



REDUCING THE IMPACT OF WORKFORCE REDUCTIONS

School District Incorporates Touchless Cleaning Technology As A Way To Lessen The Sting Of Staff Reductions

By Chris Torry

To some, it's called taking lemons and making lemonade. To others, it's making the best of a bad situation. To the custodial staff at a major unit school district in the Northwest United States, it's reality.

This rapidly expanding district consists of 18 campuses—12 elementary schools, three middle schools and three high schools—spread over four nearby communities, with a growing student population that is approaching 10,000. In fact, the district is growing so fast that it has added five elementary schools in the past three years alone, with a sixth new elementary school currently under construction and scheduled to open for the 2010-11 school year.

The district's custodial staff is responsible for the cleaning and maintaining of all of its facilities. However, despite all of the recent growth, the realities of the current economic situation came recently crashing down on the district when a number of program cuts and staff reductions were ordered. Included in these were the elimination of 15 part-time members of the custodial staff.



Fortunately for the district's students, teachers, administrators and parents, a solution was already in place to combat the reduction in work force. It came in the form of a Transport Cleaning System (TCS) automated mobile cleaning unit. The TCS is a battery-powered, self-contained, touchless cleaning system that uses properly diluted cleaning chemicals applied with a low-flow/low-pressure nozzle to clean and sanitize restrooms from ceiling to floor. The TCS is marketed under private label by Pro-Link, a full-service janitorial supply, marketing and buying organization based in Canton, MA. The TCS is distributed locally in Idaho by Hanson Janitorial Supply Inc., Pocatello, ID. Hanson is a Pro-Link member and distributor

of maintenance equipment, paper and cleaning supplies for the building-maintenance industry. The TCS is manufactured by Hydro Systems Company in Cincinnati, OH.

“I started with the district 20 years ago as an evening cleaning person, so I know what it takes to clean a building,” said a school district spokesperson. “The TCS has been a godsend in helping us keep the schools clean, especially at the time of the cutbacks.”

A Ready-Made Solution

“I recognized a need and went and demoed a unit,” explained Bret Gordon, Territory Manager for Hanson Janitorial Supply. “The staff people really liked it, so from there I went and did another demonstration at another school and those people really liked it and reported back that it saved a lot of time, in some instances as much as 50 percent.”

The initial demonstration took place at one of its three high schools, which is considered the district’s flagship facility. On hand were custodial-staff members from three of the district’s schools. After Gordon demonstrated the operation of the TCS, three teams were sent to three different restrooms in the building and asked to try it out.

“One of our custodians had just cleaned one of the restrooms prior to the demonstration and he said that his was going to be the cleanest one,” recalled



the spokesperson. “It seemed clean, but when we used the TCS unit, the dirt was just streaming down the floor and into the drain. He was just amazed.”

“It is an amazing demo,” added Gordon. “You think there’s not much pressure there, but there’s enough that you don’t believe the amount of dirt and grime that comes out from under and behind things.”

The custodian’s amazement was understandable because the TCS lets the chemicals do the cleaning, not high pressure. Utilizing Hydro Systems’ select-valve technology, the cleaning and sanitizing chemicals are correctly dosed every

time, effectively and consistently killing germs and toxins, particularly in difficult-to-clean areas like fixtures, grout lines, under counters and the space around toilets and urinals. This deep-cleaning is accomplished by a system that needs less than 100 psi, which protects surfaces from water damage, a concern when using cleaning systems that rely on high pressure (500+ psi) for their operation.

The TCS unit is also kind to the environment, with 50% less water and chemicals used when compared with many other automated cleaning systems. Operation is as simple as filling the unit's 12-gallon water tank, using the selector valve to choose any of up to four different chemicals to be dispensed (or any of four dilution ratios when cleaning with single-product cleaning chemicals such as hydrogen peroxide), and applying the cleaning solution with the low-flow/low-pressure spray nozzle. An optional foaming nozzle is available to clean surfaces where chemicals need longer dwell time to deliver maximum cleaning effectiveness. The compact design and simple operation of the TCS also eliminates complicated and time-consuming setup and breakdown, while the amount of time needed for the actual cleaning process is also greatly reduced (see sidebar).

