Environmentally Preferable Products Purchasing Program

Cleaning the Bathroom

OPERATIONAL SERVICES DIVISION

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts maintains many beaches, parks, historic sites, institutions, and public facilities. The open access to the public and during events, summer, and vacation periods pose challenges to Agency staff responsible for maintaining and cleaning these facilities. This factsheet provides guidance for cleaning the bathroom in public settings—to reduce the risk of disease caused by contact with germs, to reduce the risk of exposure to hazardous cleaning products, and to eliminate odors.

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Cleaning the Bathroom:

Cleaning and sanitizing/ disinfecting are two separate and distinct processes. Cleaning removes soil and germs. Disinfecting or sanitizing kills or destroys any remaining germs chemically. This process can only be done effectively after cleaning.

Germs: There are a limited number of germs that can cause disease and be passed from person to person or person to object from contact with feces, vomit, or in a public bathroom or childcare centers. This includes, for example, noroviruses, Hepatitis A and Shigella (dysentery). These bacteria and viruses are not absorbed through the skin but exposure occurs when they are ingested. There are other diseases such as blood borne diseases that are potentially transmitted when infected blood enters a person's body through an opening in the skin or through splashes of infected blood into the eyes, nose or mouth. These diseases include Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV.

The most important ways to prevent the spread of disease is to avoid getting germs into your nose, mouth or eyes by:

1. Frequent hand washing, especially after using the bathroom.
2. Avoiding touching your face, mouth, nose and eyes with unwashed hands.
3. Using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

Cleaning - Removing dirt with detergent and water is the most effective and safest way to remove soils and germs. The addition of disinfectant or sanitizer chemicals designed to chemically destroy germs is only needed in specific situations. Disinfectant /sanitizer chemicals are pesticides and may cause health problems, including coughing, wheezing, asthma, and eye, nose, throat and skin irritation. Selecting safer cleaning products and limiting disinfectants will protect staff using the products, as well as the public using the facilities. It is also important to note that:

CLEAN DOES NOT HAVE A SMELL!

Sanitizing/Disinfection - Disinfectants should be used ***after*** cleaning and ***only*** on the toilet, diaper changing surface, and anywhere there is visible contamination from feces, vomit or blood. Sanitizers/disinfectants must remain wet on the surface for a specified length of time to kill germs (dwell or kill time) as directed on the label.

State agencies should not use disinfectants for cleaning – Disinfectants do not clean. Disinfectants should be used only on select surfaces and for specified purposes. Any product calling itself a disinfectant/ cleaner should be avoided – they cost more than regular cleaning products and they contain pesticides where you don't need them.

Sanitizers and disinfectants are pesticides, which are hazardous chemicals and should be used with caution. As pesticides, they are regulated by the EPA and cannot be labeled "green." Sanitizers and disinfectants should only be used in certain circumstances, where required by regulation and where deemed essential; for example, on surfaces that were contaminated with feces, vomit and/or blood.

Staff assigned to use disinfectants should be trained on

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proper use (especially selection of surfaces, safe work practices, including dilution); they should receive personal protective equipment and receive training about use and limitations.

Many disinfectant and sanitizing products contain bleach or quats (quaternary ammonium products). These products are capable of causing asthma, can cause irritation of the eyes, nose, throat and skin, and contribute to environmental pollution. Quats may also contribute to the development of antibiotic resistant germs.

Safer Sanitizing and Disinfecting: The safer sanitizing and disinfecting products include: accelerated hydrogen peroxide, silver ions, citric acid, caprylic acid, and thymol, or equipment that uses steam instead of chemicals.

The Commonwealth's Statewide Contract FAC59: Green Cleaning Products, Programs, Supplies and Equipment: The Commonwealth joined with other New England states to issue FAC59 as a means to promote the health of the public, cleaning and maintenance workers and the environment through the selection and use of safer, greener products and practices. The contract requires cleaning chemicals to be third-party certified by either Green Seal or Ecologo which evaluate both how well the product cleans and the impact of the chemical ingredients on human health and the environment. In addition, the contract offers equipment such as steam cleaning, and no-hands wet, dry vacuum systems offer additional environmentally preferable options.

The Commonwealth maintains an Approved Green Products List for FAC59 that contains all the products offered on this contract.

