When it comes to public restrooms, cleaning professionals have two important jobs: cleaning for aesthetics and cleaning for health. Eliminating odors and maintaining a visibly clean restroom is key because, as research has shown, consumer perceptions of facilities’ restrooms can impact businesses’ bottom lines. But restroom cleanliness is also very important to public health. Unpleasant odors and visibly stained or soiled surfaces can also signal the presence of harmful microorganisms, such as Shigella, Salmonella, Hepatitis A, E. coli and Norovirus, which are routinely found in restrooms and are associated with outbreaks of illness.1,2

There’s no question that restroom cleaning is one of the toughest and most important jobs in the industry, but selecting the right products and processes for effective cleaning and disinfection can help ensure that restrooms are both aesthetically and hygienically clean.

**Tackling the Toughest Restroom Cleaning Jobs**

Urine stains and odors — two of the toughest jobs in the restroom — can make an otherwise clean facility seem less appealing. Results of a consumer survey conducted by the Clorox Professional Products Company showed that two-thirds of Americans would refuse to patronize business establishments, such as restaurants or hotels, with dirty restrooms.3

According to a separate survey, cleaning industry decision makers consider removing urine stains (47%) and odors (52%) from grout and other porous materials among the most important restroom cleaning priorities. Yet, many cleaning professionals are not satisfied with product solutions available to deal with these issues.4

One of the biggest misconceptions about odor in facility restrooms is that simply adding air fresheners or deodorizing fragrance systems solves the problem. But it is important to remember that temporarily masking odors with other fragrances does not eliminate or address the odor’s underlying cause.

Urine odor comes from naturally occurring bacteria that feeds on urine and uric acid crystals (crystallized urine residue). Therefore, to achieve a lasting solution, it is important to select products that can effectively break down these components in urine, eliminating odor at its source. To properly address urine odors, cleaning professionals should:

1. Look for products that work on hard and soft surfaces.
2. Look for ready-to-use (RTU) hydrogen peroxide-based cleaners.
3. Avoid dilutable general bathroom cleaners (GBCs), which tend to work poorly on long-term odors.
4. Look for an aerosol product with an active ingredient that kills 99.9% of airborne odor-causing bacteria.

Tackling the Public Restroom: Cleaning for Aesthetics and Health

By Steve Schultz, R&D scientist, Clorox Professional Products Company

To properly address urine odors, cleaning professionals should:
When it comes to public restrooms, cleaning professionals have two important jobs: cleaning for aesthetics and cleaning for health.

Enzymatic cleaners work by using living microorganisms to “eat” uric acid crystals but are not the best option for use in restrooms. These products are typically formulated at a neutral pH to be compatible with the living bacteria, so using another product that has a different pH level on the same surface can neutralize the enzymes and bacteria, which may render the product ineffective against stubborn stains.

**Enzymatic cleaners work by using living microorganisms to “eat” uric acid crystals but are not the best option for use in restrooms.**

**Cleaning professionals should select products that are specifically formulated and Environmental Protection Agency-registered to kill illness-causing bacteria. Bleach products are especially effective against multi-drug resistant organisms and are compatible with most hard surfaces found in public restrooms.**

Remember that no matter which disinfectant is used, the best results are achieved when they are used correctly. It is important to always refer to the product label and follow the manufacturer’s instructions for use and contact time, or the length of time the disinfectant needs to remain wet on the surface to properly kill viruses, fungi and bacteria. Different products have different contact times for killing certain pathogens. Disinfectants with short kill times and a wide range of kill claims provide the best value, since they do a lot in a shorter amount of time.

Restrooms are one of the toughest jobs that cleaning professionals face in any industry or facility. However, selecting the right products to tackle stains and odors and prevent the spread of germs that cause infections can help ensure that restrooms stay clean and healthy, helping keep customers happy and ultimately protect a business’s bottom line.

Steve Schultz has a BS in Chemical Engineering, an MS in Organizational Administration and 10 years of product development experience with cleaning and disinfecting products, including those specially formulated to tackle tough restroom jobs like Clorox® Urine Remover and Clorox Commercial Solutions® Germicidal Wipes. For more information on product solutions to help achieve a complete clean in restrooms and how to address other tough jobs, visit www.CloroxProfessional.com/Cleaning.

**Clean Restrooms are Healthy Restrooms**

While it’s clear that consumer perceptions of restroom cleanliness can affect a business’s bottom line, it’s important to remember that restroom cleanliness also serves a critical public health function: controlling and preventing the spread of pathogens that cause infection.

Thorough cleaning and disinfection is the first line of defense against the growing threat of multi-drug resistant organisms such as *C. difficile*, Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and Vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus* (VRE) and is an essential part of ensuring a healthy restroom. Public restrooms are filled with high-touch surfaces and objects that can harbor illness-causing pathogens. Cleaning professionals can help prevent cross-contamination in restrooms by focusing on these surfaces and objects such as countertops, urinals, toilets, doorknobs, toilet handles, stall locks and faucets. Cleaning professionals should select products that are specifically formulated and Environmental Protection Agency-registered to kill illness-causing bacteria. Bleach products are especially effective against multi-drug resistant organisms and are compatible with most hard surfaces found in public restrooms.

References: