

The following captures the Q&A session from the “Restroom Hygiene: The Importance of Cleaning and Disinfecting” podcast featuring Procter & Gamble Professional expert, Mike Weber.



Mike Weber is Principal Scientist of Products Research with Procter & Gamble Professional. A 30-year veteran at Procter & Gamble, Mike has helped develop the P&G Pro Line brand of commercial cleaners and lends his expertise on in-depth consumer understanding for finished floor care and applying this understanding towards the development of products to better meet customer needs. Mike is an experienced trainer and consultant in finished floor care, and has published more than 20 articles and care guides in numerous trade publications. Mike holds a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from The Ohio State University.

1. Looking back at the current flu season and the H1N1 outbreak, hygiene has definitely become a top-of-mind issue. Do you think the recent pandemic has opened the door to improved hygiene standards?

There is no doubt that the H1N1 outbreak has elevated hygiene to a higher level of awareness among professionals and the general population. Fortunately, the outbreak did not match the impact that was projected, but the awareness level continues to be high. For cleaning professionals, this meant that our industry spent time answering questions and reassuring their clients, customers and building occupants on the general topic of H1N1.

However, as result of this new level of hygiene awareness, cleaning professionals had to:

- Reassess their cleaning products, to be sure they were using the right products with the right disinfecting claims, and
- Reassess their formal cleaning practices with regard to disinfection.

Prior to the pandemic, there were no formal EPA-recognized claims against the novel H1N1 flu strain, so the EPA quickly allowed a bridging claim which permitted products that killed the Influenza A virus to make claims against H1N1. Procter & Gamble Professional has five products that can claim effectiveness against 2009 H1N1 which you can review at www.pgpro.com.

The H1N1 hype raised hygiene awareness, but it also caused many in our industry to focus heavily on specific product claims versus auditing or improving the way products were actually used by their cleaning employees. So, there's a huge opportunity to educate professionals on the importance of cleaning and disinfecting.

2. It sounds like cleaning and disinfecting goes hand-in-hand. Please expand on the role of disinfecting in the cleaning industry. Why is this important to address?

A cleaning program should be designed to “clean for health” as the first and foremost objective. When cleaning professionals strive to rid of soil and germs, it also reduces the transmission of infectious diseases. At the same time, this will also impact the aesthetics of the facility. When the level of cleanliness is improved, germ level can also be reduced and a facility's appearance and odor can greatly improve, because odor-producing bacteria will emit odors that signal poor hygiene.

When thinking about restroom hygiene, have you ever walked into a restroom that had a foul odor? We all know foul odor can be a key signal to avoid this kind of restroom. Therefore, the level of restroom hygiene can affect the overall impression about the facility or business operating in the facility. In fact, P&G Professional recently conducted a study of decision makers in the cleaning industry and the survey revealed that their customers believe the most important room to clean is the restroom, which reportedly also happens to be the most difficult room to clean.

In the case of retail facilities, other studies have shown that families will shop longer if there is a clean restroom available. So, an effective restroom cleaning and disinfecting program is important in helping negate negative hygiene signals.

P&G Professional's Trusted Trio brands for restroom cleaning provide a simple yet effective way to insure that all of the cleaning and disinfecting needs are met. Both Spic and Span and Comet Disinfecting Bathroom Cleaner are hospital-grade disinfectants, and thus kill a broad spectrum of germs. Beyond their disinfecting capabilities, they are both highly effective multipurpose disinfecting cleaners, so they help improve both the cleaning result and the cleaning efficiency.

3. I'd like to hear more about the topic of proper disinfection of restrooms. Please share some tips to help address this issue.

A proper restroom disinfecting program should have two important objectives. First, to remove the soils that harbor and provide a breeding ground for germs. Then, once soils are removed, the germs need to be killed via proper use of an appropriate disinfecting product.

Keeping this in mind, I'll offer a few tips that are near and dear to my heart.

#1 – Clean, clean, clean! You cannot effectively kill or reduce germ levels with a disinfectant cleaner if you don't remove the soil. If soil is not removed, then the active disinfecting ingredients will be "spent" interacting with the soil, thus reducing their effectiveness to disinfect. The soil needs to be removed before or during the disinfecting step in order to be effective. Even the most reputable disinfecting products have similar instructions to "remove gross soils before using." With P&G Professional's Trusted Trio products, cleaning professionals are able to clean and disinfect effectively in just one step.

#2 – Contact time, contact time, contact time! All disinfectants have a prescribed required contact time in order to kill the pathogens that they claim to kill, which is typically 10 minutes or sometimes less for specific pathogens. In the fast-paced spray-and-wipe cleaning world that we live in, the required contact time is not always followed.

