



## DISINFECTANT & RESTROOM CLEANERS **GERMICIDAL CLEANERS**

### **What are they?**

### **How are they different from other bacterial agents?**

What are germicidal cleaners? Are they better to use than disinfectant cleaners or should they be using a bacterial cleaner? Perhaps a sanitizer is better. Maybe we should use a bacteriostatic cleaner. The name is longer; it must be better, right?

There has always been confusion in the janitorial maintenance business when you are asked to present a germicidal cleaner to a customer, particularly when the customer is a hospital. After all, we are not bacteriologists or doctors. We may not even know the terms to be used.

Suppose you are selling a germicidal cleaner and your competitor is selling a disinfectant cleaner. Is yours as good as his?

Hopefully a little light can be shed on the situation with the following explanation.

A germicidal cleaner means that the cleaner kills germs. "Germ" means germs and "cidal" comes from the Latin word meaning to kill such as homicide means to kill men. A germ is a bacteria, so a bactericidal cleaner means that it kills the germs or bacteria with which it comes into contact. A disinfectant cleaner is a chemical substance used to kill bacteria, which causes disease.

Therefore, the terms germicidal cleaner, bactericidal cleaner and disinfectant cleaner are all synonymous. This means that a germicidal cleaner is a bactericidal cleaner is a disinfectant cleaner and that these cleaners, when used according to label directions, will kill 100% of the bacteria with which they come in contact.

Sanitize sounds like an encompassing term. Is it better to sanitize than it is to disinfect? The answer is no! When reading the label of a disinfectant cleaner that also has sanitizing claims, you will notice that the dilution for sanitizing is always larger than that given for disinfections. This should be the clue that the claim "sanitize" is not stronger than the claim "disinfect".

Sanitize, by definition, means that the product will kill 99% of the bacteria with which it comes in contact; whereas "disinfect" denotes that it will kill 100%.

A bacteriostatic agent is one that holds the bacteria at the level at which they were when first contacted by the product. "Static" comes from the Latin word "statis", which means "same". Bacteriostatic cleaners, therefore, do not kill bacteria but prevent them from regenerating or multiplying.

- The strongest claim is to disinfect.**
- The next strongest is to sanitize.**
- The weakest claim is bacteriostatic.**

