


SAFETYZONE MAGAZINE

A female scientist with brown hair, wearing a white lab coat, blue safety glasses, and black nitrile gloves, is carefully pouring a bright pink liquid from a large, polished stainless steel container into a stainless steel funnel. The funnel is placed on a white surface. In the background, another person in a lab coat is partially visible, and yellow safety caps are on a shelf.

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Bar on Hygiene
Post-Pandemic**

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
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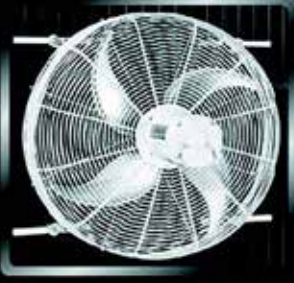


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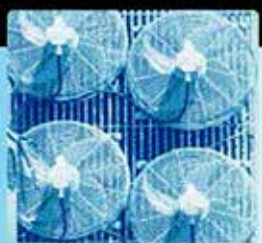
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UV Disinfection Stations Raise the Bar on Hygiene Post-Pandemic

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is the increased awareness of maintaining proper hand hygiene. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) web site, “Regular handwashing is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs to others.” This begins, of course, with regularly washing one’s hands 5 or more times throughout the day for at least 20 seconds using soap and water. The CDC also recommends the use of hand sanitizer when handwashing is not an option, which is why during the pandemic a hand sanitizer dispenser could be found at the entrance of just about every business, public venue, or restroom.

But do these hygiene efforts go far enough? It turns out the gaping hole in the equation is the cleaning and disinfection of the myriad of personal items we handle with our hands every day.

At the top of the list are our mobile phones, tablets, and other smart devices. According to various studies, individuals check their phones approximately 150 times each day, but the number of times they touch their phone is estimated to be in the thousands. If cell phones are presumed to be relatively clean compared to your hands, consider that scientists at the University of Arizona found cell phones carry 10 times more bacteria than most toilet seats.

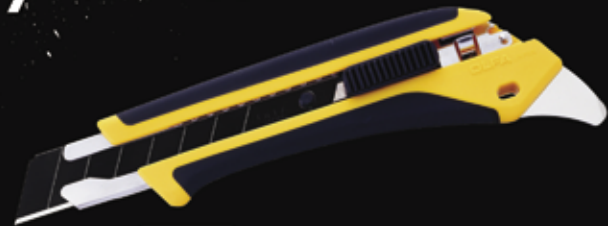
In fact, we handle our mobile devices so often they should be considered an extension of our own hands. If the items are dirty, so are our hands – and vice versa. So, when published health advice recommends cleaning smart devices “at least once a day,” it seems woefully insufficient. In addition,

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Other personal items we regularly handle with our hands include face masks, ID badges, baseball caps, sunglasses, keys, wallets, and jewelry. Many of these items pass through other people's hands as well, including credit cards, business cards, pens, bills, and coins. Even on the job, workers are increasingly using shared tablets, VR headsets, and even Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like safety glasses and gloves.

Given the risks, disinfecting our personal items and accessories should be an ongoing health mandate. For those that feel the COVID19 pandemic is over, what if there is a resurgence? A new more transmissible variant? Some other new viruses? What about the other pathogens we already know about? What about protecting those already at-risk prior to the pandemic due to pre-existing conditions?

One solution that warrants closer scrutiny is the use of ultraviolet (UV) light devices. These devices utilize short-wavelength ultraviolet C (UV-C) light to inactivate pathogens including viruses (such as SARS-CoV-2), bacteria, mold spores, and yeast.

UV-C light works by interfering with the nucleic acids of bacteria and other microbes to prevent reproduction and effectively destroy them. UV light has the advantages of being effective, low cost, chemical-free, and in most cases presents no risk to the items being disinfected.

UV-C light irradiation is already a proven technology, verified in many studies and utilized prior to the pandemic in both commercial and residential settings. In large hospital settings, UV light air purifiers are installed to decontaminate surgical equipment/tools and reduce the transmission of pathogens. Hospital-grade UV light machines are also widely used to disinfect patient rooms and

operating areas.

