

# contractor's corner

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NEWS, VIEWS AND INFORMATION FOR THE FACILITY SERVICE PROVIDER

## INFECTION PREVENTION

By KATHLEEN MISOVIC

# Weathering Cold & Flu Season



## Following year-round protocols is your best defense

**A**s the northern hemisphere enters the winter months, you might hear coughs and sneezes echoing through your facility, and notice higher employee absentee rates. Welcome to the cold and flu season.

Following two mild flu seasons due to COVID-19 lockdowns, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considered the U.S. 2022-23 influ-

enza season moderately severe, with an estimate of at least 31 million symptomatic illnesses, 14 million medical visits, 360,000 hospitalizations and 21,000 deaths caused by influenza virus infection. The rate of influenza-associated hospitalizations was similar to hospitalization rates of four pre-COVID-19 seasons (2014-15, 2016-17, 2018-19, 2019-20) and higher than all but one remaining season (2017-18) since

the 2010-11 season.

The number of death certificates with influenza listed as an underlying or contributing cause of death during the 2022-23 season (9,697) was above the average number of influenza-coded deaths (8,530) during the five seasons preceding the COVID-19 pandemic (2015-16 through 2019-20) and three to 10 times

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# Weathering Cold & Flu Season



higher than the number of influenza-coded deaths during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It remains to be seen whether the 2023-24 flu season will be mild or severe. The best plan of action is to adhere to your facility's cleaning practices and protocols, and encourage your employees and building occupants to receive their flu vaccinations. Two infection control experts, Jordan Bastian, a senior infection preventionist with CloroxPro's Clinical and Scientific Affairs team, and Jason Welch, a formulating chemist with Spartan Chemical Co., weigh in with their advice on preparing for the current flu season and dealing with other common winter illnesses.

## FACILITIES OVERRUN WITH GERMS

Bastian and Welch listed rhinovirus, influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and strep throat as the most common winter illnesses, with the addition of COVID-19 in recent years.

"Winter illness spikes for a few reasons but mainly because cold temperatures force people indoors for large gatherings," said Welch. He explained that reduced airflow in buildings due to closed windows and doors can keep germs trapped inside.

"As activities and gatherings move inside, this creates an ideal environment for bacteria and viruses to spread on surfaces in shared spaces," added Bastian. "More time inside means more of a chance for

these germs to cause illness." As people gather in facilities with reduced airflow, viruses and bacteria easily spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets, contaminated surfaces and the air. "When someone coughs, sneezes or talks, germs spread and many end up on nearby surfaces," said Bastian.

"As we spend more time inside and touch hot-spot items like doorknobs, light switches, chairs and tables, we're more likely to come in contact with germs, and also contribute to their spread."

Welch stressed that it isn't necessarily the winter season that is responsible for the spread of germs, but rather the indoor conditions. "Germs spread in the same way, no matter what time of year it is," he said. "They can be airborne, food-borne and waterborne, and [spread] from potentially contaminated surfaces."

## CLEANING PRACTICES TO THE RESCUE

Bastian suggested that facilities take a three-step approach in their plan to prevent the spread of bacteria and viruses via contaminated surfaces:

1. Ensure effective and efficient cleaning and disinfecting protocols are in place, including clear directions for who cleans and disinfects which spaces, at what time and with what products.

2. Make the most of your disinfectants by implementing a targeted approach. "I recommend doing this by focusing daily cleaning and disinfection efforts on high-

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# contractor's corner

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910 Dundas St. W., P.O. Box 10009  
Whitby, ON L1P 1P7  
Tel: **(905) 665-8001**  
Toll free: **(866) 684-8273**  
Email: [tanja@issa-canada.com](mailto:tanja@issa-canada.com)  
Web: [www.issa-canada.com](http://www.issa-canada.com)



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# Imperial Dade Continues to Grow Presence in Canada

Imperial Dade has acquired Advance Shipping Supplies Inc. for an undisclosed sum in a private financial transaction.

Founded in 1985, Advance is a Mississauga, ON-based distributor of food service packaging, printing papers and janitorial supplies servicing the province of Ontario. This marks Imperial Dade's third acquisition in recent months in Canada. The company purchased Eugene Allard Produits d'Emballage et d'Entretien in late September. It is also the 75<sup>th</sup> acquisition by Imperial Dade under its current leadership team of Robert and Jason Tillis, chairman and CEO of Imperial Dade, respectively.