"After seeing the demonstration, I thought using the TCS unit would be faster and easier to clean the restrooms," said the spokesperson. "I thought it was more sanitary than double-dipping a mop or cleaning rag, especially when you're cleaning a restroom and you want to have a new bucket of water used in each one. With the TCS, everything is rinsed down the drain, all of the bacterias go down the drain, rather than being double-dipped out of a mop bucket or on a cleaning rag. Even if the unit didn't save time, it still makes everything cleaner."

Convinced of the capabilities of the TCS, the school district purchased one unit and selected one of its elementary schools as the beta-test site. The results were so positive and so immediate that

Time Is Money

In these days of tightening budgets that can lead to cutbacks in programs and personnel, school administrators are fighting a constant battle to get the most out of every penny spent. It's no different for a major school district located in the Northwest. Earlier this year, the custodial staff felt the cutback sting when 15 members of the part-time staff lost their jobs.

Still tasked with providing the cleanest, most sanitary facilities for the district's 18 school campuses despite the cutbacks, the school district found a solution to the dilemma in the Transport Cleaning System (TCS) automated cleaning unit from Hydro Systems Co.

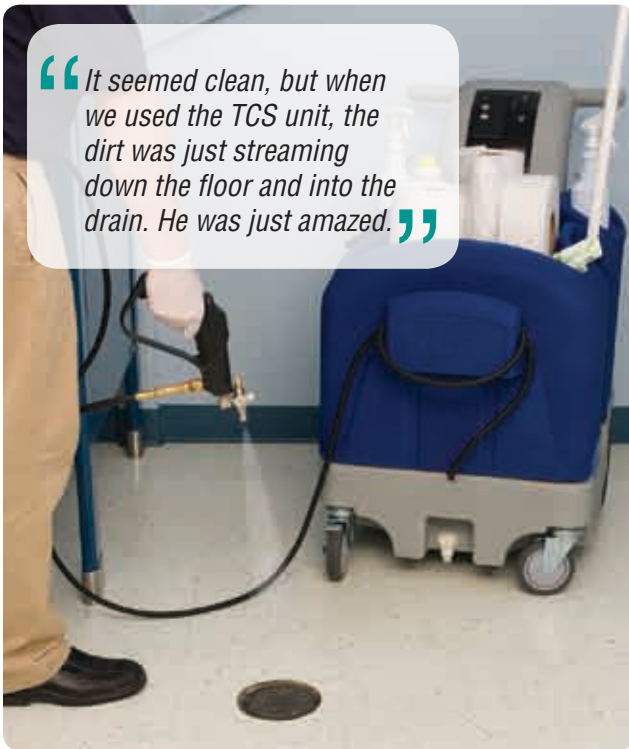
The TCS—which the district had began using at some of its facilities even before the cutbacks were announced—helps take the sting out of operating with a depleted staff by offering the capability to perform most cleaning tasks in roughly half the time.

"In seeing the time that was being saved by using the TCS, I knew we could make up the loss in man-hours by using the machines," said a school district spokesperson. "With the TCS, I only need one person per restroom, rather than two. Every place we're using it it's saving time. One of the custodians from Sandcreek Middle School told me, 'It used to take an hour to pre-spray the hallway, now it takes 15 minutes.'"

These observations are backed up by ISSA 447 Cleaning Times that show that the use of touchless cleaning technology can reduce fixture-cleaning time by as much as 67%. In addition, the custodial staff that remains at the school district is also probably much happier and healthier since the TCS reduces physical strain by eliminating the stooping, bending and scrubbing that is involved in traditional "hands on" cleaning, which can also be unpleasant and lead to an unmotivated cleaning staff and ineffective cleaning practices.



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three more units were purchased for use in two of the high schools, along with a second elementary school.

The spokesperson chuckled as one particular instance was related that serves as a perfect illustration to the effectiveness of the TCS units: “We had one restroom at one of the high schools where we just couldn’t get the odor out. Because of that, the faculty refused to use it and would go out of their way to find another restroom. After using the machine, the odor’s gone and the faculty is now using that restroom.”

Full Speed Ahead

After the staff cutbacks, the school district—which refused to allow daily restroom cleaning to become an every-other-day task—knew the cure for a reduced work force: 10 more units were ordered for use at the campuses where a part-time person had been lost.

