and maintaining a safe environment for patients and staff.
- **Commercial buildings:** Audits may assess the cleanliness of offices, common areas, and restrooms, ensuring a positive impression for employees and visitors.
- **Food service:** Audits may focus on hygiene standards in kitchens, dining areas, and storage areas to prevent foodborne illnesses.

Benefits of cleaning audits

- **Improved hygiene and cleanliness:** Audits help identify areas needing improvement, leading to a cleaner and healthier environment.
- **Reduced risk of infection and contamination:** By ensuring proper cleaning practices, audits help minimise the spread of germs and infections.
- **Enhanced safety:** Audits verify compliance with health and safety regulations, promoting a safer environment for everyone.
- **Increased efficiency and productivity:** Cleanliness can impact employee morale and productivity, and audits help maintain a positive work environment.
- **Cost savings:** By identifying areas for improvement, audits can help optimise cleaning schedules and reduce unnecessary costs.
- **Meeting regulatory requirements:** Audits help ensure compliance with relevant standards and regulations.

Types of cleaning audits

- **Visual audits:** Focus on the overall appearance and cleanliness of an area.
- **Efficacy audits:** Evaluate the effectiveness of cleaning procedures and techniques.
- **Compliance audits:** Assess adherence to specific standards and regulations.
- **Environmental audits:** Evaluate the impact of cleaning practices on the environment.

Root cause analysis

The primary purpose of root cause analysis (RCA) is to identify the underlying causes of problems or failures, rather than just addressing the symptoms.

It aims to prevent recurrence and improve overall performance.

By understanding the fundamental reasons why something went wrong, organisations can implement effective solutions that address the core issue, leading to long-term improvements and preventing future incidents.

Steps in root cause analysis

1. **Define the problem:** Clearly identify and describe the problem.
2. **Gather data:** Collect relevant information about the problem and its context.
3. **Identify causal factors:** Determine the factors that contributed to the problem, using RCA techniques.
4. **Determine the root cause(s):** Pinpoint the fundamental causes of the problem.
5. **Recommend and implement solutions:** Develop and implement solutions that address the root causes.
6. **Monitor and evaluate:** Track the effectiveness of the implemented solutions and make adjustments as needed.

The British Cleaning Council is the voice of the UK cleaning hygiene and waste industry, which is one of the UK's top ten biggest sectors, worth nearly £67bn a year to the country's economy and employing 1.49m people.

The BCC is a trade association, with 20 member organisations from all across the cleaning, hygiene and waste industry.



British Cleaning Council
c/o Clifford Roberts
Pacioli House
9 Brookfield
Duncan Close
Moulton Park
Northampton
NN3 6WL

info@britishcleaningcouncil.org
www.britishcleaningcouncil.org

Twitter @BritishCleaning
Facebook search "British Cleaning Council"
Linked In search 'british-cleaning-council-bcc'

