



Give a Good First Impression of Your Facility With Clean, Well-Maintained Restrooms

A restroom solutions guide from Staples Business Advantage

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People often use the condition of a public/commercial restroom to gauge their first impression of the whole facility. In fact, Americans focus on restrooms way more than you'd think. Their various viewpoints are even curated each year in an annual handwashing survey.¹ Some insights from the 2022 survey include

- Almost **60%** say they're likely to spend more money at a business with clean, well-maintained restrooms.
- **Eight** out of **10** people think a posted and updated cleaning schedule in a restroom is important.
- The **number one feature** that makes them feel safer from germs in restrooms is **touch-free technology**, such as smart soap dispensers.

Facility managers (FMs) also spend an inordinate amount of time thinking about restrooms - which makes sense, given that the word facilities happens to be one of those 300 synonyms. But there's a more likely reason why FMs ponder so much about their powder rooms. It's due to another data point revealed in that same handwashing survey:

51% say an unpleasant public restroom at a business **shows poor management**.¹

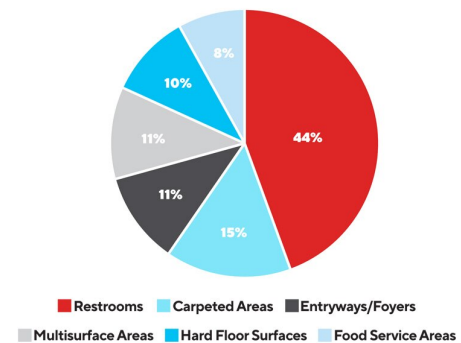
To be clear, when they referred to "poor management," they meant the facility manager. Your restrooms are like your children: their appearance in public is a direct reflection of you.

So, it should come as no surprise to learn that when FMs were asked about their points of view on the facility management industry, the problem area that merited the greatest concern across the nation was - you guessed it - restrooms.²

In the aftermath of the pandemic, having a concern about the cleanliness of your restrooms is merely the first step to ensuring your restrooms are clean and sanitized. Many FMs have already taken the next steps.

Let's look at what they're doing - and what you should be doing if you aren't already.

Biggest Facility Problem Areas



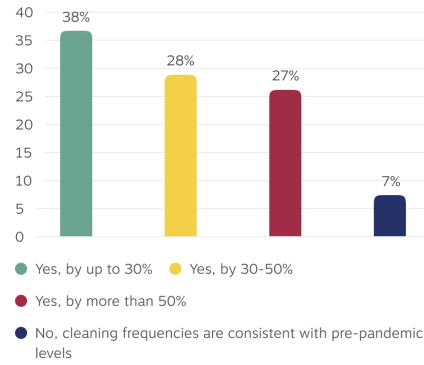
#1. Increase Restroom Cleaning Frequency

According to the 2022 CMM In-House/Facility Management Benchmarking Survey Report from Cleaning and Maintenance Management magazine, 92.7% of the facility managers said they increased the number of times their staff cleaned high-touch surfaces daily.

Determining what that increase looks like for your restrooms depends on two factors:

1. **Square Footage of the Restroom:** you can't determine how frequently you should clean until you're certain of the total surface area you must clean.
2. **Foot Traffic:** facilities with high foot traffic, like hotels, airports and restaurants, require more frequent restroom cleaning.

Increase in Height - Touch Surface Cleaning Frequency?



The Key Takeaway: Consider increasing your restroom cleaning frequency. Let the square footage of your restrooms and foot traffic serve as your guides.

#2. Add Health and Safety Measures to Your Current Restroom Cleaning Process

In response to people returning to work during the global pandemic, FMs are also implementing additional health and safety measures (throughout their facilities and especially inside their restrooms). Hand sanitizer stations and increased disinfection and sanitation processes top the list.

Remember earlier when we mentioned touchless technology? It's the number-one feature that makes restroom users feel safer from germs. Touchless dispensers are typically battery powered, so they deliver a preset amount of soap or sanitizer with the wave of a hand. While it may be obvious that touchless dispensers can reduce germ spread, they can also enhance the image of your commercial restroom.

Installing touchless dispensers in your facility can help create a modern look in your restroom and show your guests that your business cares about their health and safety.

Some dispensers also have the Internet of Things (IoT) capabilities. IoT-enabled dispensers enable your cleaning staff to receive information about the stock levels of each dispenser, reducing the frequency of stockouts and complaints.

[Shop Touchless Dispensers](#)



The Key Takeaway: Install additional health and safety measures, such as touchless soap, sanitizer and towel dispensers.

#3. Stock up on Disinfectants

The math is simple. If you increase restroom cleaning frequency and add new health and safety measures, the odds are good your facilities will need more cleaning products than the year prior. And that's exactly the case for many FMs now.

Nearly 40% of FMs reported that they increased the amount of disinfecting chemicals they purchased year over year.

