



Housekeeping

by Mary Friedman

Tub and tile: Important and difficult

*Another great article from The Rooms Chronicle®, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! ***Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.*** College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com*

Notice: The ideas, opinions, recommendations, and interpretations presented herein are those of the author(s). The College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University/The Rooms Chronicle® assume no responsibility for the validity of claims in items reported.

When it comes to cleaning the bathroom, the tub and tile area takes more time and energy and can be the cause of more problems than any other area of the guestroom. Many guest complaints and too many employee injuries begin in this area.

The following tips should serve as guidelines for training employees in the proper procedures for porcelain tub and tile shower cleaning.

Necessary supplies:

- Disinfectant cleaner in a spray bottle (Many prefer foaming sprays)
- Utility brush
- Disposable cloth, launderable cloth or sponge
- Drying rags
- Rubber gloves
- Goggles

Optional supplies include liquid cleanser, soap scum cleaner and mildew remover.



Procedures

1. To begin cleaning the bathroom, turn on the fan or open a window, if possible, to provide ventilation to the area.
2. Remove towels and amenities from the tub area. Properly dispose of soiled linens and used amenities. Be very careful with guest's personal amenities.
3. Spray the tub and tile surfaces, including the showerhead, faucets and soap dish, with disinfectant cleaner. Using a wet sponge, spread the cleaner evenly to cover all surfaces. Allow the surfaces to remain wet according to label instructions for activation of disinfectant.
4. Scrub areas with a brush or white pad. Keep the brush or pad very wet with hot water while working.
5. Rinsing the areas is a very important step. Using hot water, rinse all the surfaces to remove the cleaner. Some workers attach a hose to the spigot or showerhead while others use an ice bucket or wastebasket to collect water for rinsing. If rinsing is faithfully done with each cleaning, there will be no buildup of soap film.
6. What about the shower curtain or glass door? The best hotels keep an inventory of nylon shower curtains available to permit the curtain to be changed with every check-out. However, if plastic shower curtains are in use, they must be scrubbed with disinfectant and rinsed as above. If decorative curtains are used, managers should have a rotation program to remove the curtains regularly for laundering. Glass doors should be sprayed with the disinfectant, scrubbed, rinsed and dried. Be sure to clean the door tracks. Glass doors are usually deep cleaned on a regular schedule by removing them from their tracks and cleaning with a bleach solution.
7. Dry the tub and tile area completely, especially the corners. Dry bath areas are not susceptible to mildew. Also dry/polish the fixtures to remove water spots.

8. Wipe the shower curtain rod, towel racks (if present) and the front of the tub.
9. Replace towels, amenities and guest items as instructed.

Additional training

Additional training tips for cleaning the tub and shower area include:

- Use of abrasive cleaners (such as Comet powder) should be strictly prohibited. The abrasive content, though it will cut the soap film and seemingly provide a great result, will over time, erode the porcelain surface of the tub. The resulting dull, gray tub will have to be resurfaced or replaced, quite a costly consequence.
- Mildew removal requires special chemicals that must dry in place. Often managers will put a room on maintenance status while a houseman performs the necessary tasks of treating the mildew.
- Abrasive dots etched into the tub bottom will require extra effort if they have not been properly cleaned continuously. The etching permits soap scum and body oils to collect in the dots, resulting in a dark gray or black appearance. This accumulation requires special cleaning chemicals (most vendors have special products) and scrubbing. Some hotels use a power sander with a custom white-pad accessory to perform this special cleaning.
- Chemical labels should be examined to ensure their safe use on the surfaces present in the bathroom. Most acid-based cleaners are safe for cultured marble, tile and porcelain, but are not recommended for natural marble.
- Fiberglass surfaces should never be scrubbed with abrasive cleaners or tools as they will create scratches that will hold dirt. Most chemical companies offer liquid cleaners for fiberglass, but non-abrasive powders such as Borax or baking soda will also be effective as a paste cleaner.
- Tub drains should be cleaned when possible by housekeeping. If the design of the drain requires engineering assistance, a plugged drain should be reported immediately. A slow-drain is a nuisance to guests and a time-waster for employees.

Safety issues

Because wet tub and shower areas present a definite opportunity for slip and fall injuries, employees must take extra care while working. Various managers use different techniques to help employees complete their tasks, including provision of long-handled scrub brushes or mini-stepladders. It is proper to encourage employees to kneel in the tub on a bathmat while working or to stand on the tub on a rubber suction mat. It is not safe to stand outside the tub or to sit on the side of the tub and lean into the tub section.

Cleanliness test

There are two tests to check the cleanliness of the tub area. When cleaned properly, the tiles should visually sparkle. Second, if a person runs her hand anywhere along the surface, no white powder soap residue should be felt. In fact, the walls should squeak as a hand is pulled across the surface. It is management's responsibility to provide adequate cleaning materials (especially cleaning cloths) and excellent training for staff. The best housekeeping managers prepare a training bulletin for tub and shower cleaning, including photos of the correct method. ✧

(Mary Friedman is a veteran executive housekeeper and has authored several articles for The Rooms Chronicle. This article originally appeared in Vol. 10, No. 2 of The Rooms Chronicle.)