COVID-19:

How Autonomous Cleaning Solutions Improve Cleaning Results and Help Keep Workers Safe

The outbreak of COVID-19 has put a spotlight on the importance of cleanliness. It has also resulted in much-deserved recognition and respect for the people who work to keep spaces like grocery stores, airports, schools, warehouses, and healthcare facilities clean and hygienic. Without cleaning professionals dedicated to cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting surfaces, day in and day out, it would be impossible to prevent infections like COVID-19 from spreading.

For these professionals to maintain the desired level of clean, they need the right tools, including equipment that will enable them to clean efficiently, effectively, and safely. That's why more institutions, from hospitals to high schools, are welcoming autonomous scrubber dryers into their cleaning fleet.

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Benefits of autonomous solutions for coronavirus cleaning

Right now, especially in areas where people with COVID-19 may have been, cleaning is more important than ever. There are a lot of cleaning tasks to do, and the staff who do those tasks must be kept safe.

In this environment, the main benefits of autonomous floor care solutions are threefold:

1. **Cleaning efficiency.** In many buildings, cleaning the floor is a big job – even using a ride-on scrubber dryer, it can take several hours. When you put an autonomous machine on the job, you free up your cleaning team for more labor intensive tasks. Now, instead of cleaning the floor, that same operator can spend those hours cleaning and disinfecting door handles, light switches, restroom fixtures, and other high-touch surfaces.
2. **Cleaning effectiveness.** By following the same path every time, autonomous solutions can regularly deliver between 98% and 99.5% coverage. Our research shows that when operators use standard floor cleaning equipment, they typically miss about 15% of a space. This isn't on purpose – it's just because people aren't perfect. However, in the current situation, every surface should be cleaned as thoroughly as possible.
3. **Staff safety.** Autonomous solutions significantly reduce, and may even eliminate, the amount of time staff need to spend in areas where germs may be present. Once a route is programmed into a machine, the machine will clean that same route every time, with no human intervention required. When the cleaning route is completed, or the machine needs assistance, it will notify the operator.

Best practices for using an autonomous scrubber dryer to prevent the spread infection

Follow these best practices to ensure efficient, effective, and safe cleaning with an autonomous machine.

1. **Clean the floors frequently.** Adjust your cleaning schedule to reflect the heightened demand. That may mean scrubbing high-traffic areas more often than usual.
2. **Use approved chemicals.** You should always follow the guidelines provided by your local authorities and make sure the detergent you use is approved for scrubber dryers. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, grocery stores and other retail establishments may want to use hospital-grade cleaning chemicals. For more information, visit the COVID-19 sections of these websites: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, ISSA.
3. **Clean the machine and all consumables after use.** Once the machine has finished its work, clean all parts of the equipment – including squeegees, pads, and brushes – and let them dry thoroughly. Be sure to leave the recovery tank lid open.
4. **Adhere to safe practices when programming and/or cleaning the machine.** Follow the recommended protocols for personal protection issued by your national, regional, state, and/or local public health authorities (e.g., wearing masks and gloves, washing hands frequently, avoiding touching face).

For more best practices, read our article: How to Clean Your Floor Safely and Effectively with a Scrubber Dryer

Features to look for in an autonomous cleaning solution

Autonomous scrubber dryers are advanced pieces of equipment that use the latest robotics technology. Here are the most important features to look for when evaluating autonomous machines to support cleaning for infection control.

1. **Third-party safety certification.** Autonomous cleaning machines are designed to operate in complex environments that contain people and other obstacles. This raises the stakes when it comes to safety. Be sure the machine you choose is third-party certified to the applicable safety standards in your jurisdiction.
2. **Easy, flexible path programming that guarantees a complete clean every time.** Different autonomous solutions allow you to program cleaning paths in different ways. To ensure a complete clean, choose a machine that can calculate and execute the optimal cleaning route to ensure maximum coverage and efficiency. In addition, because the physical layout of the space to be cleaned may change, select a machine that allows operators to easily program a new path on their own rather than having to call an engineer.
3. **The ability to store multiple cleaning paths for the same area.** You may need to clean some parts of the floor more than others, for example, entryways and other high-traffic areas. Look for a machine that lets you store and run multiple cleaning paths. This also helps if you have different operators cleaning the same area in shifts.
4. **The ability to adjust the level of cleaning for different areas.** The areas you need to clean more frequently may also require more rigorous cleaning. Best-in-class autonomous solutions allow you to program different settings (e.g., amount of chemical, down pressure, water flow, and suction) for different routes.
5. **A system that lays down only clean water.** You can't clean a floor with dirty water. Some autonomous solutions have onboard water filtration and recycling systems, which may not be effective in filtering out germs. Look for an autonomous solution that guarantees only clean water is dispensed onto the floor.

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