"I enthusiastically welcome the Advance family to Imperial Dade," said Jason Tillis. "Advance has a loyal customer base and a laser focused commitment to providing an unparalleled customer experience, making the business a great addition to our growing North American platform."

"Partnering with Advance is yet another step in our mission to be the leading national specialty distributor of industrial, food service and janitorial products," said Imperial Dade Canada President, Stephane Lapointe. "Imperial Dade looks forward to building upon our already established success, and continuing to find ways to better serve our customers and vendor partners."

## ABOUT IMPERIAL DADE

Founded in 1935, Jersey City, New Jersey-based Imperial Dade distributes a wide variety of paper, packaging and janitorial products to clients nationwide. For more information, visit [www.ImperialDade.com](http://www.ImperialDade.com).

# Weathering Cold & Flu Season

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touch surfaces such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets and sinks," Bastian said. "Also focus on high-traffic areas – for example, classrooms, restrooms, break rooms and frequently-used conference rooms."

3. Choose the right disinfectant for each space, making sure your selection includes products that are registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to kill pathogens of concern. "I also recommend products that are ready-to-use as they eliminate the dilution step, making disinfecting more efficient, which is especially important in resource-constrained environments," said Bastian.

In busy public places, Welch recommends focusing on increased cleaning instead of disinfection. His reasoning is that disinfection only works in a controlled environment when the disinfectant is allowed to remain on the surface for the contact (also known as dwell) time listed on the product label. Following the recommended contact time is not always practical in a busy setting. Instead, frequent, quick cleanings will help remove germs on surfaces that are quickly re-contaminated.

"Keep adequate stock of cleaners that are suited for the surfaces being cleaned," Welch said. "Most importantly [have] a well-trained staff [that knows] how to properly clean the facility."

## CLEARING THE AIR

In addition to focusing on surface pathogens, Welch and Bastian advised facilities to consider strategies to prevent the airborne spread of germs. Bastian recommends that facility managers encourage respiratory etiquette, such as coughing and sneezing into a tissue or your elbow. Both stressed the importance of frequent handwashing and the use of hand sanitizer. "Keep soap and paper towel dispensers filled," Welch said.

Don't overlook your facility's HVAC systems. "The best thing a facility can do is make sure their HVAC systems are up to date with maintenance and are turning over a proper air exchange," Welch said.

The CDC recommends aiming for five or more air changes per hour (ACH). This can be achieved through a combination of air exchange through a central

ventilation system, natural ventilation and additional devices that provide equivalent ACH to existing ventilation.

## YEAR-ROUND PROTOCOLS

As we enter flu and cold seasons, the experts agree that, ideally, facilities should not need to ramp up their cleaning and disinfection efforts.

"During flu season, times of increased illness – or during outbreaks – it is best to rely on your disinfection plan versus closing the facility or implementing extra cleaning and disinfection procedures," said Bastian. "If you are using products effective in killing the virus or bacteria of concern, routine cleaning and disinfecting protocols should be sufficient."

"Germs don't take vacations," said Welch. "Facilities should have a solid cleaning and maintenance program year-round. Think about a kitchen; should a kitchen relax its sanitation procedures because it's a certain time of year? I hope not!"

Bastian said facility managers can monitor the number of influenza cases in their area by reading updates from their local health departments along with the CDC's flu activity and surveillance report, *FluView*, which it updates every week during flu season. Another CDC resource is the National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS), a laboratory-based system that monitors circulation patterns of RSV, human parainfluenza viruses (HPIV), human metapneumovirus (HMPV), respiratory adenoviruses, human coronavirus, rotavirus and norovirus.

Facility managers can use the information in these reports to ensure they have cleaning products on hand that are effective against the pathogens responsible for the illnesses in their area, Bastian said. They can also keep watch for illnesses among building residents and employees, who ideally have paid sick leave. Welch offered common-sense, yet often ignored, advice: "If you're sick, stay home!"

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– Kathleen Misovic is managing editor for CMM. She has a degree in journalism and an extensive background in writing print and digital media for various publications and associations. Contact her at [kathleen@issa.com](mailto:kathleen@issa.com).

SOURCE: CMM Online



## LIMITED TIME OFFER



## ISSA Releases 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Limited Edition of *The Official ISSA Cleaning Times*

ISSA, the worldwide cleaning industry association, is proud to announce the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Limited Edition of *The Official ISSA Cleaning Times: The Cleaning Industry's Most Trusted Tasks, Tools & Workloading Resource* has been recently updated and is available for pre-order today.

