

Mike Sawchuk Letter to the Editor for Cleaning and Maintenance Magazine

An Industry-Wide Call to Action to Fight H1N1

Although we are certainly hearing a lot about H1N1 and swine flu in our industry, including what chemicals and products are needed to fight the disease, we are not hearing much about how and when to use these products. For our industry to make a significant difference and help minimize the potential impact of the swine flu epidemic, we need a successful integration of four components:



- What cleaning chemicals, tools, and equipment to use
- How to use them
- When to use them
- When to adjust how and when these products are used based on threat level changes

In many areas of the United States, we are now entering stage 2, referred to as DEFCON 2, and in some areas stage 3 or DEFCON 3, of the epidemic. In reference to cleaning and disinfecting procedures, the infectious threat level should define the products, procedures, and frequencies used.

DEFCON 2 is when a contagious disease or virus is present in a community or area (but not in a specific building). Neutral and light-duty all-purpose cleaners should be replaced with products that have the required cleaning efficacy, pH, PPMs, and the necessary stated pathogen kill claims. There should also be an increased focus on

cleaning and disinfecting floors, other horizontal surfaces, and cross-contamination contact points, in this order. The order is based on the size of bacteria reservoirs: floors first because not only are they the largest bacteria source, but also because the average person has as many as 50 direct and indirect contacts with floors every day, making this a key transmission point.

DEFCON 3 is more specific and more extensive. It refers to a contagious disease or virus that is present in our facilities. Many colleges and universities are now in this phase, including Emory University in Atlanta, which ironically is right next door to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) headquarters. Cleaning should be “ramped up” with floors cleaned and disinfected first, then walls, counters, fixtures, and high touch-point areas, followed by the floors once again when leaving. A preclean should be performed and an appropriate disinfectant applied. Additionally, cleaning equipment including the wheels of equipment and carts must be cleaned and disinfected.

At this time, we need to be implementing DEFCON 2 and DEFCON 3 procedures.

Further steps our industry should take:

- Jansan chemical manufacturers should promote and advise their clients as to which disinfectants are proven (EPA registered or, in Canada, Health Canada registered) effective at killing the H1N1 pathogen that causes swine flu (i.e., Influenza A).
- Distributors and DSRs should be instructed on how to properly use these disinfectants so that they, in turn, can properly train facility service providers and administrators.

- Cleaning professionals must understand the health challenge we are facing and the key role they play in preventing the spread of this disease. They must begin cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces, including floors, thoroughly as instructed on a regular basis.

Our industry can meet this challenge and, just as with SARS and MRSA, play a significant role in minimizing the impact of H1N1. Challenges like this is when our industry can truly shine.

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