#3 – Procedures, procedures, procedures! A cleaning organization should always strive to follow sound, proven and accepted restroom cleaning procedures. P&G Professional offers written procedures for both routine and restorative restroom cleaning, which incorporate a proven seven-step process. By following these procedures, the cleaning employee can insure proper contact time for disinfectants without lengthening the overall time it takes to clean the restroom.

4. Those are great tips. But will adding a disinfecting program to current a restroom cleaning routine take more effort and time to achieve?

It will not take more time to add a disinfecting program to a current restroom cleaning routine if the program is properly designed, and if effective and efficient products are put into use. In fact, a good restroom cleaning and disinfecting program can actually save time in the long run.

Choose highly effective "cleaning disinfectants" and multipurpose products, such P&G Professional's Trusted Trio brands for restroom cleaning. This will help insure an effective and time-efficient outcome by reducing the task to one-step. It is always more efficient to get the job done right the first time by cleaning well and allowing the disinfecting actives to work, thus avoiding rework.

5. So are multipurpose cleaners as effective as dedicated disinfecting products?

P&G Professional's Trusted Trio brands for restroom cleaning are multipurpose products that are at least as effective and likely more effective than most dedicated disinfecting products. That is because cleaning is the first important step in disinfecting. If the soils that harbor germs are not removed, subsequent germ growth will continue after ineffective disinfecting is completed. However, if products are designed to remove a broad range of target soils, then "active" disinfecting ingredients in the products will be much more effective.

For example, our Spic and Span Disinfecting Cleaner is an EPA-registered and hospital-grade disinfectant. But, it is also a highly effective "all purpose" cleaner and a non-streaking glass and shiny surface cleaner. Its surfactants, solvents, and quats are designed to work in harmony to deliver on all three cleaning and disinfecting functions.

Comet Disinfecting Bathroom Cleaner is also an EPA-registered, hospital-grade disinfectant. It disinfects and effectively removes common bathroom soils. Like Spic and Span, Comet is also formulated to accomplish the cleaning and disinfecting tasks simultaneously.

These Trusted Trio brands from P&G Professional are not only highly effective multipurpose products, but they also clean and disinfect restrooms at less than half the cost, based on a cost per case comparison.

6. Sustainable cleaning is definitely here to stay and at the front of many decision-makers minds. Does this "sustainable cleaning" mindset mesh with the disinfection best practices you've shared with us today?

"If it's not clean, it ain't green." I can't take credit for that statement, but I wholeheartedly agree with it. A very wise cleaning professional I know once said that if restroom patrons turn green because they have become ill after visiting this restroom, this is definitely not the criteria we should use to define the restroom as "green."

P&G Professional's Green Guarantee ensures that all of our products provide outstanding performance while meeting high standards for human and environmental safety. The focus on "being green" in the commercial market has expanded over the past several years and is a decision factor for many companies when it comes to choosing cleaning products. Our environmental philosophy is to choose not to use the green explosion as a marketing technique, but as our everyday way of doing business.

More than four billion consumers use Procter & Gamble products every day, so there is nothing more important to us than assuring product safety for our consumers and for the environment. Our commitment to safety is reflected in the more than 700 in-house experts globally devoted to ensuring the environmental and human safety of all our ingredients and products before they go to market.

I invite you to visit www.greenguarantee.com to learn more about P&G Professional's Green Guarantee.

7. If there were three things you could recommend to cleaning professionals when evaluating their current restroom cleaning practices, what would they be?

When evaluating current restroom cleaning practices, my recommendations would be to:

1. Focus on cleaning for health first. This combines using sound procedures with highly effective cleaning disinfectant products.
2. Use simple, effective, and multipurpose products for your program. Beyond the efficiency and effectiveness of multipurpose products, employee satisfaction improves because they see better end results. P&G Professional's Trusted Trio multipurpose products can deliver a simple, yet effective program intent for restroom cleaning.
3. Lastly, training should never be overlooked. Cleaning and disinfecting products need to be "used as directed" in order to be effective. Our industry's "dirty little secret" unfortunately, is that the recommended contact time (usually 10 minutes) is not always followed, and thus the products are not truly disinfecting. I think this problem can be overcome by training and better sharing of information about disinfecting products with cleaning employees.

Net, like any other task in your day-to-day life, if a job is worth doing, it is worth doing right the first time! A well designed restroom hygiene program will likely, in all cases, yield a better result in a more efficient way.