

# 6 Steps for Safer Cleaning in Food Trucks

## 6 STEPS FOR SAFER CLEANING AND DISINFECTING IN FOOD TRUCKS

Products used for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting can be harmful to human health and the environment. Clean SHiFT's **6 Steps for Safer Cleaning and Sanitizing in Food Trucks** are designed to help you implement a Cleaning for Health Program: protect employees, customers, and the environment by substituting safer alternatives for more toxic traditional cleaning ingredients, and using new cleaning practices and equipment.

**Why should I start a Cleaning for Health program?** Sanitizers and disinfectants contain toxic chemical ingredients, and exposure can occur through inhalation, skin contact, ingestion, or injection. Exposures to these products can be serious, and sometimes fatal - especially when products are improperly mixed. **Review this recent news story to learn more about why a "Clean SHiFT" to safer products is important for the safety and health of your employees - [Case Study-Buffalo Wild Wings Manager Dies, 13 Hospitalized After Exposure to Toxic Cleaning Product Fumes](#) .** **Go to Step 1** for more information on hazards and preventing exposures.

**Where do I find safer cleaning products?** Ask your vendor for cleaning products that are independently certified to contain fewer toxic chemicals. There are thousands of products certified by third-party organizations and agencies to help you find the safer products you need. The [Washington Food Truck Association](#) can also provide you with guidance.

**Go to the steps below to learn more:**



# Protect Food & Workers from Chemicals



### Step 1: Protect food and workers from chemicals

- Develop a plan with written procedures and schedules for routine cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting to protect food and the health of workers.
- Establish a [Cleaning for Health program](#) that identifies readily-available products that substitute green chemistry alternatives for more toxic traditional ingredients, new cleaning practices and equipment - these 6 steps will help you establish your program!
- Follow safety regulations for food trucks:
  - [Washington State Department of Health Regulations](#)
  - [Washington State Department of Labor & Industries Regulations](#)



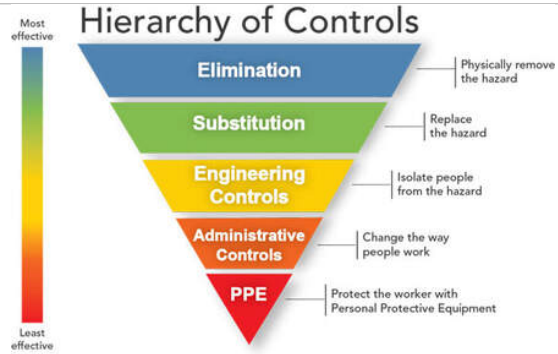
Develop a plan, and train your employees on safer cleaning practices.  
Image: Emily Wigley, used with permission.

- Cover all food and equipment before you clean.
- All chemicals such as soaps, cleaners, sanitizers, and pesticides must be stored away from food, utensils and food preparation areas.
- Store chemicals below food or food-contact surfaces away in a manner that prevents tipping or spilling.
- Store chemicals in closed containers with easy-to-read labels.
- Rinse cleaning products off when used on food surfaces or in food preparation areas.
- **Do not mix cleaning products** especially those that contain bleach and ammonia. Dangerous gases can be released and can cause severe lung damage.
- Avoid aerosol sprays that create a fine mist in the air and products with fragrances and dyes.
- Special COVID-19 Resource: [Employers Guide to Cleaning and Disinfection in Non-Healthcare Workplaces](#), American Industrial Hygiene Association, August 2020

## Use the Hierarchy of Controls to Prevent Harm from Chemicals

Traditionally, a hierarchy of controls has been used as a means of determining how to implement feasible and effective control solutions for a given workplace hazard. The idea behind this hierarchy is that **the control methods at the top of graphic are potentially more effective and protective than those at the bottom.**

**How can the hierarchy be applied when using cleaning and sanitizing products?** Selecting safer products is always the most effective way to prevent harmful exposures. The hierarchy of controls can inform the next best control when eliminating certain products is not feasible.



