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How to Clean and Maintain Waterless Urinal Systems

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NATIONAL REPORT—A waterless urinal looks very much like a conventional urinal. In fact, about all that is different is that the flush valve or piping that normally sits above the unit is missing. This is because waterless urinals, as the name implies, do not need water to operate.

Instead, waterless systems have a vertical trap design that incorporates a cylinder or trap filled with a thin layer of liquid sealant sitting atop the drain area of the urinal. Urine passes through the cylinder and sealant, and as the cylinder fills, it flows under the barrier layer and into the waste line, where it is drained—much the same way as a conventional urinal works.

Since the urinal surface is dry, it helps inhibit bacteria growth as well as odors and makes the unit easier to clean. Additionally, there are no water deposits or rust stains that can build up, as often happens with a water-based urinal.

Although there are some differences between manufacturers of these fixtures, cleaning a waterless urinal follows most of the same steps and procedures custodians are used to for a conventional urinal. These include:

- Wear gloves (and goggles) as you would to clean any restroom fixture.
- Remove any foreign objects in the urinal. The trap is designed to prevent larger objects from entering the drain area.
- Do not use abrasive cleaners, towels, or brushes.
- Mist all urinal surfaces with a neutral or all-purpose cleaner or use a Johnny Mop with water and cleaner on all surfaces.
- Allow for dwell time if indicated by the chemical manufacturer.
- Wipe clean with a soft sponge, Johnny Mop dipped in a bucket of clean water, or a cleaning cloth.
- Dry the surfaces with a soft cloth.
- Do not pour excess or soiled water down the waterless urinal trap because it can flush the sealant out of the trap insert.

Sealant and Trap Replacement

In most cases, cleaning professionals are also asked to handle the trap's maintenance. Although maintenance requirements may differ depending on the manufacturer of the waterless urinal, they usually involve replenishing the liquid sealant and/or replacing the cylinder as necessary.

As the urinal is used, small amounts of the sealant will be drained into the waste line and need to be replenished, usually after 1,500 uses. To add sealant, use the "portion aid" device that comes with the sealant. This will accurately measure out the 3 ounces of sealant needed, which is poured directly into the cylinder.

The cylinder on some brands of waterless urinals lasts several months and may only need to be changed two to four times per year. To replace the cylinder:

- Take the metal tool provided by the manufacturer to remove the trap.
- Insert it into the trap, gently pulling it out using a back and forth motion.
- Drain any excess liquids from the cylinder down the drain, and then discard in a locally appropriate manner.
- With the trap removed, pour a bucket of preferably hot water down the drain to flush any sediment in the line.
- Insert a new trap, add about 12 ounces of water, and fill with 3 ounces of sealant.
- For some manufacturers, the trap cannot be replaced and the trap needs to be taken apart and cleaned.

This completes the process and both procedures usually take only a few seconds to a couple of minutes. For custodial workers, replenishing the sealant is often equated with replenishment of soap and paper supplies, yet usually takes less time. Although the cleaning techniques are similar, some cleaning professionals find that performing maintenance on a waterless urinal also takes less time because there are no metal areas to clean, rust stains, or water deposits.