



## DEVELOPING A ROBUST CLEANING & SANITATION PROGRAM

A cleaning and sanitation program is a fundamental element of any quality and food safety management system. This program ensures that food contact and non-food contact surfaces are adequately cleaned and sanitized to prevent products or packaging from becoming contaminated with biological, chemical, or physical hazards.

Unfortunately, cleaning and sanitation programs are often incomplete and lack important details or they are not validated or documented. These issues can lead to inadequate cleaning, contamination of the product or packaging, potential consumer illness and recalls, as well as non-conformances during regulatory or third-party audits. The following steps are aimed to help companies develop and implement a robust cleaning and sanitation program or improve their existing program.



# FACT SHEET

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## 1. Create a Master Sanitation Schedule

A master sanitation schedule outlines all food contact and non-food contact surfaces in each area of the facility and how often they are to be cleaned. Food contact surfaces are those that are in direct contact with food or food packaging and can include utensils, cutting boards, containers, food contact conveyors and equipment, etc. Non-food contact surfaces are surfaces that are not or should not be in direct contact with food or food packaging such as control panels, floors, walls, ceilings, drains, doors, hoses, and overhead structures such as lighting, refrigeration, and ventilation systems. The master sanitation schedule should include every area such as the production areas, storage areas, maintenance areas, employee lunchrooms, washrooms, locker rooms, office areas, and the outside premises. If the facility is responsible for maintaining transport vehicles and conveyances, it is important that these be included on the master sanitation schedule as well. Cleaning frequencies may be daily, weekly, monthly, or less frequent depending on use and debris. Below is an example of a master sanitation schedule.

Master Sanitation Schedule		
Area	Item/Task	Frequency
Production Area	Clean and sanitize utensils	Daily
	Clean and sanitize skinning machine	Daily
	Clean and sanitize floors	Daily
	Clean and sanitize walls, doors, ceilings	Monthly
	Clean and sanitize overhead structures	Quarterly
Cooler	Organize, remove debris and garbage	Daily
	Sweep and clean floors	Daily
	Clean and sanitize drains	Weekly
	Clean and sanitize walls, doors, ceilings	Monthly
	Clean and sanitize racking and overhead structures	Quarterly
Freezer	Organize, remove debris and garbage	Daily
	Sweep and clean floors	Daily
	Clean and sanitize walls, doors, ceilings	Annually
	Clean and sanitize racking and overhead structures	Annually
Dry Storage Area	Organize, remove debris and garbage	Daily
	Sweep floors	Weekly
Maintenance Shop	Organize work bench	Daily
Washrooms	Clean toilets, sinks, mirrors	Daily
	Sweep and clean floors	Daily
	Remove garbage	Daily
	Restock hand soap, sanitizer, paper towels	As required
Employee Lunchroom	Remove garbage and recyclables	Daily
	Clean and sanitize all surfaces (e.g., counters, tables)	Daily
	Clean fridge and microwave	Weekly
Outside Premises	Remove garbage	Weekly
	Cut grass	As required



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## 2. Develop Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOPs)

The sanitation program must have documented step-by-step detailed procedures for how each area and piece of equipment, surface, utensil, etc. is to be cleaned and sanitized. These SSOPs are used to train employees on the cleaning procedure and must be detailed enough that cleaning is consistent between employees. The SSOPs should outline which chemicals are used and how they are used including the concentration, contact time, water temperature, and if rinsing is required or state that the manufacturer's instructions are to be followed. The SSOPs should also provide details on the cleaning method (i.e., foaming, manual scrubbing), how to disassemble equipment if required, how to clean hard-to-reach areas, and any requirements for cleaning tools, equipment, and personal protective equipment (PPE). Where appropriate, pictures or diagrams work well. SSOPs should be formatted to outline the purpose, frequency, responsibility, step-by-step procedure, verification procedures, and corrective action procedures to follow in the event a deviation occurs and list any associated records such as the sanitation record to be completed.

In general, cleaning and sanitizing occur in the following steps:

1. Preparation (e.g., remove all product, packaging materials, cover equipment that requires protection, etc.) and manually remove large food particles
2. Pre-rinse with water to remove large amounts of food particles/soil
3. Clean with detergent and mechanical action
4. Post-rinse with water to remove the detergent and loosened food particles/soil
5. Inspect
6. Sanitize and final rinse (if required)
7. Complete sanitation records
8. Verify that cleaning was effective through visual inspection, ATP, allergen, or micro swabs, etc.

## 3. Validation & Verification

One of the most important aspects of a sanitation program that is often overlooked is validation. Upon implementation, the cleaning procedures must be validated. A validation study will determine if the cleaning procedures, when properly followed, are capable of adequately cleaning equipment, utensils, surfaces, etc. and controlling the hazards. Validations can be done by observing the employee perform the cleaning procedure to ensure it is completed as per the written SSOP followed by sampling the cleaned item using swabs or other means and sending the samples to an accredited lab for analytical testing, or by using a rapid test method such as swabbing for ATP or allergens. If results are satisfactory then the cleaning procedure is considered capable and validated. Re-validation should occur if there are any changes in the cleaning procedure, chemicals, equipment or if verification activities indicate that the cleaning procedure is not effective.

Verification of the cleaning and sanitation program occurs after the validation and confirms that the program is functioning as intended and controlling the hazards. Verification procedures can include onsite observation of the employee cleaning, post-cleaning or pre-operational visual inspections of the cleaned item, rapid test methods, or reviewing sanitation records and any corrective actions.

For more information on the difference between validation and verification, refer to Perennia's factsheet **Verification vs. Validation.**



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## 4. Record Keeping

The sanitation program must include documenting the completion of cleaning procedures as well as the effectiveness checks. Sanitation records should include the date, the item cleaned, and the initial of the employee who cleaned the item. Effectiveness checks such as visual inspections must also be documented on either the sanitation record or a designated pre-operational inspection record. These records must indicate if the cleaning is satisfactory or unsatisfactory. If unsatisfactory conditions are found, appropriate corrective and/or preventive action(s) must be taken and documented on the sanitation record or a corrective action report, depending on the severity.

## 5. Training

As with any component of the quality and food safety management system, training employees on the correct cleaning and sanitation procedures is critical for success. Onsite observation of the employee completing the procedure is important to ensure training was effective. The cleaning and sanitation procedures must be consistent between employees and performed as per the written validated procedures. Remember to document all training.

### For More Information Contact:

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