



MAKING THE GRADE

Queen's University raises the bar on residence cleaning, hygiene with adoption of state-of-the-art disinfection technology

by *David L. Smith*

When responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of one of Canada's largest and best-known university's residences, ensuring a healthy environment that enhances students' living experience is top priority. Just ask the facility and housing team at Queen's University in Kingston, Ont.

"This is our students' home away from home", says Barbara Wowk, manager of facilities, housing and ancillary services at Queen's. "In fact, for most of our students it's their first time away from home, so creating a welcoming,

comfortable and healthy living environment is essential to their well-being and academic performance."

To maintain and continually improve the university's high standards for facility cleaning and hygiene, Queen's not only invests in the people who work on its environmental cleaning teams but gives them the best possible tools for each job.

"We're always looking for new ways to make labour more efficient so we can have more time to devote to attending to the details and achieving the highest quality results," says Wowk. "That's why

we regularly frequent cleaning and hygiene innovation showcases. (They allow us to) see the latest and greatest in cleaning equipment, products and tools."

One such showcase, presented by the university's cleaning and hygiene product supplier, introduced the team to electrostatic disinfection, a method of applying a liquid disinfectant to a surface using an electrostatic applicator. The liquid is atomized into droplets, which are charged by an electrical current as they exit the applicator. When the charged droplets approach the target surface area, they induce an opposite charge



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**Rethink
disinfection.**



on it, which in turn attracts the charged droplets to the surface. The charged droplets also repel each other, preventing them from forming larger droplets and allowing them to uniformly cover a surface. The charged droplets are even attracted to the backs of surfaces, regardless of the direction of spray, enabling them to ‘wrap around’ a wide range of surface types, from tables, desks and washroom fixtures to intricate surfaces such as keyboards.

In a traditional spray application, the coverage of a surface is determined by the direction of spray and where the droplets fall based on gravity, which can result in uneven surface coverage. In contrast, the fine, electrostatically charged droplets produced by an electrostatic applicator provide consistent coverage of a surface and do not linger in the air, resulting in the use of less disinfectant in the process.

The Queen’s team observed the effect of electrostatic disinfection during a simulated demonstration. A solution formulated to appear under black light was deposited on a chair using an electrostatic applicator. A black light was then used to

show how the solution had been attracted to evenly coat the top, sides, back and underside of the chair.

“The solution got to areas where we thought it couldn’t,” says Queen’s facilities supervisor Rob Dusharm. “That was very impressive because no matter how well you train your cleaning teams, there are only so many areas that wiping can physically reach. We saw this system as a game changer.”

Queen’s implemented electrostatic disinfection four years ago, as an addition to its already rigorous cleaning program for the 4,800 bed spaces, common areas and washrooms throughout the university’s residences. Predictably, the response from cleaning personnel was mixed; many were excited to be given the latest cleaning and hygiene technology, while some were skeptical. Dusharm says it’s natural for people to be reluctant to change, “(but) once they saw how well the system worked and understood its value, they loved it.”

The university’s cleaning program had previously included a documented man-

ual cleaning process with ongoing evaluation to ensure consistency and quality. This new technology took the program many steps further.

“Though we already had an excellent cleaning program in place, adding electrostatic disinfection has allowed us to achieve a vastly improved result in very little time,” says Wowk. “We can now disinfect an entire medium-sized building in half a day, which would have been impossible before, and a washroom can be completed in less than a minute.”

The technology has also proven to be highly effective in helping to reduce the spread of illnesses.

“Germs can spread so quickly in small, compact areas,” says Dusharm. “We can now use a proactive approach during cold and flu season to help avoid possible outbreaks. Where we see trends on the rise, we increase the frequency of our cleaning and follow with electrostatic disinfection. The extent to which colds and flu spread through our residences has been dramatically reduced.”

Queen’s focus on constantly improving its cleaning program means its processes constantly evolve. Since adopting electrostatic disinfection technology in 2014 — the first post-secondary institution in Canada to do so — the university has moved on to the system’s next generation. The units have received rave reviews from staff on their ease of use, lighter weight and manoeuvrability.

“By working to continually achieve better results, we give students that ‘welcome home’ and create a happy, healthy environment that supports a transformative learning experience,” says Wowk. /

David L. Smith is director of cleaning, hygiene and sanitation at Bunzl Canada, which provides cleaning and hygiene supplies, equipment, food and retail packaging, safety and industrial supplies to more than 45,000 Canadian businesses. With more than 25 years’ experience in cleaning and hygiene, David is a recognized expert in infection prevention and control, with special expertise in electrostatic disinfection technology. He can be reached at 613-449-2146.

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