



TOP COMPLIANCE (Pty) Ltd

Your Business' Safety Is Our Concern

QSE B-BBEE - Level Four

Website: www.topcompliance.co.za

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Top Compliance is pleased to announce that we have received accreditation from the QCTO (Quality Council for Trades and Occupations) for the Occupational Skills Programme: Basic Emergency First Aid Responder (ID Code: SP-230801). In the coming months, we will be registering more of our courses through the QCTO as part of our ongoing commitment to providing top-tier occupational training.

Health concerns of hand towels and dryers in public places

Poor handwashing and hand drying can significantly increase the spread of infectious diseases, including gastrointestinal and respiratory infections, as well as skin and eye infections. Inadequate hand hygiene allows pathogens (*Pathogens are microorganisms that cause disease in humans, animals, or plants. They include bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasites, and prions. Pathogens invade a host, multiply, and disrupt normal bodily functions, leading to illness or infection. They are responsible for various diseases, from mild to severe*) like *Escherichia coli*, *Salmonella*, and viruses such as influenza and coronaviruses to transfer from hands to surfaces, objects, and food, causing outbreaks of illnesses.

This is especially concerning in public spaces and healthcare settings, where cross-contamination can lead to widespread infections and healthcare-associated infections (HAIs), impacting vulnerable populations like the elderly and immunocompromised individuals. Additionally, improperly dried hands can retain more bacteria and viruses, further increasing the risk of spreading pathogens.

The consequences of poor hand hygiene and drying extend beyond health, affecting the economy and daily life. Increased medical costs, absenteeism from work and school, and the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria are all risks associated with inadequate handwashing and drying. Proper handwashing and thorough drying are simple yet crucial practices that help prevent these issues, promoting public health and safety.

Public restrooms in spaces like gyms, schools, workplaces, restaurants, and shopping centres commonly feature hand towels and hand dryers for drying hands. These tools are essential for maintaining hygiene and preventing the spread of pathogens. However, both have unique hygiene concerns and risks. This article explores the potential hazards associated with hand towels and hand dryers in public spaces, examines current hygiene practices, and provides recommendations for ensuring safety and cleanliness.

Hygiene Concerns with Hand Towels

1. Towels can harbour bacteria such as *Staphylococcus aureus* (including methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* - MRSA) and fungi causing infections like athlete's foot and ringworm. The warm, damp environment of used towels promotes the growth and survival of these pathogens.
2. Towels can transfer contaminants from one user to another. For instance, a towel used to dry inadequately washed hands can pick up gastrointestinal pathogens and spread them to subsequent users.
3. Reusable towels should be laundered at high temperatures (at least 60°C) with appropriate detergents and disinfectants. Facilities should adhere to established protocols to ensure thorough cleaning and sanitization. Inconsistent practices can compromise their hygiene, potentially leading to the spread of infections.
4. While paper towels offer a one-time use solution, they contribute to environmental waste. The balance between hygiene and environmental impact is a crucial consideration in public spaces.

Hygiene concerns with hand dryers

1. Hand dryers can spread bacteria and viruses by creating aerosols. This process disperses tiny, airborne particles throughout the restroom, potentially leading to respiratory or skin infections.
2. High-speed dryers can blow pathogens from hands or surfaces into the air, contaminating other surfaces and individuals. This increases the risk of contact-based transmission of diseases.
3. Hand dryers may not always dry hands thoroughly, especially in high-traffic areas. Damp hands can harbour more bacteria, facilitating their spread.
4. The loud noise from hand dryers can be uncomfortable, particularly for children or individuals sensitive to noise. Additionally, dryers can disperse allergens like dust and pollen, triggering reactions in sensitive individuals.
5. Hand dryers require regular cleaning to prevent the accumulation of dust and bacteria. Poor maintenance can result in the spread of contaminants when the dryer is in use.

