

# Repairs & Maintenance

Amber Terry

## The Role of RESTAURANT CLEANLINESS

### IT'S A DIRTY JOB, BUT SOMEONE HAS TO DO IT

There is a long-running joke in our industry that janitorial is every facility manager's least favorite trade. We get it, OK? Nobody ever said, "I want to clean toilets when I grow up." But the impact cleaning can have on our facilities is often under-valued, and frontline cleaning staff have reasons to be proud.

In fact, improving respect and credibility for the janitorial profession, and the more than 3 million people in the U.S. working within it, is one of the paramount focuses and longstanding challenges for cleaning trade organizations such as the International Sanitary Supply Association (ISSA).

Whether or not you are already heavily involved in the cleaning protocols for your brand, consider re-thinking the value of a well-run program. It can reduce overall facilities maintenance spend, increase operational efficiencies and better leverage the importance of facilities management professionals by implementing better processes and risk management strategies.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF CLEANLINESS

In the restaurant business, we know that cleaning is important. We clean not just for appearances, but primarily for health and safety reasons. We are managing facilities where food is served to the public at large. Cross-contamination is an issue, and outbreaks of norovirus, salmonella, and listeria are a concern for staff and patrons and can lead to bad press. Restaurant cleanliness is a top category in the annual Nation's Restaurant News Consumer Picks and is a strong driver of consumer choice.

Meanwhile, cleaning and janitorial activities encompass one of the top three spend categories in a facility manager's budget, not even considering the labor hours of operations. Effective cleaning can even reduce staff absenteeism.

### A HIGH PRICE TO PAY

We also know if cleaning is not done right, it's going to cost the facility— as well as the

equipment in it.

"If they are not keeping their equipment clean the way it's supposed to be, then that ties up the operation of the unit, and it ends up with costlier repairs," said a senior director of facilities and RFMA member.

Nearly all restaurant facility managers have issued work orders to plumbers for clogged drain lines due to poor cleaning practices. They have dealt with electrical issues or failing kitchen wall systems due to sprayers being used to clean walls. The pest control company may have pointed a finger at poor housekeeping as the root cause of an infestation.

Flooring is also a major spend category, as early grout and tile replacements may be required due to continuous flooding of the floors with water, hardwood floor damage caused by wet mopping and premature carpet wear. This significantly diminishes the ROI of those assets. Let's not forget the cause for greatest concern: when someone gets hurt. Reducing the risk of slip-and-fall, ladder, high-voltage and chemical injuries is crucial.

## IMPROVING CLEANING PRACTICES

What can facility managers do to impact the business in a positive manner?

First and foremost, facility managers can share cleaning best practices with their operations group and show the cause/effect relationship between poor housekeeping practices and back-end maintenance spend. They can partner with design and construction by forecasting maintenance costs. (Think about unique window layouts, high ceilings and high-maintenance flooring that cause maintenance costs to add up over time.)

Facility managers may consider outsourcing some or all cleaning activities after studying the costs and benefits. They also can partner with vendors to implement cleaning or damage mitigation best practices. Another consideration is implementing new cleaning tools or systems that increase productivity or perform better.

Alternatively, routine cleaning practices can be a driver for locating facility repair issues.

"There are deficiencies that happen in a restaurant that prevent you from getting clean," said Craig Bayless, Director of Facilities for Razzoos. "Either it's water trapped underneath, or an odor they can't get rid of, so that's how it drives that."

Training and coaching operators to look for such issues can help minor problems get repaired

before they become costlier.

## JANITORIAL BEST PRACTICES

Now, let's get down to the nitty gritty! Here are some best practices for janitorial programs to protect asset life, health and brand image:

### GENERAL BEST PRACTICES

- Train verbally by telling and visually by showing.
- Always list tasks on a checklist. For tasks that are completed weekly or monthly, it is best to utilize a new checklist for each period that records the completion of each task. Electronic verification is great for record keeping and tracking, if the technology is available. Management should validate completion and provide feedback to staff.
- Sanitation is key, and teaching all staff about the dwell time required to kill pathogens will help them follow protocol. Coach employees on the differences between sanitizing (kills 99.9 percent of organisms and needs to air dry) and disinfecting (kills 100 percent of organisms and needs proper dwell time but should be rinsed after use).
- Always clean from high to low, and avoid re-soiling areas already cleaned.
- Train employees on touch points, such as anything that has a handle or pull, and high-soil areas such as the trash cans.
- Use up-to-date cleaning equipment systems to improve efficiency. For example, install color-coded cleaning systems (tools such as mop handles and buckets/chemicals/sprayer bottles) to divide the back of house and the front of house, and use clearly color-coded wall charts with photo depictions.
- Consider using microfiber flat mops, since they do not push soil up on baseboards and tables in the front of house.

