

“Glossary Of Industry Terms


SERVICON
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Changing the face of the cleaning industry



Glossary Of Industry Terms

As we discuss our work and services with clients and colleagues, it's important to understand the terms specific to our industry. Below are some common ones. Be sure to ask a co-worker or supervisor whenever you come across an unfamiliar term.

1. **Antibacterial**

A substance able to kill or slow the growth of bacteria. Antibacterial formulas are not effective against viruses

2. **Bacteria**

Microscopic, single-celled organisms. Many don't cause disease and are beneficial to humans (such as the good bacteria in yogurt). Other bacteria are disease-causing; singular is bacterium

3. **Cleaning**

The process of locating, identifying, containing, removing and properly disposing of unwanted substances from a surface or area. Cleaning usually involves soap or a cleaning formula and requires some form of agitation, such as the rubbing of hands together or the use of a brush, cloth, running water or vacuum. Cleaning removes— but does not kill—microorganisms (see microorganisms)

4. **Complex Areas**

Sites or facilities with different types of spaces, such as health care facilities with operating rooms, clean rooms, exam areas, etc. that may require specialized cleaning procedures and equipment vs. facilities with units of the same type, such as office or apartment buildings (see multi-tenant)

5. **Contamination**

The pollution of a surface, object or area due to dirt, bacteria or other microorganisms that are unwanted and usually dangerous to human health

6. **COVID-19**

The disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, one of a family of Coronaviruses. The acronym comes from Coronavirus disease

Glossary Of Industry Terms

7. Critical Areas

(1) Areas that are most important to clients and may require more thorough cleaning (2) specific areas in health care facilities that have the most potential for causing infection if they become contaminated and may require special or more intensive cleaning, disinfection or sterilization protocols

8. Cross-Contamination

The transport of dirt and microorganisms from one place to another, most often caused by improper cleaning protocols, for example, using the same cleaning equipment to wipe different surfaces such as a toilet seat and then a mirror or sink. Cross-contamination can also be caused by air circulation (dispersing dust, for example) or inappropriate laundering of reusable products, such as microfiber mops and cloths

9. Decontamination

The reduction or removal of microorganisms or dangerous substances, including biohazardous material and infectious viruses, by physical means, such as cleaning and disinfecting and/or sterilization, or using chemical neutralization methods

10. Deep Cleaning

The term has no standard definition. However, cleaning companies often use the term to mean specific services or actions, such as disinfecting using an electrostatic sprayer or chemical; they may also use it to refer to more intense cleaning, such as “deep cleaning” a carpet

11. Disinfection

To kill 99.999 percent of the pathogens the disinfectant’s label and its U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registration says it is effective in killing. Disinfectants kill viruses, but only those listed on the label; no one disinfectant kills all microorganisms, and no disinfectant kills all bacterial spores. Cleaning should precede all disinfecting, and all disinfectants must remain on the surface for the full dwell time (see Dwell Time) stipulated by the manufacturer, or the surface will not be disinfected. All disinfectants in the United States must be registered with the EPA (disinfectants kill microorganisms)

Glossary Of Industry Terms

12. Dwell time

The time a disinfectant must remain in contact with a surface for it to disinfect. Dwell times are specific to the microorganisms sought to be killed and will be listed clearly on the product label and in its EPA registration. While some disinfectants have a dwell time of one minute, most have a dwell time of four to 10 minutes. If the proper dwell time is cut short, the surface will not be disinfected

13. Fomite

Any inanimate object that may become contaminated with infectious organisms and serve in their transmission to a new host. Examples include furniture, materials, utensils, counters, cleaning tools, and other object surfaces. Contaminated SARS-Cov-2 can cause diseases in humans such as the flu, the common cold, COVID-19 and others

14. Germ

A "catch all" name for a bacterium, virus or other microscopic particle that can cause illness in humans. Synonym: pathogen

15. Microorganism (Microbe)

Microscopic organism, especially a bacterium, virus or fungus. Disease causing microorganisms can also be called pathogens or germs

16. Multi-tenant

A building that has the same type of spaces throughout, such as an office or apartment building

17. Pathogen

See Germ

18. Sanitization

To reduce germs by 99.9 percent on a surface—the level deemed safe for humans by the EPA—in 30 seconds or less (99.999 in 30 seconds or less in food service settings). Sanitizers cannot kill viruses or fungi and should be used against the specific pathogen(s) stated on the label. Sanitizers are often used in areas such as food service, where reducing pathogens to a safe level quickly is desired (sanitizers reduce; they do not kill microorganisms)

Glossary Of Industry Terms

19. SARS-CoV-2

The specific Coronavirus of the Coronavirus family that causes the disease COVID-19

20. Sterilization

To kill ALL microorganisms and their spores—harmful or not— on a surface or object, usually using a specialized heat process or chemical. Items that are used to enter the human body, such as health care surgical implements or metal flatware in food service, are sterilized. (sterilization kills all)

21. Virus

Smaller than bacteria, viruses require a host to survive and are detrimental to human health (such as the recent Coronavirus). To assure effectiveness, the disinfectant should list the specific virus(es) it kills on the label, and the proper dwell time should be followed (see Disinfect and Dwell Time)

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