Agencies should only use disinfectants included on FAC59 and designated as effective for the target germs you need to kill. For more information on Green Cleaning and to view the Approved Products list, visit the EPP website at www.mass.gov/EPP.

Best Management Practices

1. Only use sanitizers and disinfectants where needed.
Obtain two types of products for disinfecting needs. Use a product specifically registered by EPA for blood spills. Some facilities choose to have a "spill kit" available for use on such blood-contaminated surfaces. A different product should be used for toileting areas, and for areas contaminated with vomit or feces. Some choose to use a disinfectant product on high touch surfaces after cleaning vomit, feces or blood.

2. Make sure bathroom supplies are available.
It is important to provide reliable toilet facilities (running water, preferably warm) and adequate supplies (toilet paper, liquid soap, paper towels or hand dryers) to maintain cleanliness and reduce the chance of spreading germs. A closed container for waste and disposable diapers should also be considered.

3. Provide hand soaps without antimicrobial ingredients.
Washing with soap and water is very effective at removing germs. Antimicrobial ingredients do not work better than soap and do not serve to reduce disease. They do end up in our water, contributing to antibiotic resistance.

4. Do not use air fresheners.
They mask odors by adding chemical scents, many of which have health hazards.

5. Inspect, clean and replenish bathroom supplies as frequently as needed, depending on use.
This may mean very frequently (more than once a day) on busy weekends and during events, and daily to weekly during minimal use and the off-season.

6. Use only cleaning products certified by Green Seal or Ecologo.
All-purpose cleaners should be used on hard surfaces—sinks, doorknobs, faucets, and floors. Approved glass cleaners should be used on windows and mirrors. MA State Contract #FAC59 provides many options to select high performing, cost-effective safer cleaning products.

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7. Only use the amount of product indicated.
Remember that adding more of a concentrate will not result in better cleaning; use the amount as directed.

8. Use microfiber cloths and mops.
Microfiber materials improve removal of soil and germs, and reduce the total quantity of chemical cleaning products needed.

9. Avoid the use of aerosols.
Aerosolizing chemicals make them easier to inhale and get on your skin. Wet the microfiber cloth and apply to the hard surface for most cleaning tasks.

10. Never mix cleaning chemicals together.
There may be unexpected reactions and vapors that could be inhaled and pose health risks.

11. Ensure that staff using products are involved in the selection and evaluation and receive training.
Managers and staff should work as a team to select and use products that meet building requirements.

12. Consider automated dispensing systems.
Automated dispensing systems dispense products at set dilution rates, ensuring that neither too much nor too little product is used.

13. Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) as needed.
Make available appropriate PPE for the tasks assigned. This may include gloves, safety glasses or face shields, and aprons, especially if large quantities of chemicals are being diluted.

14. Odor problems may require additional attention.
Odors are frequently caused by urine residues remaining after cleaning. They can be effectively controlled by using better cleaning practices and procedures. A special remediation effort may be necessary to address urine that has become deeply embedded in flooring materials. The enzymatic products available on the FAC59 contract may be useful in these areas.

15. Maintain and make available copies of the Safety Data Sheets for all products.
Make sure copies of the Safety Data Sheets (formerly known as Material Safety Data Sheets) are available on-site and reviewed during required Right-to-Know training. These factsheets provide information about the hazards of products used and related precautions as well as guidance about PPE and emergency measures.

16. Involve staff in selecting products and processes used: Involve staff in selecting products and processes used. Explore steam cleaning and other non-chemical approaches to cleaning.

Resources

Massachusetts EPP Procurement Program
www.mass.gov/epp

OSHA-NIOSH Poster (available in other languages)
www.osha.gov/Publications/3511-CleanChemPoster.pdf and
Informational sheet on cleaning
www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3512.pdf

EPA Green Bathrooms:
www.epa.gov/greenhomes/bathroom.htm#bathrom-practices

Green Seal www.greenseal.org/Home.aspx

EcoLogo www.ecologo.org/en/

Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH)
www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/occupational-health/sensor-lung-disease-bulletins/summer2013.pdf

Massachusetts Department of Labor Standards (DLS)
www.mass.gov/lwd/labor-standards/massachusetts-workplace-safety-and-health-program/

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