First released in 1963, this invaluable resource has been updated upon industry demand from its previous revision in 2021, providing the average cleaning times for both individual tasks as well as bundled processes. This new eighth edition was developed as a collaborative effort with ISSA members to add practical real-world information submitted by both manufacturers and end users.

The updated *Cleaning Times* features a glossary of common cleaning terms as well as sections inclusive of ISSA's entire membership with specialized industry-specific segments for the transportation, retail, residential, educational, hospitality and correctional facility markets. In addition to revised and expanded cleaning times, this latest version includes new equipment data for using walk-behind vacuum units, auto scrubbers and micro scrubbers.

"ISSA is viewed as the industry's leading resource for productiv-

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# The Fallacy of Reducing Cleaning Frequencies to Cut Costs

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frequently than twice per week.

Ignoring these complaints, the operations manager went one step further. All 20 locations adopted a once-per-week cleaning schedule, to take place over the weekend. Additionally, as another cost-cutting move, services such as carpet cleaning, window cleaning and floor refinishing, once performed twice yearly, were now only to be completed upon request.

Cleaning typically makes up 25 to 35 per cent of a facility's budget, so by applying this strategy to the branches, the operations manager could significantly reduce cleaning costs in all the locations.

However, soon, repercussions began to surface. Initially, the operations manager expected complaints about reduced cleaning from branch managers. What he did not expect was that the bank's customers would complain about the cleaning – with their feet.

They began closing their accounts, with some customers openly communicating that their local branch had become embarrassingly unclean and unkempt, saying that they did not want to do business with that location anymore.

Some other customers were nervous that the lack of cleaning meant that the bank was trying to save money because they were financially unstable. These customers believed their best bet was to close their accounts and move them to a more stable (and likely much cleaner) banking institution. Many others just closed their accounts and moved on, without even communicating to the bank what was behind the move. So while the manager wanted to cut costs, he went too far, discouraging customers from visiting and hurting the bottom line.

### A SNOWBALL EFFECT

Another example of this effect was described to me many years ago at a seminar I attended.

The story was about a large fast-food chain and its reduced cleaning frequencies. Although the head of the company did not want to take that step, his accounting department convinced him they had to cut costs – and to start with cleaning.

Cleaning frequencies were reduced

(over his objections) in thousands of franchise locations, but after a few months, it was noted that many of the franchise sales were down, sometimes significantly.

Initially, they could not find a reason for this. Many of these franchises were in cities with strong economies, so there were no economic reasons for the downturn. The company had not raised its prices, nor had its competitors. So, what happened?

The only change the company had made was to cut cleaning frequencies. Doing so made many customers feel uncomfortable about the food they purchased at the franchises, thinking that if the state of the dining room was undesirable, so must the kitchen be, too.

Seeing the financial figures drop, the head of the company demanded that the cleaning return to its previous frequency. Plus, he instructed all franchise owners to tell their staff, "If you're leaning, you should be cleaning," meaning if they were not busy, their time should be spent cleaning – and in time, sales numbers did increase.

### APPLYING THIS TO TODAY

The COVID pandemic has had a significant impact on building owners and managers in North America. Some have, once again, opted to reduce frequencies to cut costs.

However, in a post-COVID era, tenants now demand *more* effective hygiene measures, rather than less. Rather than simply decreasing the frequency, managers should consider meeting this demand by hiring a cleaning expert or janitorial distributor to inspect their facility for cost-saving cleaning solutions while maintaining cleanliness and hygiene. Cutting frequencies could just be hurting the businesses' bottom line.

Managers should keep in mind that tenants will return, especially in those facilities perceived as clean, healthy and safe. This means proper cleaning is crucial to their facility's future.

– Robert Kravitz is a former building service contractor and a writer for the cleaning industry. He can be reached at [robert@alturasolutions.com](mailto:robert@alturasolutions.com).

SOURCE: FC&M Magazine

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## ISSA Releases 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Limited Edition of *The Official ISSA Cleaning Times*

ity rates revolving around industry equipment and tools,” said ISSA Chief Global Education Officer Brant Inero. “We are so excited to launch the newest version of the *ISSA Cleaning Times* this year.”

In recognition of ISSA’s century-long commitment to the industry, *The Official ISSA Cleaning Times Eighth Edition* is available in a limited 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary version. This exclusive publication comes with a hard cover celebrating the cleaning industry, a special message from ISSA, and a commemorative notepad and pen. An excellent opportunity to own a piece of the cleaning industry’s history, this one-of-a-kind publication is only available for a limited time, and would make a tremendous gift for your employees and customers.