[Shop Disinfectant Sprays](#)



The Key Takeaway: Plan to increase your line-item budget for disinfecting chemicals. The people who use your restrooms will notice - and they may even thank you for it.

#4. Control Odors

Some of the most frequent complaints FMs receive about restrooms center around odors. Before your cleaning staff can address foul smells, it's important to know where they originated. There are three main culprits:

1. **The Air:** When people use the restroom, their natural biological functions often create odors that permeate through the air.
2. **The Grout:** When urine hits the floor, it can get into the grout and linger.
3. **The Drain:** Sewer odors often erupt from the drain in the restroom.

Grounding Air Odors

[Manual and automatic air fresheners](#) are effective at preventing odors by regularly releasing scents into the air. They mask any unpleasant odors before and after they occur.

Many air freshener products go beyond masking unpleasant odors. They release natural essential oils that eliminate the bacteria causing the bad smells. As such, automatic air fresheners are a wise investment for facilities looking to boost restroom cleanliness and overall hygiene.

[Urinal screens](#) offer an effective means of odour control in between restroom cleanings. They help prevent drain blockages, too. Placed directly in a urinal to trap the odour of uric salts that are present in urine, these screens are an excellent solution to odour issues when used regularly. It is recommended that urinal screens are changed every 30 days to keep your restrooms smelling clean.

Urinal mats are designed to capture and remove odors by preventing urine from puddling under urinals. In addition to improving a restroom's appearance, mats also keep them smelling fresh and clean. In fact, the most pungent restroom smells tend to come from dried urine on the floor (not from the urinal).

[Shop our Expert Pick for Urinal Mats](#)

One bonus perk to urinal mats: they can prolong the life of your restroom floors - for obvious reasons.

Routing Grout Odors

To combat grout odors, consider using an [odor digester](#) product, which is an enzyme-based (bio-enzymatic) cleaner. It contains active bacteria (the good kind) and enzymes that penetrate the grout. The enzymes break down the uric acid in the grout; the bacteria then eat it all up, like a potty Pacman.

Odor digesters can also be sprayed inside the urinals and toilets to control any odors emanating from there.

[Shop our Expert Pick Odor Digester](#)

Flushing Drain Odors

Did you know that cleaning a restroom can actually create bad odors? That's the irony of many drain-odor issues. When a restroom is being mopped, gunk sometimes falls through the drain, which can cause clogs. When the drain dries up, odor rises from the sewer pipes directly into the restroom your staff just cleaned. If you can't identify a smelly source, this is almost always the culprit.

The odor digester you used for the grout can be poured directly down the drain and will eat up any gunk that gets stuck in there.

Also, make sure your staff always keeps a quart of liquid in the bottom of the drain trap, which will also help to prevent sewer odors from rising.

The Key Takeaway: Knowing where restroom odors emanate and stocking the right products to eliminate them is the secret to minimizing restroom complaints.

#5. Soap Dispensers Matter as Much as the Soap

In a public/commercial restroom, the way users apply soap to their hands has an equal if not greater impact on cleanliness than the soap itself - for many reasons. Most facility managers have discovered the joys and benefits of installing automatic soap and sanitizer dispensers. Let's examine why.

[Shop All Soap Dispensers](#)

1. They're Usually Touchless

No pumps, knobs or buttons are required, as automatic soap dispensers have sensors that detect when hands are present. And remember, according to the handwashing survey mentioned earlier, the number one feature that makes people feel safer from germs in restrooms is touch-free technology.

[Shop Automatic Soap Dispensers](#)

2. They're Cost Effective

Most automatic soap dispensers come with portion control measures, so you can select how much product is dispensed with each use. Many of them are designed to dispense 99% or more of the soap contained inside. That means nearly all the product can be dispensed before requiring a refill. This eliminates soap waste and reduces the number of times your staff needs to change out refill cartridges.

3. They're More Hygienic

[Automatic soap and sanitizer dispensers](#) are proven at reducing germ contamination. Think about it: traditional soap dispensers require a person to press a pump with their hands. When someone with dirty hands touches the soap pump, their germs can linger on it. Because there is no common contact point with touchless dispensers, fewer or no germs are passed from one person to another.



A study conducted by the University of Arizona revealed that **25% of traditional** soap dispensers had unsafe levels of bacteria (more than 500 parts per million).

Of the soap samples tested, **16% contained fecal-based coliform bacteria**, which can cause illnesses.

Wall-Mounted Versus Countertop Dispensers

[Wall-mounted](#) dispensers maximize counter space and are designed to fit where many traditional dispensers can't. They can be manually pumped or battery operated, and they usually offer more versatile designs.

[Countertop](#) dispensers usually hang over the sink, so any soap that doesn't make it into the user's hands falls into the sink - instead of all over the counter.

But which type should you consider for your facility's restroom? We've come up with some factors to consider:

1. Look For Space-Saving Models

Even if you have plenty of space in your restrooms, bulky fixtures detract from the aesthetics of the room. For smaller restrooms, streamlined fixtures are a must.

