



Briefing 12-15 March 2012

Reduced Frequency Cleaning

This briefing provides an overview of the concept of Reduced Frequency / Alternate Day Cleaning and the opportunities it presents for making cost savings. Other briefings in the series highlight Daytime Cleaning and Team Cleaning.

Key issues

- Reduced frequency at its crudest is a rather blunt method of saving building cleaning costs by removing cleaning on some days.
- Correctly planned however it aims to strip out excessive cleaning hours whilst maintaining a satisfactory level of cleanliness

Description:

Alternate day (or reduced frequency) cleaning seeks to move away from a fixed cleaning regime, repeated every day to one that reflects the usage and ingress of dirt. It often forms part of a planned response to forced reductions in cleaning budgets as a methodical method of reducing cleaning hours.

Historical cleaning specifications tend to be quite rigid in the description of corridors, offices etc. and the cleaning regime for each. However the corridor on the top floor of an office building is unlikely to be visited as much as the ground floor corridor and so the same level of cleaning is not required for both.

The skill is to determine a satisfactory level of cleaning whilst retaining an acceptable level of cleanliness. High profile areas such as toilets will still require a minimum of a daily clean whilst entrance halls may equally require daily attention. Little used meeting rooms may only require a twice weekly visit with minimal cleaning.

Cleaning quality will be reduced, however it is possible to maintain cleanliness at agreed levels between cleans as per BICS standards.

Reduced frequency cleaning sits between a rigid specification with a cleaning schedule and an output based specification. As such it avoids some of the subjective decision making by the cleaning staff which can harm quality.

Methodology:

Ideally the Authority should maintain a database of all its maintained buildings with the ability to draw down detailed list of areas and room designation i.e. office/washroom/corridor etc. This information is essential for calculating the likely effect of

removing certain activities on one or more days per week and in balancing the cleaning requirement across the team which is likely to be different for each building cleaned.

A typical average productivity rate for office buildings is 200 m² / hour. Over a 5 day cycle the same piece of floor is cleaned 5 times reducing the value to 1/5th or effectively 40 m²/hr. Dividing the floor area by the number of weekly hours worked should provide a figure close to 40 m²/hr. Those building where productivity is below 40 m²/hr are already over-resourced and hours should be examined with a view to reduction down to the average.

Applying the formula to a building of 1,200 m², shows that you could expect 1,200/200 = 6 daily hours or 30 hours per week over 5 days.

In this simplified example the building is cleaned throughout every day in 29.7 hour per week:

Room Type	Critical	Productivity m ² /h	size m2	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Total days	Hours
Corridor	n/a	200	200	1	1	1	1	1	5	5.0
Offices	n/a	300	700	1	1	1	1	1	5	11.7
Washroom	n/a	75	100	1	1	1	1	1	5	6.7
Canteen	n/a	150	150	1	1	1	1	1	5	5.0
Meeting Room	n/a	300	50	1	1	1	1	1	5	0.8
Total			1200							29.17

However with a reduced frequency for non-critical items, an hourly saving of 25% is obtained:

Room Type	Critical	Productivity m ² /h	size m2	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Total days	Hours
Corridor	Yes	200	200	1	1	1	1	1	5	5.0
Offices	No	300	700	1			1		2	4.7
Washroom	Yes	75	100	1	1	1	1	1	5	6.7
Canteen	Yes	150	150	1	1	1	1	1	5	5.0
Meeting Room	No	300	50		1		1		2	0.3
Total			1200							21.67

The number of minutes a day is also easily calculated for each activity and summed to give the daily hours. Knowing this allows the requirement for cleaners to be balanced against the new workload.

Benefits:

Reduced frequency cleaning is primarily a response to pressure on budgets. With staff costs making up 90% of the cost of cleaning, the removal of cleaning hours has a marked reduction in costs. Typical cost reductions of 35% have been made whilst retaining an acceptable level of cleanliness.

If combined with a shift in responsibility from cleaners to office users, this will reduce the cleaning time requirement whilst increasing productivity. Initiatives that encourage office users to recycle their waste and clear bins to a central point are a good example.

Where high risk items are cleaned daily, and low risk items less frequently, there is the ability to redirect cleaning should circumstances require and complete the low risk item on another day without additional staff hours.

Drawbacks:

Any system that reduces the number of times an area is cleaned will compromise quality. This may be manageable but will inevitably reduce the satisfaction of the building users, especially if they have been used to high standards. It is essential that the client is made fully aware of the proposed change and also the consequences for quality.

Inevitably there can be some resistance to change and it is essential to involve the staff at all stages of the process. There are reductions in hours which will lead to reductions in staff, although often this can be achieved through natural turnover if time permits. It is likely that closer supervision will be required during the initial few weeks to ensure adherence to the new regime.

APSE Comment:

APSE welcomes innovative ways of improving efficiency whilst maintaining similar or better service outcomes. When faced with substantial reductions in cleaning budgets, reduced frequency cleaning is at least a planned approach to cost reduction whilst attempting to retain a satisfactory level of cleanliness. Rather than a blunt daily reduction in hours that will only lower quality and satisfaction across the board. Often the initial systematic reappraisal of the building area against productivity will uncover excessive hours which may be removed without affecting cleanliness without the need to reduce frequency.

Further advice is freely available to APSE members in local authorities. This includes access to productivity data and support on understanding and implementing the concept. Detailed on-site support from defining the cleaning requirement, the financial analysis and assistance with implementation can be obtained at reduced rates from APSE Solutions.

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