- **Elimination:** Clean windows and other non-food contact surfaces with water and microfiber cloth.
- **Substitution:** Select least toxic chemical products with logos that say Safer Choice or Design for the Environment
- **Engineering:** Ventilate the space with outside air by opening doors and windows
- **Administrative:** Train and communicate the hazards and health risks to workers
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Wear personal protective equipment like gloves and safety glasses

## Clean SHiFT: Safety & Health in Food Trucks



# 2 Select Safer Products



Cleaners, sanitizers, and disinfectants contain toxic chemical ingredients. The health dangers of these products include but are not limited to triggering an asthmatic or allergic reaction, chemically burning skin, and causing blindness. Additional safety hazards include fire, chemical reactions if stored with an incompatible product (e.g., bleach and ammonia form a toxic gas), and spills.

## Step 2: Select Safer Products

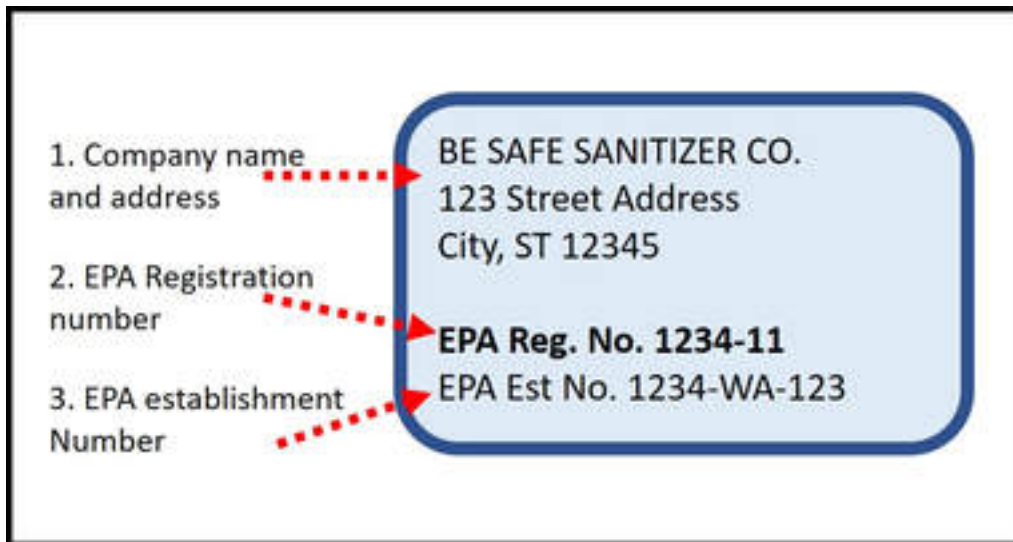
- Ask vendors for products that are third-party certified to contain less toxic ingredients. There are thousands of safer products for cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting available.
- The EPA established two programs that evaluate and certify products that contain less toxic ingredients:
  - **Safer Choice** - for cleaning products
  - **Design for the Environment (DfE)** - for sanitizers and disinfectants
- Other trusted third-party certifications for cleaning products include:
  - Green Seal, Ecologo, Cradle to Cradle
- Remember it is required to use sanitizer and disinfectant products that are registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and safe for

food contact surfaces. For example, vinegar is not registered by US EPA as a sanitizer.

- Avoid using products with sodium hypochlorite (bleach) and quaternary ammonium compounds (quats) like benzalkonium chloride, benzethonium chloride, ADBAC, and DDAC because they cause asthma, difficulty in breathing and other harmful respiratory effects.



Select cleaning products that are certified by third-party organizations, like US EPA Safer Choice, Green Seal, Ecologo, and Cradle to Cradle.



Remember you must use sanitizers and disinfectants with an EPA registration number that meets food service requirements and are safe for food contact surfaces.

When selecting a food service sanitizer or disinfectant for reducing exposure to COVID-19, check EPA's List N for products labeled as "safe for food contact". List N is the Environmental Protection Agency's list of disinfectants that are effective for killing SARS-CoV-2 (the coronavirus that causes COVID-19). Select products with ethanol, hydrogen peroxide, isopropanol, l-lactic acid, sodium bisulfate, hypochlorous acid, or citric acid.

