

Unappealing restrooms discourage hand washing, drive consumers to other facilities

Every public facility has to have restrooms, but too often, the responsibility ends at the water's edge, so to speak.

A recent survey about hand washing habits showed that a surprisingly high percentage of Americans, from kids to adults, do not wash their hands after using the lavatory in a public restroom. Why did so many fail to wash up? Mostly, they blamed the restrooms.

According to the first national Healthy Hand Washing Survey conducted by Bradley Corp., a majority said they skipped hand washing because the restrooms were so unpleasant. They cited sinks that were clogged or otherwise out of order, and wash areas that were dirty, crowded or lacked supplies. More than half the respondents said they only rinsed their hands with water, because all the soap dispensers were empty.

All types of public restrooms were indicted, but some categories fared better than others. Survey participants found casual dining restaurants the most preferred, although even they only scored 45% — and it was all downhill for other restroom types. Restrooms in retail stores were considered preferable by 15%, and airports were right behind with just 13%. Restrooms in movie theaters, fast-food restaurants and grocery stores all scored below 10%, with parks, sports arenas and zoos earning just 1% approval.

Risk of germs offers little incentive

Surprisingly, that survey was conducted when the threat of the H1N1

virus was at its peak. Yet even the risk of contracting flu or passing infection on to others failed to prompt many users to stop and wash up on their way out. More than 50% admitted that even the threat of flu wouldn't change their hand hygiene habits. Some did claim they used a hand sanitizer instead.

It's worth noting that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) calls hand hygiene "the best way to prevent infection and illness." Washing hands with soap and water is best, the CDC says, with alcohol-based sanitizers a good second option.

Restroom likes and dislikes

Restroom patrons accompanied by young children were especially frustrated by empty or jammed towel dispensers, a lack of space to put belongings, water collecting on sink counters, and sinks and soap dispensers that were too high for children to reach.

What else irks customers about public restrooms — and possibly thwarts their efforts to wash their hands after using the toilets? Empty or jammed towel dispensers were at the top of the list, followed by no place to put handbags or packages; wet sinks; inconveniently located sinks, faucets and soap or towel dispensers; wet floors; and too few sinks.

Appealing restrooms encourage repeat consumers

Statistics show that about 80% of those who enter a public building will visit its restroom. Because a consumer's first impression of a busi-

ness is often based on how inviting its restrooms look, it's important for organizations to ensure that their restrooms provide a positive experience. That's why contractors and project managers are specifying fix-

Simplified maintenance — If you're upgrading older facilities, you can save water and update restrooms by replacing old sinks, toilets and urinals with more efficient models. Removing stained or cracked china lavatories and replacing them with solid-surface lavatory systems not only makes older restrooms more attractive, it also makes them more functional. And since these systems



Public restrooms that are clean, bright and easy to use invite patrons back to a store or business. Fixtures that conserve water and energy are a "selling point" for eco-conscious patrons.

tures that are simultaneously attractive, energy-efficient, durable and easy to maintain. For instance:

Attractive ambience — Lighting in restrooms is an important element in pleasing patrons. With poor, dim lighting, even the cleanest restrooms can seem badly maintained and depressing. Many facilities designers and specifiers are borrowing the warm colors and textures found in many of today's homes, instead of institutional white. They're ordering lavatories, toilet partitions and accessories in complementary or coordinating colors for added appeal. They're incorporating architectural elements — sleek, sweeping lines, curved sinks and rounded shapes v. traditional square ones.

Depending on the type of facility, accessories like oval mirrors can provide additional visual appeal. To accommodate children and those with disabilities, place sinks at graduated levels.

require fewer connections and rough-ins, they also reduce labor costs.

Other features that save money and keep restrooms tidier are built-in soap dispensers that drip right into the bowl, and infrared sensors that shut off flow after use. These can also repel vandalism — espe-