### ENTRYWAY

- Before customers enter the dining room, the first things they see are the grounds and entry.

Policing the landscaped beds and parking lots for trash and debris is a critical daily step. When possible, this should be done in the morning as it is safer for staff and trash is more visible.

- Entry glass and door handles should be cleaned daily and spot checked throughout the day.
- Exterior trash bins should be checked throughout the day.
- Entry matting is critical to keeping soil out of the restaurant. The Carpet and Rug Institute recommends a minimum of 12 to 15 feet of coverage to remove 90 percent of tracked-in soil. Soil abrasion is the main driver for premature flooring wear, so preventing soil from entering will extend the life of the flooring. Remember to vacuum the matting daily to ensure it can function properly.

### Front of House

- Consider using a double-bucket and wringer mop system for floor cleaning. A double-bucket system maintains clean water on one side, while the dirty water is squeezed into the other side. As a result, the soil is not re-deposited back into the clean water or on the floor.
- Perform a detail clean from the floor to 8 inches up the wall every one to three months, including the baseboards and all fixtures and furnishings. A tool called a doodle bug, which is a scrubbing pad on a pole, is a great tool for this and many other detail cleaning tasks.
- A restaurant's preventive maintenance services should include vacuuming. If carpeted surfaces are present, a good vacuum with a beater bar, as opposed to non-motorized sweepers, is critical for extending the asset life. Soil and debris that remain embedded in the carpet will scratch and wear at the pile fibers, creating dull or flat-looking carpeting. Single-motor vacuums are popular for restaurant use, as they are lightweight and inexpensive; however, the debris passes through the fan blade and belt, which can spell disaster over time since bits of food can get clogged in the vacuum and create odors. It also requires more passes to clean with a single-motor than a dual-motor vacuum, which can decrease the productivity time significantly.
- The cleaning training program should include a focus on common touch points that can sometimes be easily overlooked, such as menus, condiments and phones.
- If wood furniture or trim work is present, minimize refinishing frequency by drying the furniture with a separate cloth after cleaning those surfaces.

## RESTROOMS

As reported by the American Institute for Cleaning Sciences, the restroom represents 5 percent of a facility's total square footage, yet accounts for 20 percent of the total labor budget, 40 percent of the soil and 50 percent of consumer complaints. Here are some best practices to maximize your efforts in these areas:

- The color-coded cleaning systems discussed earlier are great for restrooms. Use a separate mop head or microfiber cloths (red colored) in this area and remove and replace them, thereby reducing the risk of transferring bacteria or viruses to other areas.
- Deep clean restrooms weekly. Make sure this includes dusting door jambs and partitions, cleaning lighting and walls, and deck brushing restroom floors and baseboards.
- Customers notice build-up of mineral deposits on faucets or porcelain. However, a scale-removal treatment can maintain metal, while non-abrasive products help extend the look of porcelain. Porcelain that has been damaged and dulled from abrasive use gets soiled faster and is more difficult to clean, and the only way to correct it at that point is to replace the fixture.
- Rusty spots on stainless steel are an eyesore, but the material usually cleans up well with hard water stain removers (some great eco-safe products are available) and will save a lot of money on replacements.

## BACK OF HOUSE

Here, we will focus on practices that will create less work for facility managers:

- Install drain locks to prevent food and debris from clogging plumbing lines.
- Remove sprayer hoses so staff does not hose down the walls or kitchen equipment, which can lead to electrical failures, life safety issues and damaged wall systems.
- All kitchen equipment should have clear and specific nightly/ weekly/monthly cleaning and preventive maintenance procedures. This information can be found in the manual for each piece of equipment and can reduce repair frequency.

