

Colossal Campus Cleaning:

Using microfiber to clean university campuses

By Aileen Cleary

Cleaning an entire campus' buildings can be quite a challenge. Different rooms require different cleaning procedures, which can mean long hours and extra costs. To help alleviate some of the pressures, facility managers have begun to incorporate microfiber mops and cloths into university cleaning programs. Microfiber is proven to clean surfaces better than traditional cloths, and can reduce bacteria by up to 96 percent.

With its powerful cleaning capabilities, microfiber can be used to clean several campus areas such as classrooms, student unions, the mess hall and dormitories. Microfiber saves staff time and energy, while requiring the use of fewer chemicals and reducing cleaning costs.

UNDERSTANDING THE POWER OF MICROFIBER

A microfiber cloth consists of polyester and nylon fibers. Due to splitting during the manufacturing process, each strand of microfiber is 100 times thinner than a human hair, making microfiber 30 times finer than cotton. However, microfiber is stronger and more durable than traditional fibers. Some microfiber cloths can be laundered up to 500 times — check the instructions for proper care procedures. Microfiber is also highly absorbent, and can hold up to seven times its weight in water.

A multi-purpose cleaning tool, microfiber cloths can be used wet or dry. When used dry, microfiber's tiny strands produce a static charge, enabling them to grab and remove dust and dirt more effectively than conventional fibers. Used wet, microfiber's ability to retain moisture reduces streaking and cuts down on drying time.

Photos courtesy of Unger.



GIVING MICROFIBER A GRADE

To help facility managers select the right microfiber cloths for their buildings, some cloths are now manufactured under a grading system, which acts as a buying guide. Guidelines imposed by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) place microfiber into categories of use based on their durability, scrub factor, absorbency and the number of wash cycles they can withstand.

Heavy duty microfiber cloths are best intended for use in the healthcare, food service and manufacturing industries. They are of the highest quality textile, offer the maximum level of absorbency and can remove oils, dry dust and embedded soils. Light-duty cloths are best intended for use in areas such as classrooms and office buildings. These cloths are good for daily dusting, and can handle small amounts of moisture and light soil levels.

Medium-duty cloths can be used in any industry. They can be used regularly, and offer multi-purpose cleaning, though they aren't as durable or as absorbent as heavy-duty cloths. Each grade of microfiber is suitable for a college campus. Simply match the grade to the cleaning needs.

COLOR CODING AROUND CAMPUS

Microfiber cloths are already used to clean many restrooms and kitchen surfaces. Because bacteria are prevalent in these rooms, microfiber can be especially effective. Its miniscule fibers can reach deep into crevices and tile pores to remove dirt and germs. To prevent the spread of bacteria from one area to another, or cross-contamination, microfiber cloths should be color-coded for use by area.

Red/yellow microfiber cloths can be used to

clean restroom sinks, counters, dispensers, fixtures, walls and windows. Red cloths can be used on the outsides of toilets and urinals, but never on the insides.

Green microfiber cloths and mops can be used to clean the kitchens of dormitories and public foodservice areas. All appliances, doors, walls and windows should be cleaned and wiped down. Cleaning staff can clean kitchen floors with microfiber mops. When cleaning any surface, mops should always be rinsed periodically in hot water to avoid spreading germs.

A cafeteria's seating area should also receive microfiber's attention. Tables, chairs, trays, food line counters and floors can all be wiped down using yellow cloths, intended for specialty cleaning. Again, because these areas come into contact with food products, microfiber should be rinsed frequently in hot water and laundered nightly to ensure all bacteria are removed. Walls and windows should also be cleaned, using a fresh microfiber cloth.

Finally, classrooms can be cleaned with microfiber, as it easily removes daily dirt and dust build up. Chalk and white boards, as well as their trays, can be wiped down with blue cloths. Desks, chairs, windows and walls can also be cleaned in this manner. Remember that sticky substances, such as gum or stickers should first be removed with a scraper, as these can ruin microfiber. Non-carpeted classroom floors can also be cleaned with blue microfiber mops.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Some places on campus need special consideration when caring for them with microfiber.

Arts and Sciences: When it comes to cleaning classrooms used for art or science projects, cleaning staff should first check with

the cloth's manufacturer to find out if certain types of chemicals or art supplies could damage the fibers. As with other classrooms, chairs, walls and windows can be cleaned with blue microfiber cloths, but other wipes or towels may be needed on the surfaces where projects or experiments have been conducted.

Dormitories: Here, one cloth does not fit all. Within student rooms, cleaning staff can clean desks, dressers, closets, chairs and bed frames with blue microfiber cloths. Blue cloths work well on furniture in common lounges as well. However, red cloths are required to clean restrooms, while green cloths should stay in dining halls.

Recreational Facilities: Because campuses today consist of much more than dormitories and classrooms, microfiber's design is also well-intended to clean recreational facilities, including fitness centers, and sports and entertainment venues. Using yellow, medium-duty cloths, cleaning staff can clean workout equipment, auditorium and stadium seats, hand railings, concession stand counters, walls and windows. Educate the cleaning staff regarding which activities are conducted in each facility so the proper cloth is used. Remember, some areas may require higher grade cloths, while others may only need light grade ones.

Recent developments in microfiber technology have made college campuses safer and healthier places to live learn and work. Today, microfiber cloths and mops can be used to clean almost any area of a college campus. As with all cleaning tools and procedures, proper training and education is necessary to ensure quality results. **CFM**

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