

## **Improving Worker Productivity In Restrooms**

From Volume 47, Issue 10 - October 2010

### **Feature**

The concept of process cleaning is a JanSan revolution.

### **CM/Spotlight: Restroom Care**

*by: Dawn Shoemaker*

About six years ago, a former janitor named Rex Morrison, the 1999 Nevada State Custodian of the Year who is now the housekeeping training supervisor for Washoe County Public Schools, had his "15 minutes of fame" by developing a cleaning system that he called process cleaning.

National Public Radio (NPR) interviewed him and others from the school district's custodial department about process cleaning and was so impressed that the report referred to the system as a "revolution" in school cleaning.

The system, based on a Team Cleaning<sup>®</sup> approach, involves color-coding rooms and areas based on the type of cleaning they require and whether they need to be deep cleaned or require only occasional attention.

For instance, restrooms are red, classrooms blue, etc., and custodians are in charge of certain areas of each school based on color.

To help the school's 450 custodians working in more than 100 schools know which cleaning products are to be used and where, the tools and equipment are color-coded as well.

The big advantages of process cleaning, according to the NPR interview, are twofold: The program ensures that all areas of the school are cleaned on a set schedule and the system improves worker productivity considerably.

Worker productivity is the value of goods or services produced over a period of time, divided by the number of hours of labor used to produce them.

Using this definition, according to Morrison, each custodian cleans 25 percent more space with process cleaning.

This is a significant enough improvement in worker productivity that the Washoe County Public Schools reports it is saving an average of \$10,000 per school each year — approximately \$1 million for the entire district — due to expected custodial attrition and staff reductions.

### **Restrooms, Too?**

Process cleaning is still proving itself to be an efficient, effective and highly productive way to clean, and Morrison's fame continues to this day.

According to various studies, the national average indicates that one custodian cleans about 22,000 square feet in an eight-hour shift.

With process cleaning, this figure jumps to approximately 30,000 square feet.

However, how much of this worker productivity improvement applies to restrooms?

When the NPR interview was conducted, the restrooms were still cleaned using conventional cleaning tools and equipment — mops, buckets, cleaning cloths, sprayers, etc. — and one custodian, following a Team Cleaning approach, was assigned to all restrooms in most schools.

But, because of better organization, training and implementation, the custodians were able to reduce their cleaning times to two minutes per fixture, one minute faster than figures published in ISSA's *540 Cleaning Times*.

Based on this figure, if a restroom had 10 fixtures, it was assumed it would take about 20 minutes to clean the entire room.

However, process cleaning is not stagnant; the system is always being evaluated to find possible improvements.

As to the restrooms, one change that has proved beneficial is to automate the cleaning process by using spray-and-vacuum or no-touch cleaning systems and equipment.

According to Morrison, after using the equipment, cleaning times per fixture were reduced to one minute.

However, one caveat with the spray-and-vacuum system, according to Morrison, is that the higher worker productivity may not be accomplished by using the equipment sporadically or only for deep cleaning, as is often the case.

To reach this rate of improvement in worker productivity, the system must be used as an "everyday" cleaning process, he says.

### **Why No Rush?**

It would seem that if worker productivity can be improved so significantly using process cleaning and automated cleaning systems, there would be a rush by cash-strapped school districts and others to adopt these systems.

However, in many cases, there are issues that block the implementation.

As to process cleaning, although it has been relatively easy for school custodians to adopt and

accept the system, this has not always been the case when schools and other facilities have changed their cleaning systems.

Even Morrison acknowledged that change can be difficult and there were concerns about "saboteurs" when process cleaning was implemented, but no such problems materialized.

When it comes to selecting equipment that automates restroom cleaning, the roadblock appears to be "sticker shock."

A mop and bucket may cost \$50; a spray-and-vacuum machine may be priced at \$2,000 to \$3,000 or more.

But, what is often overlooked in the selection process is the long-term labor savings with the equipment.

Because the major cost of cleaning is labor, reducing the time it takes to clean can pay dividends over time.

To get the point across that these machines can pay for themselves relatively quickly, one manufacturer of spray-and-vacuum cleaning equipment has developed return on investment (ROI) calculators that illuminate these dollars-and-cents issues.

Based on these ROI calculators, the following example demonstrates just how quickly these machines are paid for:

- A school with 10 restrooms has a total of 115 fixtures
- They are cleaned 200 times per year
- The spray-and-vacuum machine costs about \$3,600
- The custodial crew is paid \$12.50 per hour, which does not include benefits.

Using this example, the machine would be paid for in about two and a half months.

Once the machine is paid for, the school district would save about \$1,500 per month or about \$18,000 per year.

It should also be noted that less chemical is also used, which can be a cost savings as well.

In our example above, the costs to clean the restroom fixtures would be approximately \$144.

With a spray-and-vacuum system, this is reduced by nearly \$96 to about \$48 on an annual basis.

It should be noted that improving worker productivity and cutting cleaning costs are effective only if they also maintain or, even better, improve cleaning performance.

This can be an issue because we now have scientific studies that indicate traditional cleaning methods can spread soils and contamination as they are used.

However, the same studies report that some spray-and-vacuum systems can be as much as 60 times more effective at reducing contamination than comparable conventional cleaning tools — a boon for hygienic cleaning and worker productivity.

### **Now More Than Ever**

The JanSan industry has its trends just like any other industry.

At one time, ergonomic issues were center stage; in more recent years, green cleaning has been highlighted.

Nevertheless, one issue that has been with us for decades in varying degrees is worker productivity.

As a result of the economy and the restructuring it is forcing on many businesses, schools and other organizations, worker productivity issues are again key.

The hope is that, with the adoption of new cleaning processes, equipment and systems, we can address today's challenges and make cleaning more efficient and cost effective.

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