- Equipment should be periodically pulled away from the walls for thorough cleaning of the walls and flooring.
- For floor cleaning, best practices include not flooding the floor with water as it can damage tile and grout systems over time. A typical gallon of water and diluted cleaning chemical should easily cover 200 to 300 square feet. Bristle brushes or machine scrubbers work better than mops to agitate the cleaner and emulsify grease, which can help prevent slip and falls.
- Some cleaners should be rinsed and others should not; partner with chemical suppliers for specific practices on each type of chemical.
- Don't forget the importance of cleaning the cleaning equipment! Rinse and scrub mop buckets, wash and sanitize brooms, and hang mops to dry to mitigate cross-containment system.
- Organization is also key. Retail planogram systems and labels work wonders for keeping janitorial closets organized, with each tool in a proper place.

## OUTSOURCING OPTIONS

Outsourcing models vary widely across restaurant facilities, and there isn't a single or best approach.

Some restaurants successfully outsource daily housekeeping duties, while others perform nearly 100 percent of cleaning activities in-house. Most restaurant chains utilize a hybrid approach, doing most daily activities in-house and primarily outsourcing activities that require commercial or professional equipment, such as carpet/floor care and heated pressure washing.

Another consideration for outsourcing includes activities that have a high risk for injury, such as high dusting or back-of-house FRP ceiling cleaning, where ladder use is often required.

Finally, some restaurant chains choose outsourcing to allow operations teams to focus on food and customer service and reduce time spent qualifying and managing vendors. A growing number of national restaurants are outsourcing on a regional or national level to ensure consistency of scope and frequency across the brand. They gain benefits through consolidated invoicing, IVR compliance and risk management. In addition, facility managers can typically obtain discounts when services are bundled or for increased volumes or

frequencies. A well-managed outsourced program can be especially important when routine maintenance directly impacts lifecycle/ROI, such as carpet cleaning. When outsourcing, some facility managers find that they receive stronger backing and compliance from operations by creating a separate corporate budget that does not impact the bonus structure.

## MAKING THE MOST OF CLEANING EFFORTS

Cleaning frequencies can be optimized to allocate resources as intelligently as possible.

Optimization can be done in several ways. For example, counter sales and foot traffic variables impact the level of activity and soil load introduced into the building. This is a good method to determine necessary deep cleaning frequencies, especially for flooring. Climate is also a factor, as winter weather brings in moisture and snow-melt products that wear on floors. Urban sites may have unique exterior needs due to the proximity of vehicle exhaust or traffic that impacts the cleanliness of awnings, sidewalks and building frontage, for example.

There are other new technologies to explore in the cleaning industry that may prove to achieve strong ROI.

Bayless recently implemented a floor-cleaning equipment program to reduce labor and improve outcomes at his high-volume full-service restaurants by sourcing small walk-behind floor scrubbers.

"We are using less chemicals than standard mopping, and we're not mopping with dirty water," he said. "So, the result is way better; we get a one-year ROI out of it."

Another example is electrolyzed water, which is not a new concept; however, it is gaining industry acknowledgement, understanding and application. This process produces electrolyzed water by combining tap water with small amounts of food-grade salt and low levels of electricity to create a cleaning and sanitizing solution.

Other green-cleaning concepts are driving efficiency and minimizing the use of chemicals, shipping and storing, and a variety of innovative floor-cleaning pads have recently been introduced to the market. Staying ahead of janitorial industry trends and technologies helps facility managers remain competitive as labor costs continue to rise.

Taking everything into account, who knew that cleaning could be so complex? It is just as complex as it is important, but it doesn't have to be difficult. Facility managers can support operations and cut down on maintenance costs by improving existing procedures or

implementing new best practices. There is no substitute for a comprehensive, technical and detailed cleaning program, and it can positively impact outcomes across the brand.

Amber Terry is Vice President of Sales at Superclean, where she has worked for 15 years. Her background and education are in biology, environmental health and business operations. This knowledge is integral to her ability to understand the technology behind cleaning, as well as challenges that facility managers face today. She has been a RFMA member since its inception and serves on the Member Engagement Committee.