Best practices for ensuring hygiene

1. Reusable towels should be laundered at high temperatures with disinfectants. Hand dryers should be regularly cleaned and maintained to ensure they do not harbour and spread pathogens.
2. Public spaces should ensure a sufficient supply of clean towels and regularly monitor hand dryer performance. Prompt removal of soiled towels and maintenance of hand dryers is essential.
3. Encouraging proper handwashing and thorough drying can reduce the spread of pathogens. Providing hand sanitizers and clear instructions can support this effort.
4. Where possible, single-use towels should be provided to minimize cross-contamination risks. Eco-friendly disposable options can be considered to balance hygiene and environmental concerns.
5. Informing users about the importance of proper hand hygiene and the safe use of drying methods can help mitigate risks and promote a cleaner environment.

To dry hands safely in public places, several effective solutions can be implemented:

1. Single-use paper towels are a hygienic option as they can be disposed of immediately after use, reducing the risk of cross-contamination.

2. Touchless, high-efficiency hand dryers can reduce contact with surfaces. Models with HEPA filters can help remove bacteria and viruses from the air before it reaches the hands.
3. Providing hand sanitizer in addition to drying methods can help kill residual germs after drying, ensuring hands are as clean as possible.
4. Clear instructions on proper handwashing and drying techniques, along with reminders to dry hands thoroughly, can encourage better hygiene practices.

Implementing these solutions can help maintain good hygiene and reduce the spread of pathogens in public restrooms.

Both hand towels and hand dryers have unique hygiene concerns and risks in public spaces. Ensuring proper handling, maintenance, and use of these drying methods is crucial for minimizing the spread of infections and promoting public health. By implementing best practices and educating the public, facilities can enhance hygiene standards and create safer environments for everyone.

"Handwashing is a simple thing, and it's the best way to prevent infection and illness." — Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

<u>Occupational health and safety auditing and consulting</u>			<u>Online safety shop</u>
			
<u>First aid equipment</u>	<u>Signage</u>	<u>Legal posters</u>	<u>Safety Equipment</u>

Courses offered by Top Compliance (Pty) Ltd

ONLINE ACADEMY - https://academy.topcompliance.co.za/		
Occupational Health and Safety Courses	Online	Onsite Excluding travel
Safety representative – Legal Liability	R980.00	R1200.00
The Occupational Health and Safety Act & responsibilities of management – Legal Liability	R1250.00	R 1600.00
Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	R735.00	R810.00
Food facility health & safety course in terms of R638	R735.00	R810.00
Basic Ladder Safety Course	R735.00	R810.00

Fire Fighting and Prevention Courses		
Fire Marshal - Basic firefighting	R735.00	R810.00
Fire & Evacuation marshal - Basic firefighting with emergency action planning	R810.00	R905.00

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Fire & Evacuation marshal - Basic firefighting with emergency action planning		

ONSITE TRAINING		
First Aid Courses:		
Level 1 - US 119567 - Perform basic life support and first aid procedures		2 days
Level 2 - US 120496 - Provide risk-based primary emergency care/first aid in the workplace		3 days
Level 3 - US 376480 - Provide first aid as an advanced first responder		3 days
Level 1 & 2 - US 119567 & 120496		3 days
Level 1, 2 & 3 - US 119567, 120496 & 376480		5 days
Level 2 & 3 - US 120496 & 376480		3 days
Child and infant CPR & choking		6 hours
Adult CPR & choking		6 hours
Adult CPR & choking and AED		1 day
Occupational Health and Safety Courses		
Safety representative – Legal Liability		1 day
The Occupational Health and Safety Act & responsibilities of management – Legal Liability		1 day
Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment		1 day
Food facility health & safety course in terms of R638		6 hours
Basic Ladder Safety		6 hours
Fire Fighting and Prevention Courses		
Fire Marshal - Basic firefighting		6 hours
Fire & Evacuation marshal - Basic firefighting with emergency action planning		1 day