

# Day Cleaning Myths

By Dave Frank

When is the best time to clean your facility? Conventional wisdom has always maintained that the best time to clean is during the second shift – at night – when most workers have left the building. In recent years, though, daytime cleaning has been gaining in popularity. Building service professionals are discovering that there are numerous advantages to cleaning during the day. Night cleaning experts cite numerous reasons to support their stand that daytime cleaning will never work. Their arguments are based on several myths, five of which will be exposed.

**Myth 1:** Daytime cleaning will be harder to staff. Staffing of daytime cleaning is actually quite easy. Studies have shown that people overwhelmingly prefer day shifts because of easier access to transportation, availability of daycare, and the ability to spend evenings with family. Day shifts are particularly important to the semi-retired and retired workers who have security and vision issues after dark.

Since the greatest portion of the workforce is aging, these workers present a large labor pool for daytime cleaning. Flexibility of scheduling is another aspect of daytime cleaning that draws both retirees and stay-at-home parents.

Statistics show a drastic reduction in turnover when cleaning moves to the day. Daytime cleaning operations show a turnover rate of less than 10 percent per year among cleaning contractors versus the industry average of 400 to 600 percent.

It is also easier to attract and keep quality management staff during daytime hours. Given that ineffective management is the leading cause of cleaning program failures, this fact alone provides a good argument for conducting daytime cleaning operations.

**Myth 2:** Daytime cleaning is too disruptive and hazardous in the workplace. Daytime cleaning, like any process, requires proper planning and management. More disruptive activities such as office vacuuming and restroom floor cleaning are performed before the building opens or after it has closed. The rest of the cleaning tasks, such as the cleaning of restrooms, conference rooms, break rooms, entryways, etc., can be performed without disruption or safety concerns. The use of low decibel vacuums, microfiber cloths and gender-specific cleaners in the restrooms helps to prevent disruptions or hazards.

**Myth 3:** Daytime cleaning is less productive. Daytime cleaning can actually be much more productive than nighttime cleaning, especially when workers are equipped with the right tools. High productivity equipment, such as walk-behind or rider sweepers, is used daily to clean main and secondary corridors quickly.

Low decibel backpack vacuums are used weekly to clean offices and cubicles. Staffing can also be streamlined. The day porter and/or day matron who stocks the restrooms is replaced by restroom specialists who actually clean the restrooms. Supervision requirements are reduced because cleaning is taking place in an occupied environment.

With so many others around, there are few temptations for cleaners to stop and read the newspaper or spend too much time in the break area.

Some proponents of day cleaning report that the presence of the cleaners in the building fosters a feeling of community responsibility for the cleanliness of the facility.

For example, occupants who see restrooms cleaned during the day will keep the area clean by wiping the counter after washing hands and making sure the towels get in to the waste containers. Customer survey forms reflect higher satisfaction with the cleaning done in the daytime, and inspections reveal cleaner facilities.

**Myth 4:** Daytime cleaning can only be done in single tenant buildings. Initially it was thought that only single tenant buildings could be cleaned using daytime cleaning, but recently many universities,

K-12 facilities, and airports have converted to daytime cleaning. At least one major property management company has been looking at daytime cleaning because tenants concerned with security issues have requested that no one enter their offices when they are unoccupied.

Public areas can, of course, easily be cleaned without interfering with the business of tenants.

Blending that with a scheduled cleaning program of tenant spaces can give you a successful daytime cleaning program.



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**Myth 5:** Daytime cleaning will cost more money to perform. Here is actually the most compelling argument for daytime cleaning: the average cleaning cost savings are 8 to 10 percent over night cleaning. The savings begin with the elimination of duplicate services provided by day porters and day matrons, and they are compounded by lower turnover, the need for less supervision, and the use of high productivity equipment and processes.

Further cost savings are found in the lighting portion of the electric bill, where daytime cleaning can result in a savings of 10 percent or more. Some facilities have discovered \$50,000 to \$100,000 or more in annual energy savings per building.

Another added benefit is that theft incidents virtually disappear in the daytime cleaning process.

Finally, up to an additional 25 percent can be cut from cleaning costs if a building is willing to adopt cooperative cleaning. Cooperative cleaning involves asking building occupants to take their waste to collection sites. These employees don't have to empty their trash every day as long as food waste is deposited in the collection area daily. In fact, some waste baskets may not have to be emptied for several weeks.

Daytime and cooperative cleaning have been recognized as legitimate cleaning methodologies with a number of benefits to both building occupants and their cleaning staffs. Users have found significant cost savings, better quality cleaning, lower turnover, theft reduction and greater cooperation in keeping the building clean among employees. What greater arguments can there be for the advancement of daytime cleaning?

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