

## **What's the BIG Stink About?**

Have you ever walked into a restroom and - even before using the facility - come to the conclusion that it was dirty because the room reeked of malodors? If so, you're not alone. According to a recent survey of cleaning professionals, more than 69% of respondents reported having indoor air quality complaints and have been asked to do something about the situation.

Today, more than ever, people judge a facility's cleanliness on indoor air quality. If you are a Maintenance Manager not incorporating all three elements of cleanliness - sight, touch and smell - into your cleaning programs you may think your facilities are clean, while patrons believe otherwise. All too often maintenance programs address the first two cleanliness issues, but ignore the latter.

Many times not only do custodial staffs have a vested interest in implementing odour control programs, so do corporate executives. Malodours can cause numerous problems for companies, including lower employee morale and productivity. Worse yet, malodours can reflect poorly on your organization and ultimately impact your bottom line.

## **Disguising Malodours**

**Odour control technology has advanced dramatically in the past 10-15 years.** Along with these technological advances have come more sophisticated odour control products and methods. Traditional odour control products, such as pungent air fresheners, simply mask odours or scents. The problem with masking agents?

**They only provide temporary relief from malodours.** Once their fragrance wears off, the malodour returns. What's more, masking agents often compound odour control problems by decaying over time and becoming part of the original malodour.

**Masking agents are still used today.** However, "pure" masking agents are rapidly becoming obsolete with the development of more advanced odour control chemicals.

## **WHAT'S THE "BIG STINK" ABOUT ODOUR CONTROL?**

**From a patron's point of view, a facility is not clean unless it looks, feels and smells clean.** In fact some people judge a facility's cleanliness based on acceptable smells or undesirable odours. Thus, odour control should be an essential part of every facility's total maintenance program.

**Some people believe spraying a "magic formula" into the air will solve a facility's odour control problem.** Cleaning experts know better. But in order for you to implement an effective odour control program, you must have a clear understanding of malodours and what causes them.

Generally the degradation of decay and of certain elements and the subsequent gases that become airborne and find their way to our noses, cause malodours. Stop or eliminate this decay and the offensive odours will disappear. Only a continued odour control program, however, will eliminate malodors for good. In other words, a restroom can look clean and smell bad if potential malodour sources exist (e.g. scale, lime and urine build-up).

The first line of defense against malodours is a quality-cleaning program complimented by effective odour control chemicals. Restroom floor drains, for example, require constant maintenance. Over time, drains dry out and sewer gases back up through the dry trap and into the floor drain creating malodours. Flushing and disinfecting traps regularly will eliminate most of these malodours. However, malodours harbouring in deposit build-ups may require an odour counteractant.

## **Product Wish List**

What characteristics do cleaning professionals look for in odour control products? Above all, they seek performance. Other key criteria are as follows:

From a patron's point of view, a facility isn't clean unless it looks, feels and smells clean.

**The chemical must eliminate malodour sources.**

The chemical may use a masking agent for immediate malodour relief, but in the long run, the chemical should eliminate the source.

The product's fragrance should smell less offensive than the actual malodour.

Some odour control chemicals release an almost overbearing scent that may cause as many problems as the malodour itself.

Odour control chemicals should compliment other cleaning chemicals used to clean the facility.

For example, if a custodian mops the floor with a mint-scented chemical, polishes the furniture with a lemon scented chemical and sprays the environment with a bubble gum air freshener, the combination of odours may smell worse than using nothing at all! A well thought-out odour control program incorporates complimentary systems that enhance the overall scent of a clean facility, not detract from it.

**The chemical should be easy-to-use, economical and safe for both custodial workers and cleaning surfaces.**

**Ready-to-use chemicals (RTU), pre-packaged in spray bottles or aerosol containers, apply easily.**

However, they're probably not the most economical odour control alternative. Concentrated chemicals, on the other hand, require minimal mixing and likely offer a better per-application or end-use cost. No matter what type of odour control product, it shouldn't damage the surfaces it comes into contact with (i.e. floor finishes and counter tops).

### **Products and Programs go Hand-in-Hand**

Quality products alone, however, won't completely eliminate malodours you must also adhere to an effective odour control program. An effective program incorporates the following elements:

**Teamwork-**When Swish works closely together with you, an odour control program will prove most successful. Strong partnerships have a synergistic impact on cleaning programs.

**Training-**In order for any cleaning program to work, on-going training must take place and should address at least the following topics:

#### **People often judge a facility's cleanliness on indoor air quality**

- the various types of odour control products available
- how to identify malodour sources
- how to eliminate malodour sources
- Safety issues, including how to use Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and personal protective equipment (PPE) when mixing or applying the chemicals
- How to use the chemicals effectively and efficiently
- How to build a cleaning program made up of cleaning chemicals that compliment each other

#### **Defining Product Differences**

Today, you can avoid a "big stink" by selecting from a wide variety of odour control products:

**Masking Agents:** These chemicals provide a "quick fix" solution to odour control problems. Although masking agent's work immediately, they disperse shortly thereafter. Masking agents mask malodours rather than eliminate them.

**Odour Digesters:** These bacteria or enzyme-activated chemicals literally consume bacteria and agents that generate malodours. The more multi-purpose the strains of enzymes, the greater the probability of success. Odour digesters take time to act. Thus, they work best in conjunction with a mild agent that will neutralize the malodour until the enzymes destroy its source. Many odour digesters incorporate a mild scent (i.e. vanilla or citrus) into their formulation.

Many enzyme-activated chemicals are multi-purpose. Not only do they eat malodour sources, they also clean floors.

Maintenance managers are always looking to reduce their arsenal of cleaning chemicals; the more multi-purpose or brand spectrum the application of a chemical, the greater it's marketability.

**Swish offers their Aromx line of Odour Digesters. View the odour control program on line at [www.swishclean.com](http://www.swishclean.com) or ask your Swish representative for details.**