

Lowdown on cleaning up

How cleaning processes have changed over the last 10 years for the food manufacturing industry

Just like other sectors where cross contamination and infection control is of high importance, the food manufacturing industry follows rigorous hygiene and cleanliness methods. Unlike other industrial sectors, the risks of contamination, bacteria build-up and disease are strong if the appropriate cleaning processes are not implemented. *Murray McDonald**

Modern cleaning processes and technology for the food manufacturing sector have increased productivity and hygiene, as well as reducing the resources needed to adhere to food health and safety guidelines.

Today, there is no need to use outdated and ineffective cleaning methods. For sophisticated and safety-conscious food factories, using traditional tools such as rags, scrubbing brushes and hoses are no longer an ideal fit.

The following are key ways cleaning processes for the food manufacturing industry have changed over the last 10 years to ensure a consistent and high standard of hygiene.

New technology

Traditional cleaning methods include hosing down chemical and elbow grease; these methods don't agitate the surface, which is fundamental to get into the pores of a surface. Today's technology provides the process of washing, scrubbing and removing food scraps, dirt and grime, therefore mechanically agitating the surface. Using dry steam as part of large cleaning jobs has become a key cleaning method in the manufacturing industry, as well as hospitality and healthcare. When heated to 180°C, dry steam kills bacteria and breaks down stubborn manufacturing grime such as grease and oils.

Dry steam has also helped manufacturers comply with workplace safety practices as the dry component does not allow residue to build up and floors do not become moist, which can lead to slips and falls by both staff and equipment.

Streamlined cleaning technology, such as inline cleaning systems, allows for conveyor belts to be steamed, vacuumed and any waste removed in one process, without the need to stop and swap equipment or tools. This greatly reduces the risk of contamination further down the production line as surfaces are receiving a deep clean rather than a wipe down.

Cleaning intervals

Cleaning can now be done at all intervals of the day so 'break cleaning' can now be a part of a factory's everyday cleaning process. Ten years ago, cleaning could only be done either before production or after. If it occurred during production hours, machines would need to be turned off for the cleaning to occur.

Automatic systems allow for cleaning to run whilst production is running, which allows for less interference with production schedules and downtime. Having regular cleaning sessions throughout the course of production also decreases the risk of contamination.



Reduction in resources

Modern cleaning processes, technology and machines eliminate the use of more than just manual labour. One modern steam machine or battery-powered vacuum can reduce energy and water use, time and other replacement costs by up to 70%.

As machines can complete a job in considerably less time than that required for manual cleaning, both power and water use is minimised. With processes such as using dry steam or microfibre clothes, time is also saved due to the elimination of downtime caused by wet floors.

Stricter infection control procedures

In the last five years, ultraviolet (UV) light technology has become an infection control method that is used as an adjunct to steam. UV light can be used to disinfect critical surfaces and maintain cleaning processes that have already been implemented throughout the day.

If a surface has been contaminated during production, there are 12 or more hours for microbes to grow while the

factory is closed or in non-production status. This increase in microbial load can result in the contamination of food once production resumes.

The combination of dry steam cleaning and UV disinfection can be a powerful tool that food manufacturers can use to control contamination risks in their food plants.

Duplex Cleaning Machines Pty Ltd

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**Murray McDonald has over 20 years' experience in the distribution of industrial cleaning equipment and is Director of Duplex Cleaning Machines. Duplex is an expert in the distribution of cleaning machine products in Australia and New Zealand and has solved cleaning issues and improved cleaning standards in thousands of industrial facilities.*