“It is with immense enthusiasm that I extend my heartiest congratulations to the entire cleaning industry, esteemed ISSA members, and the dedicated *ISSA Cleaning Times* team as we embark on a momentous journey with the launch of our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Limited Education,” said ISSA Executive Director John Barrett. “This remarkable milestone not only commemorates a century of excellence within the cleaning industry but also spotlights the profound impact that *ISSA Cleaning Times* has had on its growth, innovation and advancement.”

Don’t miss your only chance to purchase a part of the cleaning industry’s history. Once this limited version is sold out, it will not be released again, so pre-order your version today at [Shop ISSA](#) through November 16. Discounted member pricing is available for bulk purchasing. Contact [CMI@issa.com](mailto:CMI@issa.com) for more information.

### CLEANING PRACTICES



# Are We Mopping Hygienically?

By MICHAEL DIAMOND

In a recent GBAC-TIPS peer-reviewed article – *Do All Manual Floor Mopping Methods Give the Same Hygiene Outcomes?* – the authors set out to determine whether different combinations of mop type and product used produced different hygiene outcomes on floors inoculated with *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria.

#### THE ROLE OF MOPS IN PATHOGEN DISSEMINATION

Proper hygiene practices are essential to help mitigate contamination in commercial facilities, especially in healthcare. While conclusive evidence of the role of floors in the chain of infection is lacking to date, supporting evidence for the role of floors in pathogen dissemination has been steadily growing. This study investigated whether there were different hygiene outcomes associated with different manual floor mopping applications, varying the type of floor mop and the type of product used to mop the floor. It was hypothesized that the bactericidal efficacies of different hygiene products would be significantly different, and the hygiene practices used will cause variable levels of cross-contamination.

In the study, a two square metre floor that had been previously disinfected was inoculated with *Staphylococcus aureus* near one edge of the floor. Then the floor was mopped using combinations of launderable flat mops, disposable flat mops and

string mops combined with a neutral cleaner, hydrogen peroxide disinfectants, sanitizers or quaternary ammonium chloride disinfectants. The inoculation zone was then sampled to determine how much of the bacteria was removed by mopping. Then samples were taken every 0.5 square metres across the floor to determine how much bacteria was cross-contaminated across the floor.

There were statistically significant differences among product types used, with the neutral cleaner having the most average log<sub>10</sub> densities recovered (i.e., the most contaminated after mopping), compared to hydrogen peroxide or quaternary ammonium compounds-based disinfectant products. More cross-contamination was observed when cotton mops were used, while the area cleaned or disinfected had no significant differences among average log<sub>10</sub> densities recovered.

While the neutral cleaner was not expected to be biocidal, the prevailing theory on the use of neutral cleaner when mopping is that the mechanical action of mopping would physically remove the bacteria and provide a similar hygiene outcome to the use of biocidal products. This was not supported in the study. The neutral cleaner had the least efficacy against *Staphylococcus aureus* compared to disinfectants and sanitizers. The mop type and product combinations were significantly different.

SOURCE: ISSA



# Cleaning Models for the Post-Pandemic Reality

Commercial cleaners need to lean on communication and transparency as low building occupancy continues

**P**ost-pandemic workplaces have changed. With shifting schedules, flex hours and smaller teams, commercial cleaners are once again pivoting to accommodate lower occupancy, while managing labour and maintaining their margins.

Supply chain delays, staffing shortages and rising inflation are all issues the industry is facing from both sides of the equation, so cleaners and facility managers need to work together to find a solution to suit everyone's needs.

Remote work continues to be a common practice and 78 per cent of compa-

nies expect work-from-home policies to remain long-term or even permanent. Reports predict that 73 per cent of all teams will have remote workers by 2028. In this article, Randy Burke, CEO of Toronto-based DCS Global spoke about the ongoing challenges that commercial cleaners are facing as they struggle to optimize their labour and excel at service, while lower building occupancy seems to be a lasting trend.

*How has reduced occupancy affected commercial cleaners?*

Lower building occupancy is affect-

ing commercial cleaners on two fronts: Seemingly arbitrary cost reductions from building owners and managers, and a more complicated process for contract negotiation. With a smaller staff and often smaller workloads, many building operators are looking for cleaners to reduce their pricing – and often that's happening without any analysis or data. Many times, managers take a situation that looks like there is less work for cleaners, and determine that their services should therefore cost less than before. However, there's not always

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## The Five Pillars of Culture

By LIBBY DELUCIEN

Creating a thriving and cohesive work culture is essential for any organization's success. An effective work culture fosters employee engagement, satisfaction and productivity while promoting teamwork and innovation. To achieve this, companies often rely on the foundation of the "Five Pillars of Culture." These pillars shape the collective values and beliefs that guide behaviour and decision-making within the workspace.