**What do third-party certifications on products mean?** Trusted third-party labels mean the certifying body – for example the EPA in the case of the EPA Safer Choice Label – has evaluated the product using the following criteria:

- Health criteria – does not cause cancer, is not corrosive to skin or eyes, is not harmful to nervous system, does not impact reproductive health, and does not cause asthma.
- Environmental criteria – does not harm aquatic life, is neither persistent nor bioaccumulates.
- Adequate and verified performance. **Yes the products are as effective as traditional products.**

## Independent Third-Party Certifications to Look for:

Cleaners:	Sanitizers & Disinfectants:
   	 <p data-bbox="1024 1625 1209 1661"><a href="https://www.epa.gov/dfe">epa.gov/dfe</a></p>

Select Safer Choice cleaning products at EPA's website: <https://www.epa.gov/saferchoice/products>.



# 3 Follow Directions on Product Labels



## Step 3: Follow Directions on Product Labels

- **Read all product directions before use.**
- Pay attention to contact time. Contact time is the length of time the product must stay on the surface visibly wet to be effective against the germ for sanitizing and disinfection.
- Ensure that chemicals used are intended for food services and are appropriate for food contact surfaces.
- Follow dilution and application instructions on the label. Wear protective gear.
- When mixing chemicals like bleach from concentrate, an emergency eyewash and good ventilation are required.
- Employers must ensure workers are trained on the hazards of chemicals and other safety information used for cleaning and sanitizing in accordance with [OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard](#).



