EFFECTIVE SANITATION

Sanitation is a series of steps that are effective only when taken in order.

The following are the 'Eight Essential Steps' to an effective sanitation program:

1. Area Preparation

Area preparation must be performed prior to sanitation activities taking place. It is essential to ensure that any meat products, packaging materials, ingredients and other water sensitive materials are removed from the area or suitably covered to prevent contamination before any sanitation activities commence.

Equipment should be locked out if required, and dismantled to provide accessibility for cleaning and sanitizing. It is important to cover any water sensitive controls or electrical components to prevent damage or electrocution (these should be manually cleaned).

2. Scrapping / Rough Cleaning

Remove heavy soils from equipment like slicers, blenders, floors, screw conveyors, etc. Use a squeegee to gather floor scrap into piles and a shovel to remove the gathered scrap. **Do not** use water to move heavy soils from the floor as this wastes time, hot water capacity, can burn on proteins, and creates poor visibility due to fog.

Use brushes, scrapers, or sweeping to remove as much material as possible. Cleaning and sanitizing chemicals are not designed to cut through heavy debris and soil.

3. Pre-Rinse

The pre-rinse is the longest of the two rinses. It should be thorough and remove all visible loose soils from the equipment and walls.

Rinse equipment and areas from top to bottom with hot water at a temperature of 110°F-130°F to break up fat and remove visible soils. Do the floor as you go.

4. Inspection

After the pre-rinse the area should be visually clean. Inspect the area and equipment, checking for missed spots and those still containing soils. Go back and re-rinse those areas, remembering them for the next time.

5. Detergent Application and Scrubbing

Apply detergent as a foam (or gel) at the concentration recommended by your chemical supplier, generally 2-5%. Good foam application is key - cover everything inside and out with a thin film of foam, ensuring that the underside of equipment and working surfaces are also foamed. Foam quality should be such that contact time is a minimum of 15 minutes. Do not let foam dry.

If required use a brush to manually scrub heavily soiled areas. The use of mechanical action with brushes or scrub pads to help remove soil and prevent formation of biofilms is essential. Avoid the green pads if possible as they are harsh on soft metals and etch surfaces, which can create niches and grooves that present opportunities for bacterial attachment and growth.

6. Final Rinse

The final rinse is the same as the pre-rinse just faster and primarily for rinsing away the detergent. Use hot water at a temperature of 120°F-130°F and rinse equipment or plant surfaces from top to bottom. It is important to rinse the floor as you move down the line or across a room with equipment in it. Once you've got the equipment and plant environment clean do not use high-pressure spray on the floors or in the drains because this can drive bacterial aerosols back up into the atmosphere that will then settle on equipment.

7. Final Inspection

The final inspection is the same as the first inspection except it should be fairly detailed. The final inspection looks for remaining detergent and soils. Do the inspection before you release the equipment or production area for the sanitizing step because in the event that you must re-clean, you've wasted both time and sanitizer agent.

It is a good idea to follow up the rinse with an inspection using a biochemical technique like ATP bioluminescence, which is a very effective tool for environmental hygiene monitoring and verification of cleanliness and sanitation.

8. Sanitizing

Sanitizing is just as important as all other steps. If the cleaning steps are done well, sanitizing will be effective in killing any remaining or hidden microorganisms left in difficult-to-reach or otherwise hard to clean areas.

Use the maximum concentration allowed without going over the no rinse level, usually up to 200ppm.

Flood everything, same areas as for rinsing. Ensure that the underside of equipment and working surfaces are also sanitized.

Procedures

A good sanitation program starts with well written sanitation procedures that include the 'Eight Essential Steps' of an effective sanitation program.

The written procedures should also include at minimum:

- Sanitation schedule/frequency
- Details and specifics describing the method and procedures for equipment and room cleaning and sanitizing
- The chemicals required
- The chemical concentration level required
- Proper handling and application of chemicals (duration of application, etc.)
- The chemical solution temperatures, where applicable
- Equipment disassembly and assembly instructions
- Methods to prevent cross-contamination, where necessary
- Housekeeping and sanitation procedures required during operations

Records

In order to demonstrate that the sanitation program was executed as per the written program, the following records should be completed:

- Post-Sanitation Checklist: Sanitation activities for premises, equipment and utensils are recorded on the day that they are performed on a Sanitation Checklist/Form.
- Pre-Operational Sanitation Inspection Form: For each day the plant operates, and before beginning operations on that day, the operator or plant employees must conduct a pre-operational inspection of the premises, equipment and utensils of the plant to ensure that the plant complies with its sanitation program. The inspection will be documented on the Pre-Operational Sanitation Inspection Form.

For more information, resources, or help with your program please contact:

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