

Best practice cleaning in the manufacturing industry

Traditional cleaning methods in the manufacturing sector usually require manual scrubbing together with chemicals, large amounts of water together with high-pressure washing, and industrial vacuum methods. Unlike other industries where cross contamination is a key focus, the manufacturing industry mainly focuses on ensuring large areas are covered, as well as saving time and reducing manual effort. By Murray McDonald, Director of Duplex Cleaning Machines.

Modern technology and processes for the manufacturing industry now commonly include 'steam vapour technology'. This is the number-one cleaning method for sectors such as healthcare and accommodation, and the manufacturing sector is now beginning to follow suit. The following are key elements of what makes up a best-practice cleaning process for the manufacturing industry, the use of steam vapour as a leading manufacturing cleaning method and common cleaning applications.

Ensuring best-practice OH&S

The type of cleaning processes used can impact on occupational health and safety (OH&S).

The cleaning of dirt and oils off industrial floors is vital to the manufacturing cleaning process to prevent slips and falls. However, when processes such as water and chemicals are used, it only "wipes" dirt, transferring the grime from one surface to another.

Overuse of chemicals is a common hazard when using outdated cleaning processes. Not only does it create a slippery surface that creates the risk of slips and falls, but it actually prevents the removal of dirt. Instead it creates a sticky surface due to trapped dirt and oils, leading to a build-up of grime.

When heated at 180 degrees Celsius and above, dry steam breaks down and melts all dirt and grime, and kills mould and bacteria without the need for drying time, eliminating the hazard of slippery floors. Also, today's modern industrial steam cleaning equipment can now be battery operated, minimising trips on cords and electrical hazards. These machines have been designed specifically to cater for large flooring areas and the safety-focused culture of the manufacturing sector.

Passing the 'cleanliness' test

A key cleanliness test in the manufacturing sector is running water across a surface and seeing whether it runs smoothly or if it results in beaded water. If the water is broken up rather than producing a smooth stream, the result is that there is most likely some form of residue still left on the surface.



When cleaning with traditional chemicals and hosing down surfaces with large amounts of water, the chances of the cleaning process passing this water test decrease greatly. Steam vapour technology is designed to disintegrate dirt and together with industrial machine brushes, it agitates the surface and picks up any remaining residue. Together with its infection control capabilities, high temperature steam ensures that all manufacturing surfaces, whether they are benches, flooring or equipment will pass the cleanliness test.

Parts or equipment cleaning

Due to steam being a vapour, it can detail clean and get into hard to reach areas or awkwardly shaped surfaces that can be involved in parts cleaning. Steam on metal surfaces, such as equipment, removes all impurities by getting into the "micro holes" of the metal. Getting into the pores of metal produces that lustre and shine that can commonly be seen when metal receives a deep clean.

Although the sanitation of equipment is an important step to the manufacturing cleaning process, it is also important that the cleaning method used doesn't ruin a surface or equipment. Steam vapour

technology doesn't leave behind any moisture that could cause blockages and rusting, and because it is a natural cleaning agent it won't cause surface erosions.

Infection control

Although infection control procedures in cleaning are not as significant a concern in the manufacturing industry as it may be in other sectors, there are still major risks that can harm the health of staff or contaminate a production line.

For examples, outbreaks of legionnaires' disease can be caused by the build-up of moulds and spores, which typically grow in moist and damp areas such as factory refrigeration systems, warehouse storage units, cold rooms and industrial air conditioning systems. The use of steam vapour is a top infection control process as bacteria and microbes are unable to survive at the high temperatures that steam vapour can reach.

Surfaces such as conveyor belts, production lines and benches are critical contact points where product, in a raw state when touching these surfaces, increases the risk of contamination.

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