



Safety

## How Better Hand Cleaning Helps Create a Safer, More Productive Workplace

James Langford | Jul 23, 2024

If you've ever walked into a restaurant bathroom, you've probably seen signs reminding employees to wash their hands before returning to work.

It's good advice for people in metalworking shops and manufacturing facilities, too.

Not only does the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration recognize good hygiene as a key to workplace safety, requiring lavatories and handwashing stations at job sites, the ***Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*** says handwashing is an effective way to keep employees healthy, lowering the number of people who get diarrhea by as much as 40 percent and curbing respiratory illnesses like colds by as much as 21 percent<sup>1</sup>.

That underscores the productivity benefits of on-the-job cleanliness, which can be optimized with hygienic equipment such as Georgia-Pacific Professional's sealed soap and sanitizer systems, including its enMotion<sup>®</sup> dispenser line as well as a hand cleanser containing powerful scrubbing agents to remove heavy grime.

# The Soap System Decision

“OPEN SOAP SYSTEM”

OR

“CLOSED SYSTEM”



**1 in 4**  
refillable soap dispensers  
contain bacteria known  
to cause infections.<sup>1</sup>

**54%**  
of hands more likely  
to be contaminated with  
bacteria if they are washed  
with contaminated soaps.<sup>1</sup>

1. Journal of Environmental Health, March 2011: Occurrence of Heterotrophic and Coliform Bacteria in Liquid Hand Soaps From Bulk Refillable Dispensers in Public Facilities



Sealed refill bottles help  
reduce risk of cross  
contamination.

Every refill soap, pump &  
nozzle are replaced and  
can be installed with  
one hand in seconds.

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The dispensers use sealed refill bottles that are discarded once they are empty, explains Whitney Shaw, the company's senior category manager for skin care. Simply replace the bottle when refilling is needed.

That helps minimize the risk of soap contamination, which can happen with traditional bulk dispensers.

“People sometimes think, ‘It’s soap. How can it become contaminated?’” Shaw says. Unfortunately, these refillable, bulk soap dispenser systems pose public health risks, and the CDC advises against them because “topping off” of the refill can lead to bacterial contamination of soap, she says.

Another benefit is that each refill bottle comes with a new pump. Bulk dispensers rely on permanent valves or release mechanisms that grow less sanitary over time as recommended cleaning procedures can be labor-intensive. Since contaminated soap may not be washed off, bacteria from that soap can be transmitted to workers and make them sick.

Another maintenance consideration for bulk-refill systems is that refilling them can lead to spills and drips on the floor, creating slip-and-fall hazards.

## **Touch-Free vs. Manual Dispensers**

While touch-free systems are the most common soap and sanitizer dispenser format in the market today, due to their lower risk of cross-contamination and the potential for reducing waste by dispensing controlled amounts, manual dispensers remain in use.

Georgia-Pacific Professional, which expects the market for touch-free dispenser formats to keep growing, offers them for industrial grit hand soap as well as foaming hand soap and sanitizer.

"If you think about manual, push-style dispensers that workers often have to touch with very dirty hands in industrial settings, that increases the cleaning and maintenance needs," Shaw adds. "That is an added benefit of touchless systems that can be overlooked."

Such systems tend to be popular with workplace users, too. In one survey by Georgia-Pacific Professional, 65 percent of respondents say having access to an automated hand sanitizer dispenser in germ hot spots (e.g., break rooms) would show their employer cares about hygiene<sup>2</sup>. And 84 percent say having touchless dispensers in the bathrooms would enhance their peace of mind at work<sup>2</sup>.

Along with hand soap and sanitizer products, Georgia-Pacific Professional offers matching lines of enMotion® paper towel and toilet paper dispensers, giving customers the option of buying a single solution across several categories of products.

"When it comes to hand hygiene, paper towels and hand soap go together," Shaw says. "The fact that we offer a more complete suite of products is an added benefit of choosing GP PRO."

## **Disposable Wipers vs. Shop Rags**

Along with upgrading hygiene equipment, Georgia-Pacific Professional recommends that manufacturing facilities use disposable wipers such as its Brawny® Professional products instead of shop rags.

Not only are shop rags less hygienic, with 20 percent of workers listing them as a germ hot spot<sup>2</sup> in research by Georgia-Pacific Professional, they can be dangerous. Company research also shows 10 percent of industrial operators reported employees cutting themselves on shards caught in rags and shop towels at least once a month<sup>2</sup>.

Georgia-Pacific offers a wide range of disposable Brawny® Professional wiper options to suit a variety of tasks, including absorbent, plant-based products.

**How can you improve hygiene in your workplace? Tell us in the comments below.**

## **Footnotes**

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/prevention/about-hand-hygiene-at-work.html> (Use of these materials, including any links to the websites, does not imply any relationship, affiliation or endorsement by the CDC.)

2. GP PRO, 2020, *Industrial Segment: Hygiene Ready | Instill Confidence Among Valued Workers*, [Brochure], Georgia-Pacific.

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