Let's delve into each of these pillars to understand their significance and impact on workplace culture.

### THE CORE VALUES PILLAR

At the heart of every strong work culture lies a set of core values. These values reflect the fundamental principles that guide an organization's actions and define its identity. Core values go beyond just words on a wall; they are the driving force behind how employees interact, make decisions and prioritize tasks. When core values are well-defined and embraced by everyone in the organization, they act as a moral compass, fostering unity and alignment among employees.

Leaders play a crucial role in cultivating the core values pillar by consistently demonstrating and reinforcing these principles through their actions. Organizations that have successfully integrated core values into their work culture tend to attract like-minded individuals

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# Cleaning Models for the Post-Pandemic Reality

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such a direct correlation. Now, with occupancy down to 20 per cent in some areas, there may well be some validity to those requests, but arbitrarily cutting costs is a problem. These decisions need to be data-based to make sense all around.

The second issue is that many cleaners are operating on old contracts, and that means that they are being held to systems, specs and tools that were negotiated before the pandemic even happened. In these cases, there may, in fact, be an efficiency issue where buildings are actually being over-cleaned. This brings to light the need for cleaners and operators to work together to find solutions that get the job done and maximize productivity.

*What are some of the strategies cleaners can employ to address these concerns?*

Getting proactive, inviting open communication, and talking to customers are the best ways for cleaners to handle these issues. Explaining why cuts may not make sense, suggesting realistic, relevant adjustments to contracts and practices, showing the math, and getting ahead of the problem as much as possible will help. Recommending changes that make sense as a way for operators to save money, gives cleaners some control over the process and the ability to plan for those changes, rather than the adjustments thrust upon them. Win-wins are possible by working together!

Cutting profit level is not the answer, it's about finding a solution that is not going to hurt the overhead, the equipment or the supervision. Keeping those key pillars at the forefront can simplify working together to agree on fair reductions and processes.

*As this situation changes over the coming years, what skills or approaches will cleaners need to employ to continue to thrive?*

These last few years have really highlighted how important it is for cleaning companies to be adaptable and ready for any situation. Building occupancy is something that is still changing and shifting, and cleaners need to be able to adjust to address these changes going forward.

For example, some companies are looking for ways to cut costs with company-wide cleaning programs, wherein cleaners

schedule visits for maximum ease and efficiency. Because these occupancy levels are regularly shifting, a monthly approach is best, where the schedule is adjusted and confirmed a month ahead based on predicted occupancy.

From a practical standpoint, there are simple office tools or visual cues that can be used to simplify cleaners' jobs and maximize time spent on site, as building occupancy continues to fluctuate. Getting creative with things like tenant tent cards that say whether the space has been used and needs to be cleaned will help refine processes from both sides.

At the end of the day, cleaners should be approaching customers with a focus on value. Looking at communicating to companies that the low bid isn't necessarily the answer, even in today's economic climate. The bottom line doesn't speak to value. The simple truth is that price is what you pay, but value is what you get. Communicating your value means agreeing on something that makes the most sense for everyone.

### OVERCOMING OBJECTIONS TO COMMERCIAL CLEANING

*What can building operators do to help address these cleaning challenges?*

As cleaners need to work on optimizing their labour and lowering their topline costs, building operators need to collaborate with cleaners to increase transparency, work on better communication and create solutions that are advantageous for both sides. Cleaners and operators need to assess and renegotiate what the new reality looks like, determine the best course of action, and decide on what's required by both parties to simplify the process and reach success.

It's often a good idea to hire a third party to conduct productivity studies to get help doing the math and get both sides to reach a place where everyone is happy with the end result. This type of cleaning assessment can help determine and clarify the best approach to cleaning the building, create a realistic scope, identify opportunities and provide data for a better overall end result.

No one likes surprises, so communica-

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# The Science of Alcohol-Based Sanitizers and Norovirus

By NEAL WIESELMAN

**N**ovember is a month of preparation Black Friday, Christmas, Hanukkah, New Year's – and, sorry to be a Scrooge – norovirus.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the peak season for norovirus is November through April. However, while many schools, hospitals, businesses, restaurants and other facilities – including cruise ships – continue to stock up on alcohol-based hand sanitizer (ABHS), science has proven that these formulas do not protect against norovirus. In fact, the CDC and other agencies warn the public not to rely on hand sanitizer to combat norovirus.

