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# Looking Good, Feeling Good— How to Keep Your Attraction Clean and Hygienic

Like operators in any industry, attractions get one chance to make a first impression. Unlike most industries, however, there's less margin for error in the fun business, owing to the fantasy and escape messages it sells. A visit characterized by litter at the front doorstep and filthy restrooms is not the kind of "escape" that guests have in mind, nor one they are likely to pay for again.

Consequently, maintaining the appearance and hygiene of all your attraction's areas—especially bathrooms, food service areas, midways, and trash receptacles—must be among your most vital business priorities, for an attraction's cleanliness is a direct line of marketing to guests.

As numerous consultants who have studied the success of Walt Disney World Resort have found, the number one visitor comment that often comes up is, "It's so clean."

Obviously, spills will happen and assigned tasks will sometimes be missed, but here's some expert advice on ways to minimize the chances of leaving a trashy impression.

## TEN TIPS

▶ **Train and motivate staff** in the cleaning process. "For many of our employees, this is their first job," explains Ken Whiting of [Whiting's Foods](#), the food and beverage service supplier at [Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk](#) in California. "So first, you can't assume anything about their knowledge of a clean work place and proper hygiene. Second, you need to educate them not only on how to achieve these goals, but also about why they matter. And third, you need to keep this message at the forefront of your daily communications through constant and creative reminders."

Make sure your managers and supervisors are the role models when it comes to keeping facilities clean by always demonstrating proper procedures and the priority such methods deserve, from hand washing to the use of Personal Protective Equipment. "Working side-by-side with supervisors in learning these procedures is both educational and motivating for younger workers," notes Gary Pogharian at [Wild Wadi Waterpark](#) in Dubai, UAE.

▶ **Get organized** with simple but thorough checklists and well-stocked, accessible cleaning supplies. Whatever the job, any cleaning-related tasks should be outlined in an easy step-by-step format on checklists that cover opening, operating, and closing procedures. Such lists will help to maximize labor efficiency, as well as create clear expectations and a sense of accountability for employees.

Keep your cleaning supplies fully stocked and ensure they're close at hand and easy to locate. As Whiting notes, "Simplify the placement of these items and they will naturally get used more."

▶ **For gum and grunge removal**, use simple remedies. To get rid of gum on the midway when

it's too crowded to use a pressure washer, spray it with canned oven cleaner and melt it away, says Chris Kearsing of [Elich Gardens](#) in Denver, Colorado, or freeze it with an ice cube and it will usually come off, says Cathy Greubel at [Holiday World & Splashin' Safari](#) in Santa Claus, Indiana.

And for removing the grunge that builds up around faucets and hand dryers, continues Greubel, buy an inexpensive vegetable brush/peeler, remove the blade, and use the brush side to get at those hard-to-reach crevices.

▶ **Keep restrooms clean.** When it comes to clean restrooms, everything is important, but especially the women's room, declares Bob Amoruso of [Adventureland Amusement Park](#) in Farmingdale, New York. "Since mom is often the decision maker for most of the family outings, we need to keep mom happy and confident in the cleanliness of our business, and that starts with our restrooms."

For all restrooms, have enough stalls and urinals in ratio to your attendance to reduce unnecessary waiting. Second, automatic flushing systems and scented deodorizers will cut down significantly on unpleasant odors. Third, placing attendants in restrooms, responsible only for the cleanliness of that location, will minimize problems and mess dramatically. "You might say this is too labor-intensive," Amoruso observes, "but trust me, it will bring back revenue 10-fold."

At a minimum, regular checks of restroom cleanliness and supplies (with systematic logging) should be a mandatory operating practice.

▶ **Make time** for one or more of IAAPA's [annual expos](#), where you'll always get the latest on new industry-related cleaning products coming on the market, like the [Adgility XP backpack vacuum](#)

### International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions

#### USA - HEADQUARTERS

1448 Duke Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314 USA

Telephone: +1 703/836-4800  
Fax: +1 703/836-1192

#### EUROPE

Square de Meeus 38/40  
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium

Telephone: +45 24 49 14 05  
Fax: +32 2 401 68 68

#### LATIN AMERICA

Ave. Presidente Masaryk #111  
Piso 1  
Col. Chapultepec Morales  
México, D.F. 11560

Phone: +52 55/33005915  
Fax: +52 55/33005999

[www.IAAPA.org](http://www.IAAPA.org)

from Advance for working in close quarters, Hydro Systems' [mobile ICS spray dispenser](#), the [Barrier UV water sanitation system](#) from Siemens, or the [Sanidoor](#) for no-touch exits from the restroom.