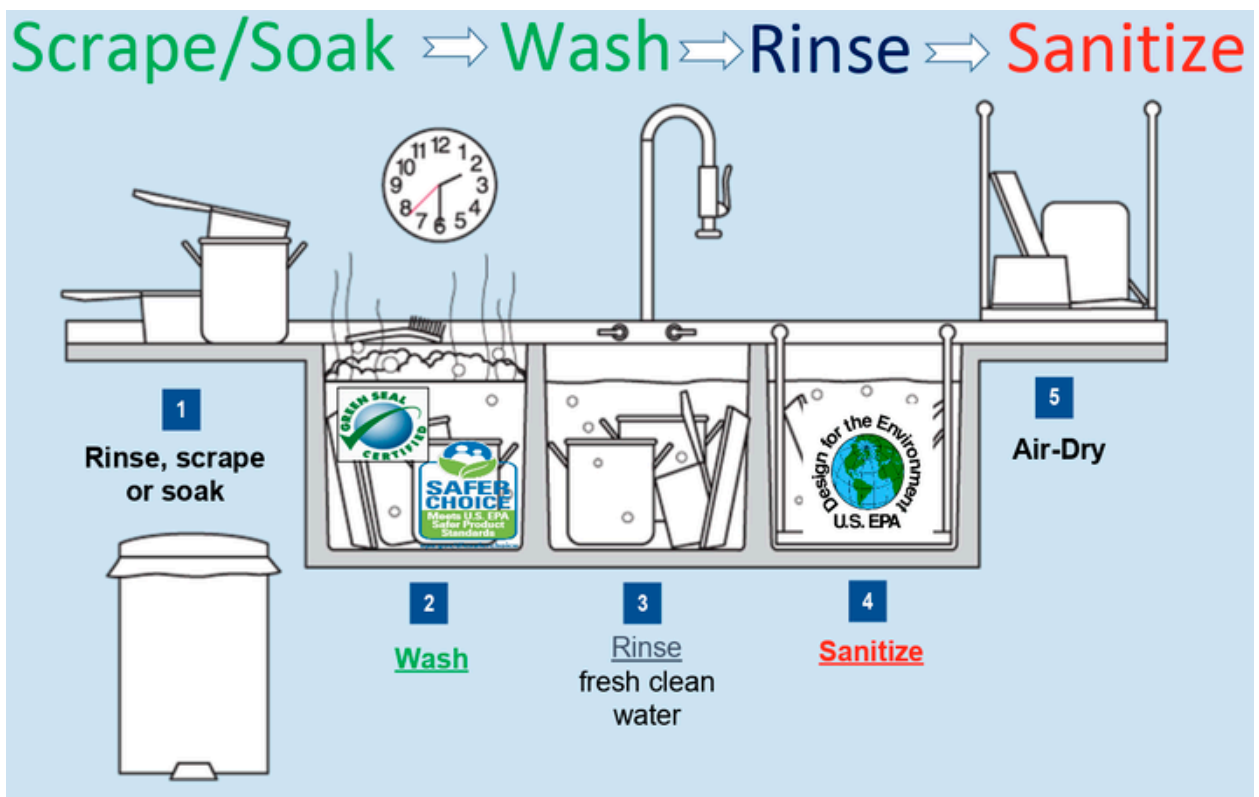


#### **Step 4: Clean First.**

- Cleaning and sanitizing are not the same. Cleaning removes dirt, food, and grease so that chemical sanitizing and disinfecting products that kill germs can work effectively. **You must clean food-contact surfaces before sanitizing.**
- The best practice is to spray a cleaning product onto a clean cloth. To reduce worker exposure, do not spray cleaners onto surfaces directly.
- Surfaces that do not contain visible dirt, grease, or have contact with food can be cleaned with a microfiber cloth and water. YES- this is true!
- Wash with soap and water or a safer all-purpose cleaner if surface is dirty or greasy. Scrub well.
- Floors, walls, shelving units, windows, some work surfaces, and equipment that do not come in contact with food should be cleaned only, meaning they do not require sanitizer.
- All dishes, prep areas, and food contact surfaces must be washed first before sanitizing.
- Special COVID-19 Resource: [Employers Guide to Cleaning and Disinfection in Non-Healthcare Workplaces, American Industrial Hygiene Association, August 2020](#)



Proper Steps for Cleaning, followed by Sanitizing:  
In Step 5 we will discuss sanitizing in detail



### **What are the advantages of using microfiber cloths for cleaning?**

1. Microfiber cloths absorb germs and dirt better than cotton. They can remove large quantities of microbes, including hard-to-kill spores.
2. They are made from synthetic fibers that are positively charged, meaning they attract dirt and grease.
3. High quality microfiber and third-party certified cleaning products reduce germs on surfaces very effectively and is much safer.
4. Microfiber, unlike cotton, dries fast, making it hard for bacteria to grow in it.
5. Microfiber mop heads trap much more dirt, and are easy-to-remove.
6. Microfiber lasts longer than cotton; it can be washed a thousand times before losing its effectiveness.
7. Microfiber cloths and mops are available in grocery stores, hardware stores, and big box stores and online. Prices are similar to other mops and cleaning cloths.



High quality microfiber and third-party certified cleaning products reduce germs on surfaces very effectively and is much safer. Use a clean cloth for each surface or piece of equipment.

**How can I maximize the effectiveness of cleaning with microfiber cloths?**

1. Select color-coded microfiber cloths to clean surfaces and equipment.
2. Use a clean cloth for each surface or piece of equipment. Designate a place away from food and food contact surfaces for cloths that need to be washed.
3. Apply cleaning products directly to cloth.
4. Do not use bleach, fabric softeners or dryer sheets when washing microfiber cloths.
5. Microfiber cloth and water is all that is necessary to clean windows. Use just one cloth and water to wash, and another to dry.



The best practice is to apply cleaning products directly to the cloth.



# Use Sanitizer on Items that Contact Food



- A **sanitizer** reduces the level of bacteria and germs to levels considered safe as determined by public health codes or regulations, and are intended for use on food-contact surfaces.
- Select a sanitizer that is registered by the U.S. EPA.
- All dishes, utensils and food-contact surfaces must be washed, rinsed, **sanitized** and let to air dry between uses.
- **Sanitizers should be applied directly to a surface. Use wiping cloths that are soaked in sanitizer.**
- **Sanitize** surfaces that have contact with potentially hazardous foods every 4 hours.