For more than 35 years, I was involved in hand sanitizer manufacturing, selling to some of the largest healthcare facilities in the world, and I am a huge proponent of ABHS for many applications, even though we have always known about ABHS' lack

of non-enveloped viral efficacy. But before I explain why ABHS is ineffective against norovirus, let's look at what norovirus is and why an outbreak is so dangerous.

## A BRIEF DEFINITION

Norovirus, commonly known as the stomach flu, includes a group of viruses that cause acute gastroenteritis and inflammation of the stomach and intestine linings. Unrelated to influenza (the flu), the highly contagious norovirus can cause days of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and fever. In extreme cases, it can lead to severe dehydration, reduced nutrient absorption and death.

As for how it is spread, Sara Mirza from the CDC's norovirus team told *Time*, "About 80 per cent of the transmission occurs when the virus spreads from person to person." This is why healthcare facilities, restaurants, schools, daycare centres, cruise ships and other environments with regular person-to-person contact are particularly

susceptible to norovirus outbreaks.

## SOME SCARY STATISTICS

According to the National Foundation for Infectious Disease (NFID), norovirus in the United States causes:

- 19 to 21 million cases of vomiting and diarrhea.
- Nearly 2.3 million outpatient visits.
- 450,000-plus emergency department visits.
- 109,000 hospitalizations.
- 900 deaths.

According to the CDC, the norovirus is especially dangerous for young children. Of children under five infected:

- One in 40 will go to the emergency department.
- One in 160 will be hospitalized.
- One in 110,000 will die.

The CDC also reports that norovirus accounts for 50 per cent of all foodborne illness cases in the United States. Yet the

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## The Five Pillars of Culture

who share similar beliefs, leading to a stronger sense of belonging and purpose.

### THE MISSION PILLAR

The mission statement serves as a north star, guiding employees towards a common goal. It outlines the purpose of the organization, the impact it aims to create and the target it strives to achieve. A strong mission statement instills a sense of direction and motivation, creating a shared vision that employees can rally behind.

When the mission is clearly communicated and understood by all employees, it fosters a sense of meaning and fulfillment in their work. As a result, employees feel more engaged and connected to the larger purpose, driving them to perform at their best. Moreover, a compelling mission statement can also attract top talent who are drawn to the opportunity of contributing to a meaningful cause.

### THE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS PILLAR

The performance standards pillar revolves around setting clear expectations and objectives for employees. This pillar focuses on establishing measurable goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) to evaluate individual and team performance. Transparent performance evaluations and feedback mechanisms enable employees to understand how their work aligns with organizational goals and where improvements are needed.

When performance standards are well-defined and consistently upheld, it fosters a culture of accountability and excellence. Employees feel empowered to take ownership of their work and contribute to the overall success of the organization. Furthermore, recognizing and rewarding exceptional performance reinforces positive behaviours and

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# The Science of Alcohol-Based Sanitizers and Norovirus

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country is hardly alone. According to the U.K. Health Security Agency, by mid-March, norovirus cases had already soared to their highest level in more than a decade. Laboratories reported 77 per cent more cases of norovirus than the five-season average before the COVID-19 pandemic.

### SIMPLE SCIENCE: WHY ABHS DOES NOT WORK

Norovirus is a non-enveloped virus, which makes it more resistant to pH and temperature changes. It is completely unaffected by some disinfectants, including alcohol. This is because alcohol, regardless of strength, cannot penetrate the protein shell, or capsid, surrounding a nucleic acid core. In contrast, SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is an enveloped virus, which means that it has a fragile covering that is easily penetrated by alcohol sanitizers.

### THE EXPERTS WEIGH IN

Numerous studies and experts, including Dr. Lee-Ann Jaykus, a professor in the food, bioprocessing and nutrition sciences department at North Carolina State University, often dubbed “the norovirus woman,” report that ABHS is ineffective in killing norovirus. In 2017, CDC’s former branch chief for viral gastroenteritis, Dr. Aron Hall, agreed, telling *NBC News* that ABHS is ineffective against the virus and that “soap and water can wash it away, but it takes really hot water to kill it.”

