

The Day Cleaning Question

Written by Dawn Shoemaker



Day cleaning, which usually refers to cleaning that is performed while building occupants are still using or working in a facility, is certainly not new.

Some of us may not have taken notice of it, but large public facilities such as airports, convention centers, megahotels and other locations have been cleaned during the day- when scores of people are using the facilities- for decades.

It is true that some cleaning work, such as carpet extraction or floor refinishing, may be

performed in the evening when fewer people are using the facility, but for the most part, the bulk of the cleaning is performed during the day when the facility is being used.

Many retail facilities adopted day cleaning systems decades ago and scores of smaller companies located in California's Silicon Valley, ever concerned about the loss of their technological trade secrets, insisted on day cleaning as far back as the 1980s.

However, since 2000, two incidents have influenced a renewed interest in day cleaning more than anything else: the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the growing interest in energy conservation.

9/11 made everyone much more security-conscious, says Nicolas Lazaris, partner of PEACE Maintenance in Montreal, Quebec, whose company provides day cleaning services to many types of facilities. This was especially true of [Canadian] government offices as well as many highsecurity private facilities.

Many building owners and managers also have transitioned to day cleaning to save energy. According to Randy Burke, a consultant and advocate for day cleaning, This painless and inexpensive switch to cleaning during the daylight hours brings about serious, quantifiable reductions in energy consumption.

Indeed, Building Owners and Managers International (BOMA) claims that 25 percent of the weekly lighting used in a large facility, such as a high-rise office building, is used to illuminate the facility solely for after-work and cleaning purposes. The organization estimates that this amounts to about seven percent of the total energy used in the facility— an amount that can be turned into energy and cost savings if the facility is cleaned during the day and the lights and other mechanicals are shut down in the evening.

However, is day cleaning a painless way to clean facilities, as Burke describes it? Many would agree with her, but most cleaning consultants and building service

contractors that offer day cleaning services will argue. It has its pros and cons, and may work very well in some facilities while not in others.

Pros

One thing we really like about day cleaning is that problems can be addressed right away, usually between the customer and the cleaning worker, explains Lazaris. With night or traditional cleaning, the customer typically contacts the office about a problem that may take 24 hours or more to address.

Lazaris says this has an added benefit in that it develops a strong working relationship between the custodial staff and the customer. It puts a face on cleaning, he says. When you never see the cleaning workers, if something is missing, the cleaning workers are often suspected. This is no longer true when you see the cleaning people every day.

Some of the other benefits Lazaris notes about day cleaning are that his company finds it easier to hire workers and, very often, these day workers are more stable, staying with the company for longer periods versus traditional evening workers. This minimizes training, which can prove to be a real cost savings as well.

He also thinks it is good for our industry that the public see cleaning workers at work. Many people simply do not know what it takes to clean a facility. It's hard work, a lot of bending, moving, picking up things. Our customers develop a much greater respect for us and what we do when they see us working every day.

Cons

One of the biggest concerns about day cleaning systems, which Lazaris has experienced firsthand and has been noted by cleaning consultants critical of the system, is that deep cleaning a facility, something that should be done on a regular basis, is hard if not impossible to accomplish. For instance, even such simple things as dusting

the bottoms of office chairs, which can become serious dust collectors if not attended to, are almost impossible to clean if the chairs are always occupied.

“Cleaning desk areas in general can be a real problem,” adds Lazaris. “The building occupants are there to work at their desks. Sometimes they will leave for a few minutes and we can clean them, but usually we can’t, and they can get pretty grimy.”

As for worker productivity, he adds that it takes longer to clean a facility when day cleaning is implemented because there are times when they cannot access an area or, especially after mopping floors, an area must be blocked off until it has dried. “The custodians are invariably in a situation where they must always ask building occupants, ‘May I clean this area now?’” says Lazaris. “This never happens when the building is empty, and it can really slow down the work.”

He adds that even though his company may charge more for day cleaning services, the supplementary amounts are to cover extra time and the labor needed to clean the facilities. Moreover, there are times when some cleaning, such as deep cleaning or floor and carpet work, must be performed when occupants are not present. When this happens, his company may pass on the added costs to the client.

Manufacturers Face the Light

Because of the interest in day cleaning, some jan/san manufacturers have introduced cleaning equipment and products that lend themselves well to cleaning when the facility is occupied. “Many of our end customers that perform day cleaning tell us they like using backpack vacuums,” says Michael Schaffer, president of Tornado Industries®, manufacturers of professional cleaning tools and equipment. “That’s because the newer backpacks are quiet, often quieter than an upright vacuum cleaner; versatile so that they can vacuum hard and soft surfaces without changing machines; and fast.”

Schaffer is referring to the fact that studies indicate more square feet of floor area can

be cleaned using a backpack than using a conventional upright vacuum cleaner. Along with quieter vacuums, newer floor-care equipment technologies have been introduced that have found a home in day cleaning situations. According to Schaffer, a perfect example is a whisper quiet+battery-operated burnisher introduced last year.

The fact that it is battery operated is a big plus because it means there are no cords that someone could possibly trip over,+he says. Cords can be a big safety issue in day cleaning situations.+

Similar to the backpack mentioned earlier, the burnisher is also very quiet. The quieter the cleaning equipment, the more work the cleaning worker can perform because it does not disturb building occupants,+says Schaffer. This is how you improve worker productivity in day cleaning situations.+

A Reflection of Us

As already mentioned, Lazaris says day cleaning puts a face on cleaning. The public has the opportunity to see cleaning workers at work and all that they do. He believes this helps build more respect for our industry and his business. I encourage my staff to always be as polite and professional as possible. Watching cleaning workers at work can be very powerful, and I want that message to be as positive as possible.+

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