- Identify the surfaces and equipment that touch food. Clean first and then sanitize.
  - Food contact surfaces - dishes, utensils, and equipment that come into direct contact with food (e.g. mixing bowls, cutting boards, blenders, serving spoons, counters)
  - Non-food contact surfaces- surfaces that don't directly come in contact with food such as food preparation and storage areas which include counters, tables, pantries, walls, floors, shelving units.



This is a typical sanitizing bucket with a wiping cloth that is used by food truck operators .

- Soak cloths used for sanitizing in the sanitizing solution. Store wiping cloths in clean sanitizer bucket with a lid.
- Sanitizers must be mixed by following the directions on the label. Soap should not be added to sanitizers.
  - Use test strips to check the strength of the sanitizer. Make sure it is not too strong or weak.
- Follow instructions on the label for contact time. Sanitizers must **remain undisturbed** on the surface or air dry for the right contact time, otherwise the sanitizer is not as effective. Resistant germs will remain and grow, which can lead to “superbugs”.
- **Ventilate the space** with outside air by opening doors or windows.



**Dip the strip into sanitizing solution for a designated time as specified on instructions.**

**Then instantly compare the resulting color with an enclosed color chart that provides the safe level for food safety.**

**Some test strips are based on concentrations of 0-50-100-200-300-400 ppm and other strips have % concentration (passing of >29.4%).**

**Follow instructions on test strip vial because different products have different times and concentrations that meet food service requirements.**

