Factory Cleaning Plan of Attack

By Mike Nelson, Pro-Link

During factory construction, managers of factories or industrial facilities often go to great lengths to plan the layout of factory equipment—with the goal of improving production and worker productivity—but often place only minor emphasis on cleaning and maintaining the facility. Although some large plants have a “best practices” plan in place, which recommends certain cleaning supplies and systems, many still have no such plan.

In fact, what many facilities practice is commonly referred to as “hot spot” cleaning in which workers concentrate on soiled areas that appear dirty, while other areas that look relatively clean are neglected or ignored. The result is haphazard cleaning at best. Some areas of the facility will be well maintained, while others may be in great need of attention; ultimately, all areas will suffer. Dirt, dust, and soils in one area of a factory can be easily tracked into others or become airborne. And airborne impurities can negatively impact indoor air quality and the cleanliness of the entire building.

The best way to avoid these problems is to have a plan: a cleaning and maintenance program that addresses all the cleaning needs of a facility. For an office or a residence, this can be relatively easy. For instance, some experts suggest that cleaning be performed in a “clockwise” pattern or that workers be divided into teams, with some performing vacuuming tasks, others dusting and emptying trash, and others attending to the restrooms.

But an effective cleaning program in a factory setting can be difficult to establish. Manufacturing facilities are often large, collect a lot of dirt, and may be in operation 8, 16, or 24 hours per day. Therefore, developing a cleaning plan that is ideal for factory settings can take considerable time and may require flexibility. However, to get the program started, two key elements are required: conducting a baseline survey and incorporating a workloading program.

Baseline Survey
Before any factory cleaning plan can be established, it is important to be clear about the current state of cleaning. This requires management and cleaning professionals to inspect all areas of the facility and note which sections need the most cleaning attention

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and which require the least. Also, management and cleaning professionals should record which areas are currently being adequately cleaned as well as those that are not being effectively cleaned. In addition, the survey should provide information such as:

- When certain areas of the facility are used or not used
- What type of work is performed in different areas—sawing, cutting, assembly work, etc.—to help determine how much cleaning attention may be necessary
- What cleaning is now being provided in each area of the facility
- If conventional or Green cleaning systems are in place
- How many cleaning workers are involved
- What cleaning chemicals, tools, and equipment are now being used
- The type, quality, and efficiency of the cleaning tools and equipment in use
- What source-control measures are in place, such as effective matting systems to help minimize soiling

The goal of the baseline survey is to give a "big picture" of how things are. It is very important to know where things stand now before moving forward.

Workloading

A workloading program's goal is to allow factory floor managers to accurately determine the number of cleaning professionals needed to maintain a facility and, from this, the cost. Additionally, an effective workloading program helps optimize labor, speed, and even the quality of cleaning.

Workloading can be relatively easy to incorporate in an office setting. Most office cleaning involves similar duties—vacuuming carpets, mopping floors, dusting, cleaning restrooms, etc.—and studies show that one worker can clean approximately 3,000 square feet in about one hour. However, because there are many variables unique to each particular factory, there is no universal workloading program for all factory settings. Instead, an individual facility may need to establish a specific workloading program for each area of the facility. It will require examining such issues as:

- The size of the area involved
- The number of factory workers in each area
- The number of cleaning workers available
- How long it takes to complete a task or clean an area
- How altering cleaning task frequencies will affect appearance, indoor health, overall maintenance, time, and cost
- New cleaning duties that should be incorporated
- Unnecessary cleaning tasks that can be eliminated

One of the big concerns cleaning workers may have when their tasks are being evaluated and a workloading program is being created is that it will require them to work harder. However, the goal is to make cleaners work smarter, not harder.

In studies of school and office environments, proper cleaning has been shown to help improve student performance and worker productivity as well as morale. Similar benefits are achievable in factory settings that have planned, high-quality cleaning programs in place. Often the facility's distributor of cleaning supplies can play a vital role in helping manufacturers plan their cleaning needs, working with managers to develop a baseline survey as well as a workloading program.

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