The spokesperson did admit that there have been a couple bumps in the road since the TCS was introduced to the staff—not in the operation of

the units, but in the reluctance of some of the staff to embrace a change in cleaning regimens, or really grasp all of the tasks that the TCS can be used for.

“The custodians at one building in particular had a hard time deciding that the unit could be used for everyday cleaning and not just deep-cleaning,” said the spokesperson. “Overall, most people were excited to try it, but some people want no change. That’s been the biggest challenge in a couple of the schools and I hope that those who don’t welcome change will come around. I told them, this isn’t a miracle—there are no miracles—but this definitely makes the job easier and leaves the restroom cleaner and more sanitary.”

Those that have embraced the technology spent the summer finding other uses for the TCS units.

“Throughout the summer, my crew has discovered that they can use it for different things,” said the spokesperson. “They can pre-spot carpets, they took the cafeteria tables and chairs outside and cleaned them, they sprayed down the outside doorways and windows, they sprayed down the lockers.”



With the new school now rolling along, the time-saving nature of the TCS units has been playing a role in helping the schools present a cleaner, more sanitary face to the public.

“There’s always something going on at a high school, so if an activity like a basketball game, a dance or a concert is being held, the custodian can go in and clean the restrooms an hour before the event so we can guarantee they’ll be clean and fresh,” said the spokesperson.

Conclusion

If life were easy, what fun would it be? That’s why when challenges arise you have to work that much harder to see that they are overcome. No one likes a reduction in staff. Not only are people’s livelihoods being affected, but there’s an ancillary effect on those that remain in the form of added responsibilities and duties.

When the current economic crisis forced this Northwestern school district to reduce its custodial staff, the custodial staff could have bemoaned its fate, or attacked the new reality head-on. The staff chose the latter path by incorporating the TCS automated cleaning unit into the daily cleaning regimen of the district’s schools and turned what could have been a huge negative into a new way of doing things that is providing the required results at a fraction of the cost.

“No matter the size of my staff, I still have to maintain the same level of sanitation and cleanliness,” said the spokesperson. “To that end, the TCS is playing a role for us. It’s not a miracle, but it’s a good step in the right direction.”

For more information contact:

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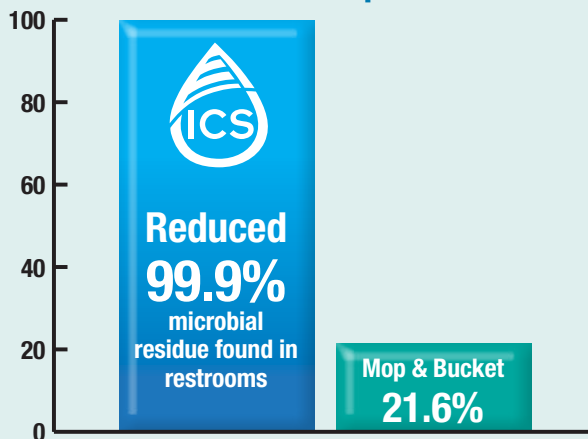
Independent Lab Tests Show TCS 36-40 Times More Effective Than Mop-and-Bucket

A new study, which was conducted by Advanced Testing Laboratory, an independent laboratory based in Cincinnati, shows that a major school district in the Northwest made the right choice in selecting the TCS over traditional cleaning methods. Titled “Cleaning Effectiveness of the Spray-and-Squeegee Touchless Cleaning Systems Versus Conventional Mopping,” the results of the study revealed that the cleaning method offered by the ICS was 36 to 40 times more effective than mop-and-bucket cleaning methods.

Specific key results showed that using Hydro Systems’ touchless cleaning technology reduces the amount of microbial residue or simulated-urine residue from standard tile floors found in restrooms by as much as 99.9%, compared to as little as 21.6% when using a flat mop.

“The benefits of time-savings and the reduction in physical stress when using spray-and-squeegee technology such as our TCS Mobile Cleaning Unit are plain to see and document,” said Bradley Drury, Product Manager at Hydro Systems. “Now, with the results of this study, there can be no question that cleaning educational facilities with a TCS unit will result in a much cleaner and more sanitary facility when compared with traditional mop-and-bucket cleaning methods.”

ICS vs. Traditional Mop and Bucket



For the complete report, go to:

www.hydro-ics.com/report.asp