



Cleaning requirements for a Hot-desking

Hot-desking is now a common feature in many councils, but whilst money is saved on the reduction in building space, there is often less emphasis on the changes to the cleaning regime required by multiple use of the same desk and equipment. This briefing examines the research around hand cleansing and makes suggestions for necessary improvements in wash facilities and cleaning

Key issues

- Hot-desking will continue to be a favoured option for councils consolidating office space to improve building utilisation and save money.
- At best 2/3 of people wash their hands after using the toilet but only 1/3 use soap
- Where hot-desking is in use, sanitising wipes should be made available and wash-room hand cleaning facilities enhanced.

Introduction

Hot-desking has been the 'buzz phrase' for over a decade as councils attempt to reduce office space and move to a position whereby the number of desks matches need rather than numbers of staff. Whilst in many cases it does save money, it can affect productivity where officers who work in teams aren't sat with their colleagues.

From a cleaning perspective, hot-desking removes ownership of the space around the desk and some people are not always as tidy as might be desired. Conversely, a hot-desking approach usually requires that all personal paperwork is removed at the end of the day so cleaning is easier without the typical desk clutter.

With a desk and telephone being used by multiple officers during a week, there is an expectation that the common tools are sanitised on a frequent basis.

Contamination:

Bringing together the various threads of research is not for the faint hearted:

- The average person's hands carry at least 3,000 different bacteria
- They belong to more than 100 species
- You can identify a person from the bacteria they leave behind after touching an inanimate object
- Bacteria can remain unchanged on an object after two weeks at room temperature

Researchers at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Queen Mary, University of London took nearly 400 samples from mobile phones and hands in 12 British cities. They found 16% of phones and 16% of hands harboured E. coli (Escherichia coli), bacteria which inhabit the human intestines. Overall although 95% of people interviewed said they washed their hands with soap where possible, 92% of phones and 82% of hands had bacteria on them. The largest proportion of contaminated phones was in Birmingham (41%) while Londoners were caught with the highest proportion of E. coli present on hands (28%). Faecal bacteria are present on 26% of hands in the UK, 14% of banknotes and 10% of credit cards,

In a recent UK-wide study, 99% of people interviewed at motorway service stations toilets claimed they had washed their hands after going to the toilet. Electronic recording devices revealed only 32% of men and 64% of women actually did.

A sample of 1793 office workers were surveyed by ukbathrooms.com and found the following:

- When asked whether they wash their hands every time they visit the toilet at work, 68 % of people said they did, while 32 % said no. 4% of respondents said they never used the bathrooms in their workplace.
- When asked what cleaning products they used when washing hands, with only 33 % saying soap, 30 % just use water, while 37 % use hand sanitiser.
- When it comes to drying hands, the most common method is a hand dryer, with 31 % using one in the bathroom, closely followed by 27 % using paper towels, 14 % shaking their hands dry, and 10 % simply wiping wet hands on their trousers.
- Prior to eating, 36% washed their hands every time, 31% claimed to do so 'most of the time'. 19% only did some 'sometimes', 9% 'rarely' and five % never.

Typical hot-desk configuration

The typical hot-desk might contain the following elements:

- Standard office desk, with or without partial partitioning
- Configurable office chair
- Telephone
- Computer with screen & keyboard / or laptop docking station (fixed or wifi)
- Storage Units

Current Cleaning

APSE has surveyed its members to determine whether any specific differences might be required in the cleaning regime between hot and static desks. There is no 'standard', however the following can be used as a rule of thumb. Frequency of use should drive the frequency of clean.

Cleaning Requirement	Hot desk	Static desk
Desk surface	Daily wipe with a cloth and spray solution to clean and remove smears	Daily wipe with a cloth and spray solution to clean and remove smears
Telephone handset	Daily sanitise	Weekly sanitise
Keyboard	Weekly sanitise	Weekly sanitise

Floorspace	Daily vacuum	Alternate day vacuum
Waste collection	Central recycling bins for paper, plastics and grey waste	Central recycling bins for paper, plastics and grey waste
Deep Clean – desk and computer	Quarterly	Yearly

In many authorities, a carousel is provided with cleaning wipes and sanitising hand spray. It is the responsibility of the desk user to sanitise the telephone and the desk if they wish to do so.

APSE Comment

The efficient use of office space and resources by councils will continue to be a priority. Technological advances make the needs for a fixed desk less essential although recent moves by Yahoo to ban home working and Google to discourage it shows that some companies recognise the benefit and value of personal interactions within an office.

The data on personal hygiene is less encouraging and shows that public information on hand-washing probably isn't reaching around half of staff. Combined with the research on hand contamination, the message should be restated across an authority.

It is clear that the availability of sanitising wipes and hand sprays is essential where hot-desking is used. It is a false economy to move to hot-desking and retain the same cleaning regime. Daily cleaning (if the desk is used) is a requirement and providing the tools to maintain cleanliness is a priority. In the communal toilet facilities, older hand-dryers that take an age to dry hands, empty soap dispensers and lack of hand towels are points that need investment or improvement.

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