Most recently, in February 2023, senior Forbes contributor Bruce Y. Lee quoted Hall: “Alcohol gels won’t kill the virus. Even if you were to use so much hand sanitizer on your hands that you felt like you were wearing hand sanitizer mittens, the live virus could still remain on your hands.”

Today, the CDC’s website states, “Hand sanitizer does not work well against norovirus... and is not a substitute for washing your hands with warm water and soap.”

Notifying the public is the least the CDC is obligated to do. However, considering how much the CDC recommended ABHS during the pandemic, the agency needs to do more to make sure that all the people that have been conditioned to use ABHS are aware that ABHS does not kill norovirus.

Perhaps even more unsettling is that as early as 2011, studies showed that ABHS

was not only ineffective but may increase the risk of outbreaks of highly contagious diseases – such as norovirus – because people, especially in healthcare settings, are more likely to use it than to wash their hands. The prevalence of ABHS use during and since the COVID-19 pandemic has helped spread this false sense of security at a wildfire pace.

### WHY HANDWASHING ISN'T WORKING

As previously mentioned, killing norovirus “requires really hot water,” 60 degrees Celsius (140 degrees Fahrenheit) or hotter, to be exact, which would scald human hands.

Handwashing can remove norovirus – but only if it is performed properly and thoroughly, which studies show most healthcare workers do less than 50 per cent of the time. More discouraging, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) found that research subjects preparing meals in a test kitchen washed their hands improperly 97 per cent of the time. Greatly complicating the situation are the many situations where water is not readily available for handwashing, which turned ABHS into the hero overnight during the COVID-19 pandemic. This begs the question, what is the superhero with the efficacy to protect us against norovirus?

### HOCL TO THE RESCUE

In humans, hypochlorous acid (HOCL) is created by white blood cells to defend against infection, bacteria and general illness. HOCL works by breaking down the cell walls of pathogens, then killing them. Outside the body, HOCL is made using electrolysis to break down a simple saltwater solution. It contains no alcohol, benzalkonium chloride, hydrogen peroxide or other chemicals.

U.S. studies show that HOCL is effective against a wide variety of viruses. As in the human body, HOCL has been shown to inactivate enveloped viruses and non-enveloped ones like norovirus. Yet HOCL is also safe enough to be used in products such as wound care and eyecare formulas and for the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to approve it as a non-rinse

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# The Science of Alcohol-Based Sanitizers and Norovirus

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sanitizer for meat, poultry, fish, vegetables and fruits. It is also an approved hand sanitizer in the United Kingdom and Europe.

Yet, not all HOCL-based products are the same. They have varying percentages of HOCL and free available chlorine, shelf lives that can vary from days to years, and pH ranges from acidic to alkaline, making some unadvisable for use on the skin.

## S-HOCL: THE BEST OF THE BEST

The best HOCL antimicrobial spray for hand hygiene you can choose contains stabilized hypochlorous acid (S-HOCL), which has all the attributes of HOCL plus unique benefits that make it exceptionally well-suited for use in hand hygiene.

S-HOCL is hypoallergenic with a neutral pH to make it safe for use on skin, a feature few HOCL solutions can match. The best formulas have a two-year shelf life compared to the 30-day shelf life of most HOCL. It is also advisable to look for an S-HOCL hand hygiene spray with

an antimicrobial designation that has a 510K registration and is FDA-cleared. All the better if it is accepted by the National Eczema Association and has other safe skin designations from reputable organizations.

ABHS is excellent for protecting against COVID-19 and other illnesses caused by enveloped viruses. But when it comes to protection against norovirus, 'tis the season for a hand hygiene antimicrobial spray with S-HOCL.

For more information on the science of alcohol-based hand sanitizers, tune into this episode of *BioTalk*, a GBACTv production.

— *Neal Wieselmann is the Director of Infection Prevention for Intercon Chemical. He has been involved in new product development of infection prevention products for 35 years, including ABHR, hand hygiene, wound care and surface disinfection using novel antimicrobial technology like S-HOCL and silver dihydrogen citrate (SDC). He can be reached at [nealn@interconchemical.com](mailto:nealn@interconchemical.com).*

SOURCE: ISSA Articles

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# The Five Pillars of Culture

motivates others to strive for excellence.

## THE CORE COMPETENCIES PILLAR

Core competencies refer to the specific skills, knowledge and abilities that are essential for employees to excel in their roles. This pillar encompasses both technical skills and soft skills, such as communication, adaptability and problem-solving. Identifying and nurturing core competencies are crucial for creating a competent and agile workforce.

