REMCO PRODUCTS HYGIENIC CLEANING SOLUTIONS

Maintenance of Hygienic Cleaning Tools

When it comes to maintaining sanitation and food safety within a food processing plant, there's more to it than training employees and staying abreast of today's food safety regulations. Properly selecting and using the right tools and equipment for each assigned task in a manufacturing facility is key, but it's the ongoing care, cleaning and maintenance of such tools and equipment that are pertinent in achieving success.

That's why Remco Products, Inc., Zionsville, Ind., supplies color-coded tools for environments where hygiene and efficiency are essential.

"*Remco* and *Vikan* products offer food contact tools that are hygienically designed with the user in mind," says Cristal Garrison, director of training and development. "Food contact tools are made with surfaces that are free of imperfections like crevices and have surfaces that are smooth and easy to clean. When stored properly, [food contact] tools are designed for self-draining to allow liquid to flow away and off the tool."

When selecting tools for food processing facilities, it's important to choose the right tools for the right area. Garrison recommends, for example, a hygienically designed product that has smooth surfaces free of seams and sharp angles, and tools that are FDA CFR 21-compliant.

"Hygienically designed brushware is easier to clean than standard brushware since bristles are not crimped and smooth surfaces

allow water turbulence to aid in removal of debris, resulting in less mechanical action needed to remove debris," Garrison adds.

Also, tools and equipment should be cleaned regularly—cleaning entails rinsing with water to remove loose debris, then washing in water containing a detergent or chemical, then rinsing again with water to remove the detergent or chemical.

"We often recommend storing tools within their assigned areas and stored hanging in an area that allows them to dry thoroughly after use," adds Garrison. "Organized storage areas should be kept clean and protected to ensure good hygiene, which often helps extend the tool life too."

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The following are some basic cleaning principles:

1. **Dry clean.** Remove visible and gross soils and debris.
2. **Pre-rinse.** Using the lowest possible pressure, rinse all areas and surfaces until they are visibly free of soils.
3. **Wash (soap and scrub).** Use the correct detergent, in the right concentration, in conjunction with mechanical action, in the correct water temperature for the appropriate contact time.
4. **Post-rinse.** Visibly rinse away all detergents and remaining soils.
5. **Inspect.** Scrutinize areas that are challenging to clean and ensure they are free of soils and detergents and determine whether steps 1-5 should be performed again.
6. **Sanitize.** Foam, wipe or spray sanitizing chemicals as directed by an SSOP or chemical supplier instruction onto surfaces and ensure the designated contact time is met.
7. **Dry.** Ensure adequate time is allotted for equipment to dry thoroughly, especially with non-rinse sanitizers.
8. **Verification.** Gather proof (visual or microbiological) that the cleaning performed achieved the level of expectations by following facility verification protocols.

Remco also recommends that tools be regularly inspected for damage that indicates a need for replacement. Things to look for are excessive abrasions or gouges, tangled or extremely damaged brush filaments, discoloration, scratches or stains and broken or badly worn tools, according to Garrison.

"It's important to remember that food and beverage facilities are concerned with controlling the hazards and risks in their products and environments," she says. "The most significant hazards are microorganisms that can lead to illness. Selecting cleaning tools that are hygienically designed and fit for their intended purposes is an important first step for every company that produces safe food products." **RP**