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Industry News

Understanding Disinfection Terminology

Disinfectants play a major role in the professional cleaning industry. They are used not only in health care settings but in schools, offices, and large and small public facilities. However, unlike other cleaning products, disinfectants have their own terminology.

Mark Warner, product manager for disinfectants and sanitizers for Enviro-Solutions, a leading green cleaning chemical manufacturer, helps sort through the jargon and lists some common disinfectant-related terms and what they mean.

Disinfection efficacy: This is a list of the pathogens that are killed by properly using the disinfectant. If a pathogen is not stated on the label, the product cannot claim to kill it, nor should the user assume it can kill an unlisted pathogen. The more kill claims on the label, the broader the ability to disinfect.

Contact time required: Sometimes referred to as dwell time, this refers to the amount of time the product must remain wet on a surface for the active ingredients to be effective.

Parts per million (ppm): Disinfectants are considered to be efficacious if the ppm is above 300–350. More effective disinfectant concentrates are designed to yield almost twice that amount. However, it must be noted that the ppm value decreases as the disinfectant is used.

Cleaning efficacy: This refers to a disinfectant's ability to clean (remove soil). However, some disinfectants are not designed to clean or be used as a cleaner. In either case, preclean the surface first. Carefully read the disinfectant's label to determine cleaning efficacy.

Cost in use: This refers to the actual cost associated with using a product and is determined by analyzing the cost of using the solution after dilution. A product may have different dilution rates for different kill claims or for cleaning, so it is important to calculate all the different applications' cost in use.

"To use disinfectants properly requires considerable product knowledge," adds Warner. "An astute jansan distributor can prove to be an invaluable resource when it comes to enhancing customers' disinfectant lexicon."

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