Investing in employee training and development is vital to strengthen this pillar. When employees are equipped with the necessary tools and expertise, they are better prepared to handle challenges and adapt to changing circumstances. A focus on core competencies also encourages a learning culture, where employees are continuously encouraged to grow and develop professionally.

## THE PEOPLE PILLAR

The people pillar emphasizes the significance of the human element in the workplace. Employees are not just resources but valuable assets who contribute to the overall success of the organization. This pillar encompasses factors such as diversity, inclusion, work-life balance and employee well-being.

Nurturing a positive and inclusive work environment allows employees to feel valued, respected and supported. Organizations that prioritize the people pillar tend to have higher employee retention rates and experience increased levels of collaboration and creativity.

In conclusion, the five pillars of culture in a workspace are interconnected, and essential for fostering a strong and cohesive work culture. By cultivating core values, embracing a clear mission, setting performance standards, investing in core compe-

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## ISSA CHARITIES™

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**December 6:** ISSA Hygieia Network, Sustainability: The Impact on the Cleaning Industry Webinar, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. (Eastern). [Click here](#) for more information.

**December 7:** Beyond Fresh Air: IAQ Webinar, 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. (Eastern). [Click here](#) for more information.

**January 16, 18, 23 & 25:** CMI Supervisor and Management Bootcamp, Virtual Event, Noon to 4 p.m. (Eastern) each day. [Click here](#) for more information.

**March 12, 14, 19 & 21:** CMI Train the Trainer, Virtual Event, Noon to 4 p.m. (Eastern). [Click here](#) for more information.

**April 25:** SAVE THE DATE! ISSA Hygieia Network, Networking & Leadership Conference – Mississauga, ON. More details will be available soon!

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## The Five Pillars of Culture

tencies and prioritizing the well-being of employees, organizations can create an environment where employees feel motivated, engaged and proud to be part of the team. A thriving work culture not only enhances productivity and performance but also sets the foundation for sustained success and growth.

– Libby DeLucien is the owner of the residential cleaning company Organize It. She is also a founder of lead generation company WootRecruit.

SOURCE: ISSA Articles



## Queen's University Teams with CIMS for Clean, Healthy Facilities

The COVID-19 pandemic brought along with it a heightened sense of awareness regarding hygiene and cleanliness. Queen's University in Kingston, ON, is a perfect example of an organization that has sustained that same value of clean in post-pandemic times.

In a recent episode of *Straight Talk!*, three employees of Queen's University – Sam Whyte, director of operations and facilities maintenance; Barb Wowk, assistant director of custodial support and

grounds services; and Matt Savoie, director of facilities and infrastructure for housing and ancillary services – discuss how ISSA's Cleaning Industry Management Standard-Green Building (CIMS-GB) certification has helped the university consistently maintain clean and healthy facilities.

To find out how CIMS-GB certification has played a major role in helping the university meet its goals, watch the video or listen to the podcast here.

## Cleaning Models for the Post-Pandemic Reality

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tion is truly key as things like building occupancy are in continual fluctuation.

*Are there any positive takeaways from the current commercial cleaning landscape?*

Yes, this situation has shone a light on out-of-date business models, and has paved some of the way for innovation adoption like sensors, robotics and automated systems. These tools have emerged as ways to help address some

of these challenges, helping people to get smart about flexible and scalable working models. There's a real opportunity for cleaners to look closely at their businesses, and improve overall operations for better productivity and service into the future.

*This article was originally featured in the summer 2023 issue of FC&M Magazine.*

SOURCE: FC&M magazine

# Stand Out From the Crowd

Validate services to build lasting trust.

**Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) Advanced by GBAC** assures excellence for quality - driven building service contractors and in-house organizations that strive to maintain hygienic environments for the benefit of building occupants.

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- A comprehensive certification for quality driven building service contractors and in-house cleaning organizations.
- Created to maintain hygienic environments for the benefit of building occupants.

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*"The CIMS Standard assures TCS employees and customers that systems are in place that instill quality service for all and that we will continue to refine and improve our delivery of services to benefit all stakeholders."* – **Rada Bishenkevich | Project Manager**

### Enhanced Criteria

The CIMS Standard has been bolstered by critical elements from the GBAC STAR accreditation program.

### Evolved Certification

The first major update of components for the CIMS Standard since its inclusion of the Green Building (GB) elements aligning with LEED building certification requirement.

### Empowered Organizations

GBAC's expertise in infection prevention best practices will help cleaning service providers support their customers and help internal stakeholders create more hygienic environments for building occupants.



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