- ▶ **Don't take trash lightly.** It's a standard maxim in the attractions industry, but bears repeating again and again: If you see a piece of litter on the ground, pick it up and deposit it in the right place. From the CEO to a part-time games operator, everyone must live by this simple yet essential rule.

Schedule checks and empty trash cans in specific sections of the facility; this will greatly decrease the risk of messy and ugly overflows. Some facilities even empty their receptacles at half-full to further protect against possible overflows, avoid unpleasant odors, and minimize the chance of liner breakage.

And don't forget the look of the trash bins themselves. "We set up a pressure washer in the back area and clean the trash cans inside and out, especially during bee and wasp season, when they're looking for all those sweet treats that are discarded," say Amoruso of Adventureland. Elitch Gardens' Kearsing adds this helpful tip: "We keep the tops of our hard-plastic trash cans looking fresh by using auto wax. The tops of these trash cans are subject to UV damage more than other parts, so we wax them frequently to bring them back closer to their original color"

- ▶ **A good way to implement unannounced spot-checks** of your own internal cleaning checks is to periodically utilize an independent consultant or a mystery shopper. "Operators who use us are usually looking for info beyond what staff can gather themselves," explains Scot Carson of [Amusement Advantage](#), a mystery-shopping firm based in Arvada, Colorado. "They're looking to get unbiased third-party feedback. And it's not just negative feedback. We want to catch employees doing things right and set that as an example."

- ▶ **Cut down on germs and increase hygiene** in your food prep areas with innovations like dissolving labels, which leave no trace of bacteria-collecting adhesive residue, as well as newer kitchen equipment that utilize more automated cleaning processes with less chance for human error. To quickly and easily verify that your preparation surfaces have been properly cleaned and sanitized, Hygiene offers a [handheld hygiene monitor](#).

- ▶ **Make sure you clean in a clean and safe way.** In light of the materials and procedures and the byproducts that often result from cleaning tasks, every facility should have an environmental, health, and safety (EHS) management system in place. Elements of such a system should include identifying regulatory requirements and necessary permits, providing relevant employee training, implementing proper operational

controls of chemicals, etc., correcting or preventing EHS weaknesses, and preparing for and responding to EHS incidents.

- ▶ **Other brief but useful cleaning insights** include:
  - Color-coded cloths, one for eating areas and one for restrooms, says Wild Wadi's Pogharian.
  - Basic curb appeal counts—painting, landscaping, etc., that keeps the entrance area of a facility looking fresh and well kept is not lost on guests.
  - For big hygiene impact, Kearsing of [Elitch Gardens](#) recommends training staff to clean "high-touch" areas most often, such as door handles, faucets, counters, and flushing levers.
  - Some facilities employ a SWAT—Sanitary, Waste, and Trash—team, which tours a specific area or the entire facility and supplements regular cleanings by area staff.
  - "The number one practice, particularly for a young workforce, that you can build from is hand washing," counsels Whiting. "Overemphasize the importance of this, and other cleaning and hygiene practices will be easier to adopt."

## RESOURCE ARTICLES

### Web Sites, Seminars, and Products

- "[Cleaning House](#)" FUNWORLD, March 2004. Basic information and checklist on establishing an EHS management system.
- "[Hotel Cleaning 101: Tips from Executive Housekeepers with National Trust Historic Hotels of America](#)" Hospitality Net, March 2006. Experts share time-tested cleaning nuggets for facilities with lodging.
- "[How to Clean an Enormous Aquarium](#)" FUNWORLD, June 2005. How to tackle the biggest of tanks.
- "[Industry Undercover](#)" FUNWORLD, November 2008. Is mystery shopping right for your facility?
- "[Sounds and Smells](#)" FUNWORLD, May 2006. How to keep you noise and air quality standards high.

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Square de Meeus 38/40  
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Telephone: +45 24 49 14 05  
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### LATIN AMERICA

Ave. Presidente Masaryk #111  
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Col. Chapultepec Morales  
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Phone: +52 55/33005915  
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