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## Your Cleaner's Rooms: A strength or weakness?

Okay, so your average cleaner's room is not the sort of place where you'd throw a party. There are some you couldn't swing a cat in.

However, the humble cleaner's room and the activities performed therein are coming under increased scrutiny not only by clients' property managers, but also by independent auditors, insurance assessors and various authorities.

When I say cleaner's rooms, I'm talking about cleaning chemical and equipment storage, but more on that later.

You would think that the standard of cleaner's rooms had improved in recent times, but with some noteworthy exceptions they haven't. Listening to industry consultants and others, it sounds like many contractors need to focus on improving their cleaner's rooms and in particular chemical storage practices.

I'm not saying it's easy to have wonderful cleaner's rooms. With barely enough time to clean the client's facilities, there is little time left for tidying up the cleaners room to the n<sup>th</sup> degree.

More than ever though, there is very good reason to get the cleaners room, and particularly chemical storage and handling in good order.

So what are the important issues regarding the cleaners room?

### Tidiness, Cleanliness and State of Repair

The cleaner's room is the only permanent evidence in the building of your company. Once the building is clean, the client is blissfully unaware of the frenzy of activity that occurred in the wee hours to achieve it. Your company image rests with day staff, contact managers and your cleaners room and equipment. How good do they make you look? Is the cleaners room messy? Is there redundant junk lying around getting in the way? Is paint peeling off the walls?

### Chemical Storage

A critical area that is under scrutiny by Worksafe and quality auditors. You need to consider the following:

1. **Controlled Dilution.** Whether it is a tap with a cup, a hand-pump or a more expensive dispensing system, there needs to be a known, repeatable measure for use when diluting chemicals to the recommended rate.
2. **Labelled Containers.** All containers in which chemicals are stored including the supplied drums and dispenser bottles must be clearly labelled. The Agar printed dispenser bottles certainly help in this regard – being printed, there is no label to fall off.
3. **Keep Containers Sealed.** All containers of cleaning products should be kept sealed when not being dispensed to minimise the amount of chemical vapour in the air, and prevent contamination of unused product.
4. **Careful Storage of Dangerous Goods.** These include flammables (Class 3) and corrosives (Class 8) and should have a diamond shaped symbol on the label. If you cannot avoid the use of products classed as dangerous, you must ensure that the quantity stored does not exceed the prescribed limits, and that the appropriate storage facilities are in place, including spill kits.
5. **MSDS.** You should have a Material Safety Data Sheet for each chemical that you use or store at that site. The MSDS should be kept in a folder which is accessible to all cleaners.

6. **Chemical Substances Register.** Worksafe require an array of documentation which, when you think about it, does make sense, although it takes extra time to maintain! A register should be compiled containing; a list of all chemicals that you use or store on site, a list of those that are dangerous goods, a list of those that are classified as hazardous (this relates to safety in use), MSDS for all products, risk assessments for the dangerous goods and hazardous materials, and product and/or task sheets explaining the correct use of each product. You can look at it in two ways; a bureaucratic hassle **or** doing your homework to ensure the safety of your cleaners and others.

7. **Wall Charts & Posters.** Any useful information that is accessible to cleaners has to be a good thing. Wall charts that list the products in use and how to use them safely should be placed in a prominent position. Safety posters provide a good reminder about safe work practices.

8. **Rationalise Product Range.** To make life simple in respect of the above, the less products in use at a site, the better. Every effort should be made to use safe and versatile products, and avoid duplication. Better to have one product that does two jobs, than two products that do one and the same job.

### Equipment Care & Storage

Clean mop-heads show a commitment to good cleaning and effective hygiene. Stringy, smelly, dirty-water grey mops are a haven for bacteria and cause a bad odour in and around the cleaners room. Not good for the image or cleaning quality.

A mop-bucket with splash marks and soilage all over the outside sends out bad signals. Now that they're made of plastic, they're not hard to clean.

And so it goes on. The state of repair and cleanliness of your hardware is an indicator of the effectiveness of your organisation.

It is just as important to maintain cleaning machinery in good order and correctly tagged, but the reader is referred to specialists in this area for more information.

If you have any queries regarding chemical storage and handling such as documentation, dispenser bottles, storage, wall charts or how to select the safest and most versatile range of products, please give us a call.



## Looking for Inspiration?

We subscribe to a number of international trade magazines specific to the cleaning and building services industries.

The November 2003 issue of European Cleaning, included an interview with Waldemar Schmidt, the former chief executive of the global services provider ISS Group.

This highly experienced and influential identity has written a book called **'Winning at Service – Lessons from Service Leaders'**. It is the culmination of a research project case study on leaders in the service industry.

As European Cleaning states, 'the book...shows how four world beating firms – Compass Group, Group 4 Falck, Securitas and Sodexo – managed to establish their framework for success by having good leadership, focus, passion for people and simplicity in what they do!'

If this book sounds interesting, you can order a copy at the website at [www.winningatservice.com](http://www.winningatservice.com). Don't expect to find it at your local bookstore.....

It's not that often that a book of substance comes along that has so much relevance to the building services sector.

Please contact your Agar Representative or call us for more information.....

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