

BEYOND THE KITCHEN

A BSC's Guide to Preventing Cross Contamination

By Mark Unger

TRADITIONALLY, THE TERM "CROSS CONTAMINATION" has been used in the food service industry to refer to the spread of germs resulting in food-borne illnesses. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) establishes strict guidelines for handling and processing food to protect the public from these dangers.

Similarly in the jan/san industry, cross contamination occurs when infected cleaning tools such as mops or other tools come in contact with one another, spreading germs and causing illnesses. While the CDC and other regulatory agencies have stringent policies in place to help reduce the spread of infection through cross contamination, building service contractors (BSCs) can also hold workers to similarly high standards to effectively contain pathogens throughout the building.

HIGH RISK ZONES

One necessary, but often overlooked, step in the cleaning process is identifying low- and high-risk areas of a building. High-risk areas are most susceptible to rapid bacteria growth and can become contaminated almost instantly. This includes food service areas, locker rooms, restrooms, etc.

BSCs should assess the effectiveness of cleaning programs in these areas by examining the types of chemicals and cleaning tools used. After identifying a program, areas should be prioritized according to risk level and placed on a more rigorous cleaning schedule.

COLOR CODING

In order to reduce cross contamination, many BSCs prefer to use color-coded products. Cloths, hand tools and cleaning systems can all

be color coded to specify where they should be used in the building. Suggested Global Color Code Guidelines include:

- Red for high risk contamination areas such as toilets, urinals, and showers
- Yellow for specialty cleaning such as labs or gymnasiums
- Green for kitchen and food service areas
- Blue for general cleaning outside of kitchens and restrooms

Disposable gloves should always be used when cleaning. These can also be color coded in order to assure cloths and tools are not used outside designated areas.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

A compulsory component to reducing the threat of cross contamination is to ensure employees are trained in the safe and proper use of cleaning tools. A cleaning product is only as effective in preventing cross contamination as the professional using it.

Employees should also be supervised and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure proper use of cleaning tools. Supervisors should be included in all training programs. By including staff and supervisors in the same training program, a definitive set of expectations can be



Photo courtesy of Unger.

outlined, reducing the opportunity for confusion or miscommunication.

Good training programs indirectly help extend the life of cleaning tools through proper use and also assure that products are being used in the correct area. Through supervision and assessment, BSCs further reduce the danger of cross contamination, ensuring the safety of building patrons and staff.

MICROFIBER MOPS

Many cleaning tools such as traditional mops can actually create soil or spread bacteria to unaffected areas in a building. A microfiber mopping system works to prevent cross contamination. Benefits of a microfiber mop include longer product life, less water use, increased ergonomics for workers, reduced worker fatigue, and improved productivity. When cleaning for health and sanitation, at least 95 percent of all contaminants and harmful substances must be removed from an area for it to be considered disinfected. Microfiber mops can reduce bacteria by 96 percent compared to traditional mop heads.

When used with a dual compartment bucket, microfiber mops prevent surface and mop head re-soiling. The dense microfiber blend promotes deeper penetration for cleaner surfaces while the bucket separates clean solution from dirty rinse water.

DOCUMENT CLEANING POLICIES

Finally, BSCs should carefully document all efforts taken at preventing cross contamination, including all cleaning and hand washing policies. If in the unfortunate event that cross-contamination leads to an illness or infection, proper documentation demonstrates a BSC has taken proactive measures to prevent incident.

While regulatory agencies like the FDA and CDC establish regulations to help prevent the threat of cross contamination in a building, BSCs provide the next step in safeguarding building workers and patrons. By employing practical steps like identifying high-risk zones, color-coding cleaning tools and equipment, training cleaning staff and supervisors, using microfiber and documenting policies, BSCs can help promote a safer environment free of cross contamination.



Mark Unger is president of Unger Enterprises. For more information, visit www.ungerglobal.com.

BSCAImemberprofile

Joseph Ferdinando

What is the full name of your company and where are you located?

It is Building Security Services, Inc. (BSS). Our corporate office is at 15 Freeman St. in West Orange, NJ. We have branches in Cherry Hill, NJ; New York, NY; and Norristown, PA. We can be reached at (800) 762-0029 and at www.buildingsecurity.com

What was your percentage of growth last year?

20 percent

How did you personally get started in this business?

BSS fulfills the need within the security marketplace for an elite security guard force, where emphasis is placed on servicing

clients in a proactive, professional, and responsive manner.

By remaining true to this philosophy, BSS has built a strong reputation as being a leader in the security industry. We have grown from a local company to that of a regional provider, serving Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.

What is the smartest move your company has made?

We decided to become a regional company.

When did BSS join BSCAI and why?

We joined BSCAI in August, 2005. As a security provider I wanted to join an organization that I felt was well rounded from educational training to networking of its peers on a national level.

What is the main benefit you derive from BSCAI membership?

The main benefit to date has been the networking of peers, attending seminars, and taking advantage of the cost savings with Nextel and DHL. Through seminars and networking, Building Security Services has redesigned its marketing plan with great success.

What was the last BSCAI function you attended and what did you get out of it?

I attended the 2006 Chief Executive Seminar in Hawaii and the 2006 Executive Seminar in San Antonio, TX. The seminars and networking have given me an opportunity to evaluate the current and future direction of BSS.

For more information on joining BSCAI, contact John Fletcher at jfletcher@bscai.org or (800) 368-3414. If you would like to be profiled in a future issue, contact Lisa Kopochinski, editor, at (916) 481-0265 or at Lisakop@sbcglobal.net

Correction: In our January/February issue, we inadvertently published an incorrect telephone number for ABH Services in our member profile. The correct number is (540) 667-4409. We apologize for this oversight.