KEY FACTORS IN WAREHOUSE CLEANING

In the last 10 years, industrial cleaning processes have become more modern, taking into consideration the specific cleaning issues involved. Traditionally, water combined with high pressure was the main method for cleaning in all types of industrial sectors, including warehouse cleaning. However, water alone isn't a disinfectant and when combined with chemicals this can cause dirt build-up rather than removal, as well as an increase in WHS issues such as slips and falls.

Compared to domestic or commercial cleaning, a key difference in industrial cleaning is that the areas that need to be covered are much larger. Larger areas can lead to key cleaning areas being missed, longer labour time and increased risk of WHS issues.

Warehouse cleaning is a key industrial cleaning area, with many industrial sectors having a warehouse for the transportation and distribution of their goods. The following are three key factors involved in warehouse cleaning.

Dust and debris

Dust and debris is the main cause of dirt build-up in a warehouse. Vehicles such as fork trucks bring in dust from being driven in dusty environments. As well as this, the packaging or equipment used in the transportation of products, such as pallets, also bring in and accumulate large amounts of debris.

Roller shutter doors are a key feature of a warehouse that can cause more dust to be brought in. When a heavy roller door is opened and closed, it blows in debris from outside, scattering it around a large and open-spaced environment, making it hard to confine the dirt to one area for cleaning and removal.

Today's modern industrial cleaning technology is especially designed for this specific issue of dirt and debris in large areas. Scrubbing machines and sweepers are made to go across both concrete and epoxy-painted concrete, which are the two main floor surfaces of a warehouse. Industrial cleaning equipment and processes need not only pick up loose and large debris, but also wash and flush a floor surface to ensure the smaller particles are not being left behind to accumulate.

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A dusty environment is not just an WHS issue. A big concern is the effect it will have on the reputation of your distribution service or your products. Dusty goods are seen to either be 'old stock', unpopular items or products that have not been properly taken care of during the storage and transportation processes.

Liquids and fine particle spills

Liquid spills are a key priority to be dealt with during the warehouse cleaning process. Spills in any sector are usually the first type of cleaning issue to be dealt with straight away because of its ability to lead to serious consequences.

Freezer warehouses, cold stores or blast freezers can lead to ice build-up on the floor. Ice build-up is particularly dangerous from a WHS standpoint, due to the large vehicles that are driven or equipment that is used on warehouse floors. These vehicles or equipment can slip causing serious injury to the person driving or in control, as well as to others or stored goods in the vicinity.

Fine particle spills are categorised different to liquid spills, as these spills don't necessarily have to be a liquid. For example, a common situation in which fine particle spills occur is when a good or product bursts, causing particles to scatter around shelving and racks that may be too difficult and time consuming to disassemble. Modern cleaning technology, such as battery vacuums, are designed to get into these hard-to-reach areas and suck up all fine particles that

may have been missed by a manual sweep or are hidden behind racking.

Food carrying vehicles

Sectors, such as healthcare and hospitality see infection control as a critical component to their cleaning processes. However, infection control is also a key element to warehouse cleaning, although with a focus on bacteria build-up rather than disease.

Disinfecting vehicles should be a key task in any warehouse cleaning procedure. Contamination can occur due to leakages and damaged products within vehicles that result in product surface to vehicle surface contact, particularly inside those that transport food.

Steam, at a high temperature of around 180 degrees Celsius or more, is one of the top cleaning methods for killing all bacteria and removing any grime, dirt or oils. It essentially provides a 'deep clean' for all surfaces including flooring, equipment and vehicles.

Vehicles are also a small, enclosed space that can easily lead to moisture build-up. Moisture build-up can lead to the growth of fungus and mould, which can also lead to contamination when in contact with a transported product or good.

Warehouse cleaning can seem like a laborious task, but when key cleaning elements are given priority, this can help minimise the regular activity of other smaller cleaning tasks such as daily sweeping or polishing. It is common for cleaning to be seen as the task to simply 'keep up appearances', but at the end of the day, incorrect processes can cost businesses more than just a bit of dirt build-up.

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