

Why the railways must dig deep on disinfectant

January 4, 2021



Never has the cleanliness of the railways been more important. That is why those involved in the industry have gone above and beyond when it comes to cleaning regimes.

Among those helping in the battle to keep passengers and workers safe is anti-virus disinfectant fogging and anti-virus protective coating specialists Dyno-Pest.

The company's Managing Director Ralph Izod has written an article for railbusinessdaily.com on the importance that at every stage of their journey, passengers and the people that make the railways run must be protected as much as possible from getting coronavirus because they have entered or touched an infected space or surface.

"If passengers are to return to the railways with confidence and every member of staff, every contractor to know they're protected when going about their daily business on the rail networks then action is required. Coronavirus is going nowhere. And with current news on the alarming fast spreading variants of the virus, trains must be able to navigate future virus scares. A robust system of anti-virus disinfectant-based surface protection must be in place for the long term. At every stage of their journey, passengers and the

people that make the railways run must be protected as much as possible from getting Coronavirus because they have entered or touched an infected space or surface.

The success of a long term robust anti-virus programme for the railways rests on 5 pillars:

- Acknowledging that deep cleaning no matter how deep falls short at the final hurdle by not being able to protect 24/7
- Protecting passengers, staff, and contractors
- Defining what constitutes the right products and the right combination of products
- Proof of Concept
- Rigorous application to a predefined standard across rail networks.

Deep cleaning. I lose track of how many times a person has told me their premises are 'COVID-19 secure' because they've upped the ante on their deep cleaning. This usually means more feet on the beat, super powerful disinfectants replacing the old formulas and buildings cleaned more regularly. Although undeniably important, deep cleaning is being confused with infection control.

Deep cleaning revolves around a visibly clean environment. Infection control removes, kills, and prevents the bacteria and viruses we cannot see. Deep cleaning simply can't kill an airborne virus whereas disinfection using specialist ULV foggers and applied by trained technicians with full PPE, kills all bacteria and viruses on contact. A train carriage fresh from a deep clean can within seconds become a virus transmission hotspot simply because a virus infected passenger has touched a door. The infection spreads from one isolated area to the entire carriage and other carriages within hours infecting many passengers and staff. The deep clean affords little protection.

By contrast a train that has been fogged with a specialist disinfectant will carry on protecting from COVID-19 from the start of the day to the end – for several days depending on the product used. But it takes more than equipping a person with full PPE and showing them how to operate a ULV mister before they're up to LEAN operational standard. I've seen videos recently of 'technicians' fogging buildings looking as though they're taking a stroll in the park. They must be trained (as our technicians are) in how to apply the many different treatments to the standard required, complying with all health and safety and COSHH legislation.

Protecting staff, contractors, and passengers. Think for a moment about the health and safety of the teams responsible every day for cleaning train carriages and keeping the stations clean. Given the speed at which coronavirus can spread from one affected area to several (a study by UCL makes for alarming reading and underpins this) those responsible for cleaning are in the firing line for getting and transmitting coronavirus. They're encountering contaminated surfaces every day. And they must be protected. The duty of care applies to all.

Onto products. This is a contentious area because in recent months certain manufacturers of disinfectant products (those used for fogging) have been investigated by Trading Standards for making false claims. For example, giving a 30-day guarantee when in fact post application testing has shown that after 5 days the protection is zero. For the railways this could be catastrophic with the very real risk of duty of care litigation you believe (and promote to passengers and teams) that based on your service provider's claims

your spaces are COVID-19 safe for 7 days. After 5 days your luck has run out. Unsuspecting passengers, staff and contractors are now entering unprotected spaces.

Products and systems should not rest on a manufacturer's claims but instead on independently verified and scientifically tested data. Because how can you be sure a product is up to the mark? It's important too that service providers explain why they're recommending several products and systems. For example, we provide services to schools where our technicians treat surfaces with an invisible surface coating product with accompanying UK certification that shows it protects against COVID-19. We also fog all areas using an anti-virus disinfectant with a 30-day guarantee. This is backed up by long term testing at each application site. These schools have an ongoing programme of anti-virus cleaning where more than method of treatment is deployed. I believe this will be the requirement for the railways.

What this demonstrates is the need for a menu of tried, tested, and trusted products for all railway spaces. Not a company turning up with a ULV mister (or worse still a basic sprayer!) and a disinfectant product that offers little or no long-term protection after application.

Onto Proof of Concept. At pre-defined stages this is crucial to ensure the highest levels of passenger and staff safety. Is this happening at present? It's also incumbent on businesses like Dyno-Pest responsible for leading the charge against viruses on the railways and in other spaces, to keep abreast of the latest technologies and products because it's a rapidly evolving space.

This brings me to my final pillar and the need for ensuring that the railways act as one with a recognised service standard for anti-virus disinfecting and surface protection. It's not acceptable for one station to be an exemplar in this area, another a laggard and for a myriad of different products to be used without validity or scientific reason.

Established service standards must be implemented without delay, which is why, as an RSSB member we are pleased to be spearheading this initiative."

Ralph Izod, MD of Dyno-Pest, ralph@dynopest.co.uk. [Click here for more details.](#)