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The change in cleaning processes to ensure a safer workplace

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Over the last 10 years, the safety maturity of many commercial and industrial sectors has increased dramatically. No longer is it just the safety managers or supervisors prioritising safety in the workplace, so are workers on all levels.

There are many reasons for this increase in awareness, including mainstream safety awareness media campaigns, companies investing in more safety training and legislation changes. With companies becoming more safety aware, current processes have been evaluated and replaced with products and methods that meet safety standards.

The following are three key reasons why cleaning processes have changed in the last decade to ensure cleaning is a safer process for all involved.

Slips and falls: It is common thinking that for something to be clean, large amounts of water and chemicals need to be used during the cleaning process. This is one of the myths that modern cleaning technology has tried to shake.

An overuse of water and chemicals has the opposite effect to cleaning by actually transferring grime and bacteria from one surface to another. The excess water is just being 'wiped' to another area. An overuse of chemicals causes grime and dirt to actually stick to a surface, leading to a build-up bacteria.

Besides the obvious hygiene, OHS issues associated with this, sticky surfaces and wet floors are a major contributor to slips and falls. Staff, as well as vehicles and machinery that are driven on damp or wet floors, are at risk of vehicles or equipment slipping, causing serious injury to the person driving, as well as to others in the vicinity.

Dry steam vapour is a leading method to clean, sanitise and dry in one action. Due to its dryness, residue and wet surfaces are no longer a risk.

Build-up of debris: Debris is the main cause of dirt build-up in many industrial facilities. Although dusty working environments go hand in hand with the job for some sectors, too much of it can impact eyesight and breathing abilities. PPE gear, such as masks and goggles, aim to eliminate some of these concerns; however, many sectors are adopting the mindset of eliminating risk, rather than solely focusing on prevention.

Modern cleaning technology is especially designed for the specific issue of picking up dirt and debris in large areas. Industrial cleaning equipment and processes, such as sweepers and scrubbers, need to pick up both loose and large debris and also wash and flush a floor surface to ensure the smaller particles are not being left behind to accumulate.

Infection control: High-temperature steam is also a key method in infection control as it provides a 'deep clean' of all surfaces including flooring, equipment and vehicles. For example, sectors that deal with the distribution or preparation of food benefit from its disease-killing abilities.

Ninety per cent of contamination in food happens during the production and packaging process. Gastroenteritis and botulism are just two of the diseases that are infectious. When heated above 180°C, steam kills all bacteria such as *Staphylococcus* and *Escherichia coli*.

It is important for industry to understand that the process of disinfection and cleaning isn't just for presentation or reputation purposes. Upgrading from the 'mop and bucket' is essential to keep workers safe from physical industry as well as disease.

**Murray McDonald has over 20 years' experience in the distribution of industrial and commercial cleaning equipment and is director of Duplex Cleaning Machines. Duplex distributes cleaning machine products in Australia and New Zealand and has solved cleaning issues and improved cleaning standards in thousands of industrial and commercial facilities. Visit www.duplexcleaning.com.au.*