

Mobile handwashing stations can be placed anywhere inside or outside a building where hygiene is essential for a convenient handwashing option (3D rendering). Photo credit: Sloan Valve Co.

Hospitable Handwashing

A new design concept brings handwashing beyond the restroom in hospitality venues.



By Kim Darke-Miller

The guest experience is paramount in hospitality venues. And with germs and bacteria now at the forefront of society's awareness as we enter public places such as restaurants and stores, there is an opportunity to rethink and elevate the hand sanitization experience through form and function.

After the COVID-19 outbreak, hand-sanitizing stations were installed throughout public buildings. However, filled with an alcohol-chemical mix that often leaves hands sticky and cloaked in an unwanted scent, the convenience benefits of these hand-sanitizing stations tend to be outweighed by a lack of cleanliness.

There's now an opportunity to return to the basics of soap and water and incorporate it as a permanent part of design structure in the public spaces we engage with every day — and hospitality settings are no exception.

A Toast to Hand Hygiene

Let's put restaurant infrastructure under the microscope when considering how a return to soap and water can impact permanent design.

Restaurant restrooms are typically tucked behind the bar, near the kitchen. There are obvious functional reasons

for this location, but just because it's how it's been done for a long time doesn't mean it's a reason to continue it in a post-pandemic environment.

On the contrary, bringing hand sanitization out of the restroom can become a vital part of the entrance area and a welcoming aspect of a new space. And by focusing on accessibility, aesthetics and connections, these public handwashing stations can enhance trust, offer comfort and celebrate beautiful design.

Double-sided wash stations located near the front of the restaurant are geared to complement a facility's composition. The centralized location now makes hand hygiene more visual and accessible from various rooms. This provides patrons with a convenient handwashing solution — whether you're sitting down for a meal or stopping by for a drink.

For example, guests who check in with the host can conveniently wash their hands while waiting for a table, while guests popping in for a drink at the bar can wash their hands before heading to their next destination. Both options make for a meaningful and shared experience where hand hygiene is top of mind.

A 5-Star Experience

A guest's impression of a restaurant's restrooms con-



3D rendering of handwashing station located on an outdoor patio.
Photo credit: Sloan Valve Co.

tributes significantly toward their impression of the overall restaurant.

In this case, handwashing outside the traditional confines of the restroom only enhances this experience — from a hygiene and convenience perspective for guests. It's important for guests to be at ease, knowing the restaurant where they're about to eat places a high priority on hygiene.

More than 80% of consumers would avoid a restaurant with a dirty restroom altogether, not only avoid the restroom, notes a survey by research company Zogby International. When consumers were asked where they were most concerned about washing their hands, 40% said restaurants.

While proper handwashing is at the center of the “sinks beyond the restroom” concept in hospitality environments, let's not forget that touch-free sinks play a vital part in this innovation for effective hand hygiene. Touching manual faucets and soap dispenser handles that could be laden with viruses and bacteria defeats the purpose of washing your hands in the first place. However, with sensor-operated products, the entire handwashing experience is completely touch-free.

Yet, not all sink systems are created equal. For example, with handwashing stations gaining more prime real estate, the last thing any restaurant wants is water dripping on the lobby floor to create a messy — and hazardous — environment.

This is where integrated sink systems enter the equation. An all-in-one specification trend — where sensor-activated faucets, soap dispensers and hand dryers all work together in one highly efficient system — will help guests complete the handwashing process quickly without leaving the sink station to dry their hands.

How It's Done

Bringing this innovation to life as part of permanent design is a pretty simple feat in new construction projects, while also very attainable through renovations.

With retrofits, restaurants can incorporate more sustainable technology by using solar- or turbine-powered faucets. Most restrooms likely have drains integrated into welcome areas, making them an ideal location for handwashing stations.

However, installing handwashing stations against an outside wall or other areas could involve more extensive renovations. Integrating handwashing into the infrastruc-

ture of the reception area during new construction allows the architect/MEP to easily account for water lines, etc., making new installations ideal.

When it comes to new construction, architects can account for all water lines when designing floors to avoid slip-and-fall potential. In this instance, perforated nonslip flooring is an ideal specification to let the water fall into a drain and reclaim it, while integrated hand dryers help keep water off the floor. While local codes vary by state, the future of handwashing is changing, and building codes will certainly evolve with it.

An alternative option when a restaurant's layout or infrastructure does not make a permanent handwashing experience feasible, mobile handwashing stations are equipped with hands-free, sensor-operated technology for indoor and outdoor applications.

Mobile handwashing stations are designed to enable more convenient handwashing options for facilities and can be placed anywhere inside or outside the building where hygiene is essential. They can be used near entrances or exits, hallways, patios and more.

These mobile handwashing stations help facilities enhance health, wellness and hygiene even beyond the restroom and Sloan models are available with self-contained water or water-line-connected handwashing stations.

Sloan teamed up with a leading architectural firm to make this “Sinks Beyond the Restroom” concept a reality in hospitality environments, airport terminals, schools, stadiums and more.

This new handwashing model is beginning to gain traction in hospitality venues across the country, such as at the 900 North Michigan Shops, one of Chicago's premier shopping experiences featuring retail and restaurants. The sink, faucet and soap dispensers offer an elevated design, enhancing the look and feel of the restaurant area itself.

This new addition truly adds to the upscale shopping venue and confirms that handwashing outside the restroom is a welcome addition to the space. Shoppers and diners alike are now able to wash their hands without having to locate the nearest restroom, creating a safe and welcoming guest experience. ●

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