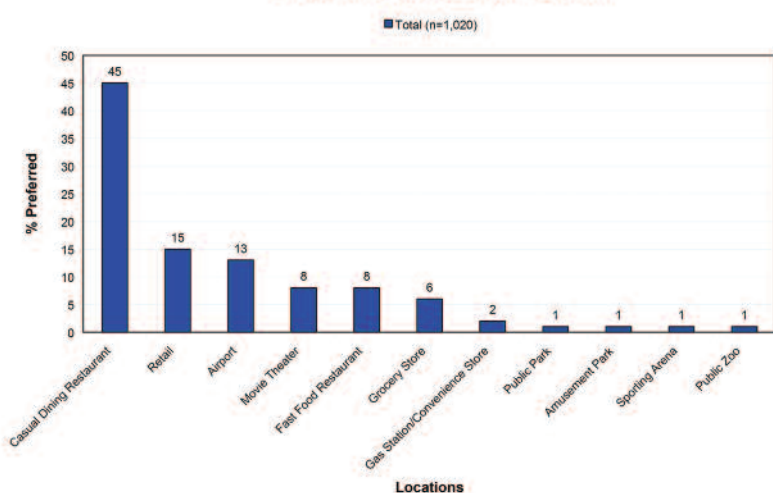
Attractive, updated restrooms can encourage customers to return more often.

cially important in schools and heavily used facilities like shopping malls and airports.

Energy efficiency — Low-flow restroom fixtures have become the standard in commercial restrooms. Toilets that once used 5 to 7 gallons per flush (gpf) are now required to use no more than 1.6 gpf. Many specifiers are also opting for ultra-low-flow toilets and waterless urinals
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Bradley Corporation National Healthy Hand Washing Survey
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Preferred Public Restroom Location



According to the data, Casual Dining Restaurants are what most people would prefer when choosing a public restroom location to use at 45%

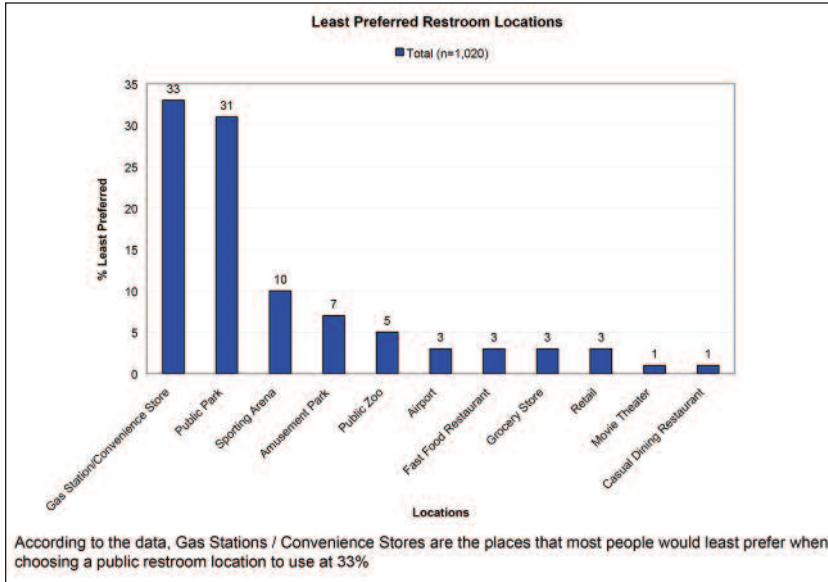
Public restrooms with appeal help ensure repeat customers

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for their facilities.

Sensor-activated flush meters can control water at peak times, saving

scarce resources and reducing utility charges. Depending on local codes, water used by lavatories varies from 2.5 gallons per minute to 2.2 gpm,



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with many public restrooms using just 0.5 gpm. Infrared sensors on faucets and lavatory systems save additional water by ensuring that water is only running while someone

is washing his or her hands.

Another way to save energy is with light-activated lavatory systems. Photovoltaic cells integrated into the top of a lavatory system can convert either normal restroom lighting or day lighting into energy that is stored and used to power valves and sensors in the hand-washing fixtures. These fixtures eliminate the need for batteries and electrical hookups. By eliminating replacement batteries, these products not only cut operating costs but also help reduce the 2.5 billion pounds of batteries that are sent to landfills each year.

Restrooms can be much more than just required facilities in public buildings. Attractive, updated restrooms can encourage customers to return more often. And well-maintained, appealing restrooms can persuade users to wash their hands after using the lavatories. As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reminds us: good hand hygiene is "the best way to prevent infection and illness." ■

For information on this survey, contact Jon Dommissie, director of marketing and product development for Bradley Corporation of Menomonee Falls, Wis. A USGBC member and manufacturer of locker room products, plumbing fixtures, washroom accessories, partitions and emergency fixtures, Bradley serves the commercial, industrial, health care, recreation, education, and corrections markets worldwide. Dommissie can be reached at Bradley Corp., W142 N9101 Fountain Blvd., Menomonee Falls, Wis., 53052-0309. For more information, call (800) BRADLEY or visit www.bradleycorp.com.