**Record date, time, and concentration on a sanitizer log as a best practice.**

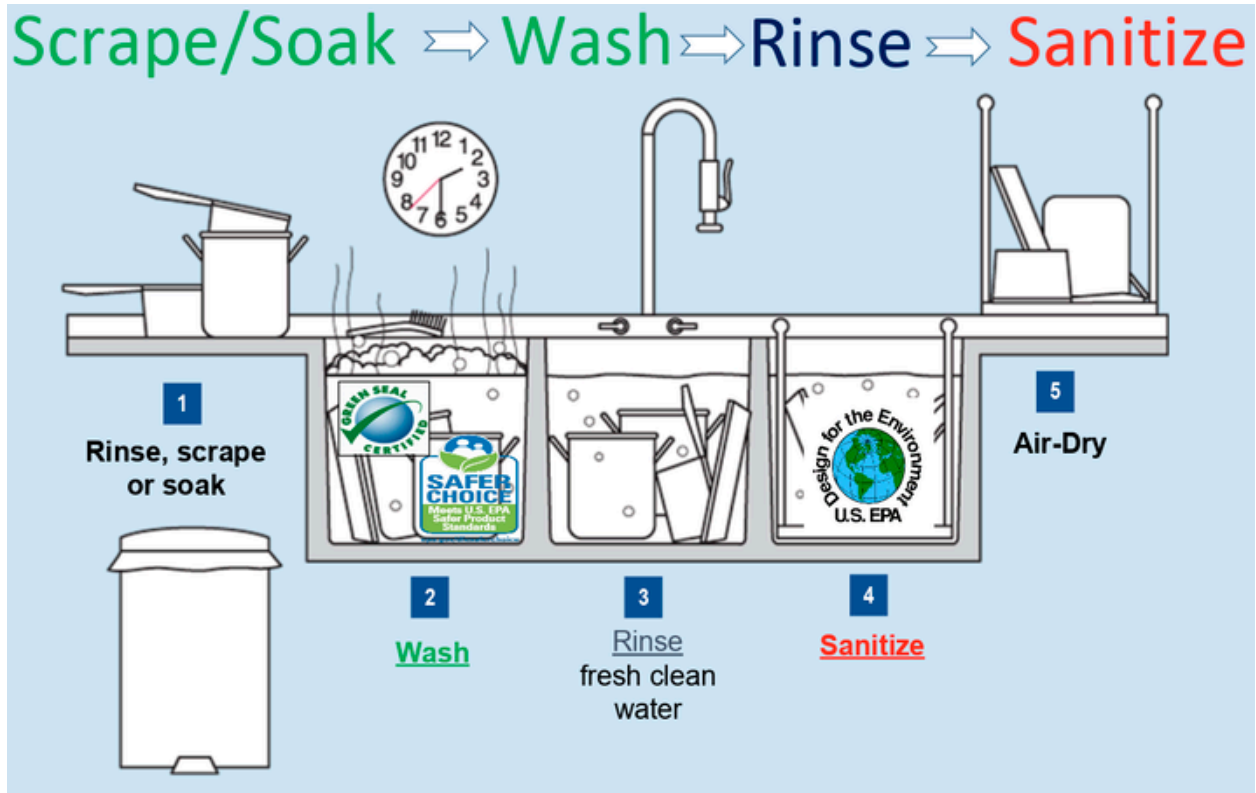


Steps for preparing sanitizer. Photo Credit: Lynne Rose

- Wear personal protective equipment, including chemical resistant gloves (such as nitrile), safety glasses, and or aprons to protect your skin and eyes during cleaning and sanitizing activities.
- Clean hands immediately after gloves are removed.



Remember the proper steps for cleaning, followed by sanitizing:



## When and How to use Disinfectants

Use disinfectants only for cleanup of bodily fluids.

- Disinfectants destroy almost all infectious germs. They have no effect if dirt, soil, dust, or food debris are present on the surface or equipment.
- Clean the surface or equipment before using a disinfectant. Disinfectants do not work on dirty, greasy or food covered areas.
- Use a U.S. EPA registered disinfectant on hard, nonporous surfaces or equipment that have contact with

**bodily fluids from people like vomit. For example, floors, sinks and walls.**

- Disinfectants must be used by following the directions on the label, and should never be mixed with any other chemicals or products.
- Follow instructions on the label for contact time. Contact time is the amount of time a surface needs to remain wet or air dry in order for germicidal activity to occur. Contact time can range from 30 seconds to 10 minutes depending on the product and types of germs that need to be eliminated.



Follow directions on the label when applying a disinfectant to the surface. Disinfectants need to remain wet on the surface for a specified amount of time.

**To respond to COVID-19, refer to CDC website:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

You do not need to disinfect all surfaces in your food truck on a daily basis in response to COVID-19. Use of a disinfectant is only necessary when bodily fluids, such as respiratory droplets, come into contact with a surface, or when a specific COVID-19 concern arises such as an employee who tests positive.

- **Refer to EPA's List N** to determine if a disinfectant is effective against SARS-CoV-2 (the coronavirus that causes COVID-19)
- **Refer to EPA's List N** to determine if a disinfectant can be used on surfaces that touch food, and if rinsing is required after disinfecting.

**List N** is the Environmental Protection Agency's list of disinfectants tested for effectively killing SARS-CoV-2 (the coronavirus that causes COVID-19). List N will also tell you the types of surfaces on which you can safely use a disinfectant product. (Click the green plus sign next to a product's registration number and look at the Surface Type). Products that can be used on surfaces that touch food, such as dishes, cooking utensils, and countertops will be listed as "Food Contact." Sometimes the product's directions will require a user to rinse the surface after disinfecting -- this will be noted as Food Contact Surfaces, Post-Rinse Required. Some sanitizers are also effective in killing SARS-CoV-2, and can be found on List N.

# 6

## Wash Your Hands After Cleaning & Sanitizing



### Step 6: Wash your hands after cleaning and sanitizing.

- Food workers are required to wash their hands before they begin food preparation and any time hands may be contaminated. This includes after cleaning and sanitizing.
- Wash your hands at a hand washing sink that has hot and cold running water, soap, and paper towels (or other single-use drying method).
- Use soap that is fragrance and dye free. Avoid antibacterial soaps.
- Do not place any food or other items in the hand washing sink.
- All food workers must wash their hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Hand sanitizers can not be used instead of washing your hands



Image: Adobe Stock

[Click here to visit the CDC website](#) for more information on proper hand washing.