2. Consider the Holding Capacity

Low-capacity dispensers must be filled more often, so check the capacity of the dispenser's holder to ensure that your staff won't have to maintain it constantly throughout the day. It's a waste of time, money and resources.

3. Think About Maintenance

Spending time determining if your soap dispensers should be refilled leads to unnecessary downtime and lost productivity. Look for systems that prominently display product levels on the outside of the dispenser to make it easy to see when maintenance is needed. Low product or battery levels can either be displayed through clear cartridges on manual systems or LED indicator lights on automated systems.

The Key Takeaway: Facility managers who spend time thinking about their soap dispensers now will most likely endure less time listening to restroom complaints later.

#6. Get Strategic on Paper Towels

[Shop All Paper Towels](#)

While proper and safe hand hygiene begins with soap, it doesn't end there. Drying hands is also an important step.

In fact, it's often wiser to not wash your hands if you can't dry them immediately afterward - wet hands transfer more germs than dry ones. Leaving the bathroom without drying your hands can defeat the purpose of washing them altogether, and it can facilitate the spread of harmful bacteria and illnesses.

Let's set aside the debate on whether paper towels or air dryers are better at drying hands (paper towels win, by the way - hands down).

Instead, let's do what many facility managers have already started doing: they're taking a closer look at the products and technologies that dry those hands after they've been cleaned and sanitized - specifically, the types of paper towels best suited for commercial/public restrooms as well as the dispensing methods for each towel type.

Essentially, you have two types of paper towels from which to choose:

[Paper Towel Rolls](#)

[Folded Paper Towels](#)



20% of people who use commercial/public restrooms self-identified as "Human Dryers."¹

Their preferred method of hand drying after washing includes wiping their hands on their pants. Seriously.

Paper Towel Rolls

[Paper towel rolls](#) can come in sizes that range from 350 to 1,200 feet in length per roll. Typically, they are available in natural brown or white and come in cartons that contain six or 12 rolls (depending on the size of the rolls).

The main benefit of roll towels is their high capacity. More hand towels per roll is greatly beneficial for high-traffic areas, which would otherwise need constant monitoring. Roll towels also dispense very evenly, one at a time, so overuse is kept to a minimum.

[Shop Hard Wound Paper Towels](#)

Folded Paper Towels

The folded variant is available in two types: C-fold and multi-fold.

As the name implies, a [C-fold paper towel](#) is folded in the shape of a C. These paper towels are not interlocked with one another, so they lay on top of one another. They can be placed in a dispenser that will distribute them one at a time. Since these towels aren't interlocked, the next one in the pile may not automatically pop out, so you may have to pinch and pull to use them.

[Multi-fold paper towels](#) also have two folds but are folded in opposite directions. This allows the paper towels to be interlocked, which allows more paper towels to fit inside each dispenser.

The main benefit of folded towels over roll towels is that the folded towel dispensers are narrower and can fit into smaller spaces. The drawbacks of folded towels are they require replacement more often than rolls, and people tend to take more than they need because they may dispense more than one at a time.

Paper Towel Dispensers

How a paper towel is dispensed to restroom users is also an important factor FMs consider.

1. Manual Paper Towel Dispensers

[Manual paper towel dispensers](#) are most commonly surface-mounted to the wall and have a slot in the bottom that allows access to the paper towels. Some dispensers are made with a slot in the front face or side of the unit that allows for visual observation of the towels available to dispense. So, instead of opening each unit to check the fill level, your cleaning staff can quickly verify if it needs to be refilled.

2. Automatic Paper Towel Dispensers

[Automatic paper towel dispensers](#) are exactly what you'd imagine. They have motion sensors that allow the user to simply wave a hand in front of the sensor to trigger a towel's release. This allows for more control of how much paper towel is used with each use. Automatic dispensers must be connected to power via electrical wiring or batteries. The battery-powered dispensers often have indicator lights that flash when the battery power is low, letting your maintenance staff know when to replace them.

The Key Takeaway: Don't underestimate the importance of hand drying. Consider the types of paper towels and the various ways they're dispensed to find the combination that's right for your restrooms and your operating budget.

The Overall Restroom Takeaway

Public/commercial restrooms serve as a gauge for the cleanliness of a facility. You can help make a good first impression by:

- Increasing your restroom cleaning frequency
- Adding new health and safety measures, like touch-free technology
- Stocking up on disinfectants
- Controlling odors
- Focusing on handwashing and drying

By taking these factors into account, you can ensure that you're utilizing the best restroom solutions for your facility, resulting in a healthier restroom environment, happier customers, and quite possibly even more synonyms for our favorite room in the building.

Sources

¹The Annual Healthy Handwashing Survey, The Bradley Corporation, 2022.

²The 2022 Cleaning and Maintenance Management In-House/Facility Management Benchmarking Survey Report, 2022.

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