To be clear, there are already many UV light devices on the market. However, the main barrier to adoption and perhaps the primary reason these devices are not as ubiquitous as hand sanitizer stations are inherent limitations in design.

Many require direct contact and manipulation to operate the appliance, and there can be questions about the intensity and contact time of the applied UV light. If the item is treated in a static manner, for example placed in an enclosure without being rotated or moved, it is like tanning on the beach on only one side. The UV-C light may not reach all the relevant surfaces.

"Simply adding a UV lamp to a product and expecting it to destroy pathogens does not mean it will be effective," says Robert Tegel, founder, and CEO of Tebots, Inc., a design-build company with experience designing everything from consumer devices to products and automation systems for the textile, automotive, and other processing industries.

"UV light sources can vary in intensity and output, and there can be line-of-sight issues as well. You have to make sure the UV light is directed at the items from many angles with uniform intensity, and all this requires a high level of engineering," explains Tegel.

Many UV disinfection appliances are also essentially designed like microwave ovens. To disinfect an object, the door must be opened, the item added, the door closed, and push buttons used to initiate the cleaning process. The door then must be re-opened to remove the item.

"When you are opening and closing the door it can be detrimental to how effective the appliance will be," says Tegel. "One reason is the UV lamps do not instantly reach their maximum power and there is a long warm-up time. So, if you turn it off to open the door, you either have to wait until the

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lamp reaches full power or live with a less efficient and less well determined exposure time.”

Based on this observation, Tegel and his two partners, Herm Adams and Turan Erdogan, a former research professor at the University of Rochester’s Institute of Optics, decided to design a better mousetrap that would address many of these limitations. Tebots excels at prototyping and production and has a long history of solving industrial problems by arriving at creative solutions.

The patent-pending UV disinfection appliance the trio designed runs continuously without a door to open or close. The appliance resembles a small, portable charcoal grill. Tablet sized, or smaller items are placed on a rotating platform and then move in a 360-degree arc through the chamber where they are bombarded from all angles by UV-C light for approximately 10 seconds.

“Because the item is moving through the chamber, we can direct the UV-C in a way that ensures it will hit the targeted surface. By controlling the internal environment and the time within the chamber very precisely, we can kill more than 99.9% of the pathogens on the surfaces of the item,” says Tegel.

“People can walk up to a disinfection station, place an item in a tray, and then it would rotate around within the chamber. In less than 10 seconds – half the time the CDC recommends washing your hands – the item is disinfected, and ready to grab and go. The portable kiosk can process multiple items at once to rapidly disinfect as many items as the person wants,” says Tegel.

The enclosed, no-contact features mean the user is never exposed to UV light and does not have to touch any part of the appliance or push any buttons to initiate the process. This design feature eliminates the potential for cross contamination along with the need for constant maintenance and cleaning as is the case with toilet seats.

The appliance, called the POZ, can be used for COVID and a vast list of other pathogens, mold, mildew, and other items that cause adverse human health effects. The unit is portable (size is 76 cm x 76 cm x 120 cm) and plugs into a standard 110VAC outlet.

For those concerned, UV-C light has been proven to be safe for use on most materials.

“Nylon, cotton, leather, polypropylene, or plastics are not going to be adversely affected by these types of doses. But the dosages of UV light are high enough to kill germs, bacteria, and viruses, including SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19),” says Tegel.

Tegel envisions the self-service disinfection stations being installed in front of entries/exits or bathrooms at public venues, retail stores, health-care facilities, academic institutions, airport terminals, and nursing homes – to name a few. In the workplace, facility management companies or major corporations could install the POZ to protect workers as part of corporate safety initiatives.

Tebots is currently in discussions with several entities to license the technology. The initial design and several full prototypes have already been created.

Although at the time the primary driver to develop this technology was COVID-19, Tegel says the intention was to create a device that addresses both existing and future health challenges as well.

“This isn’t just a COVID-related product,” says Tegel. “It is a product and an approach that could have a lasting impact on hygiene now and in the future using a technology [UV-C] that has been around long before the pandemic.”

For more information, visit <https://tebots.com/> or contact Robert Tegel at 847-669-6876.

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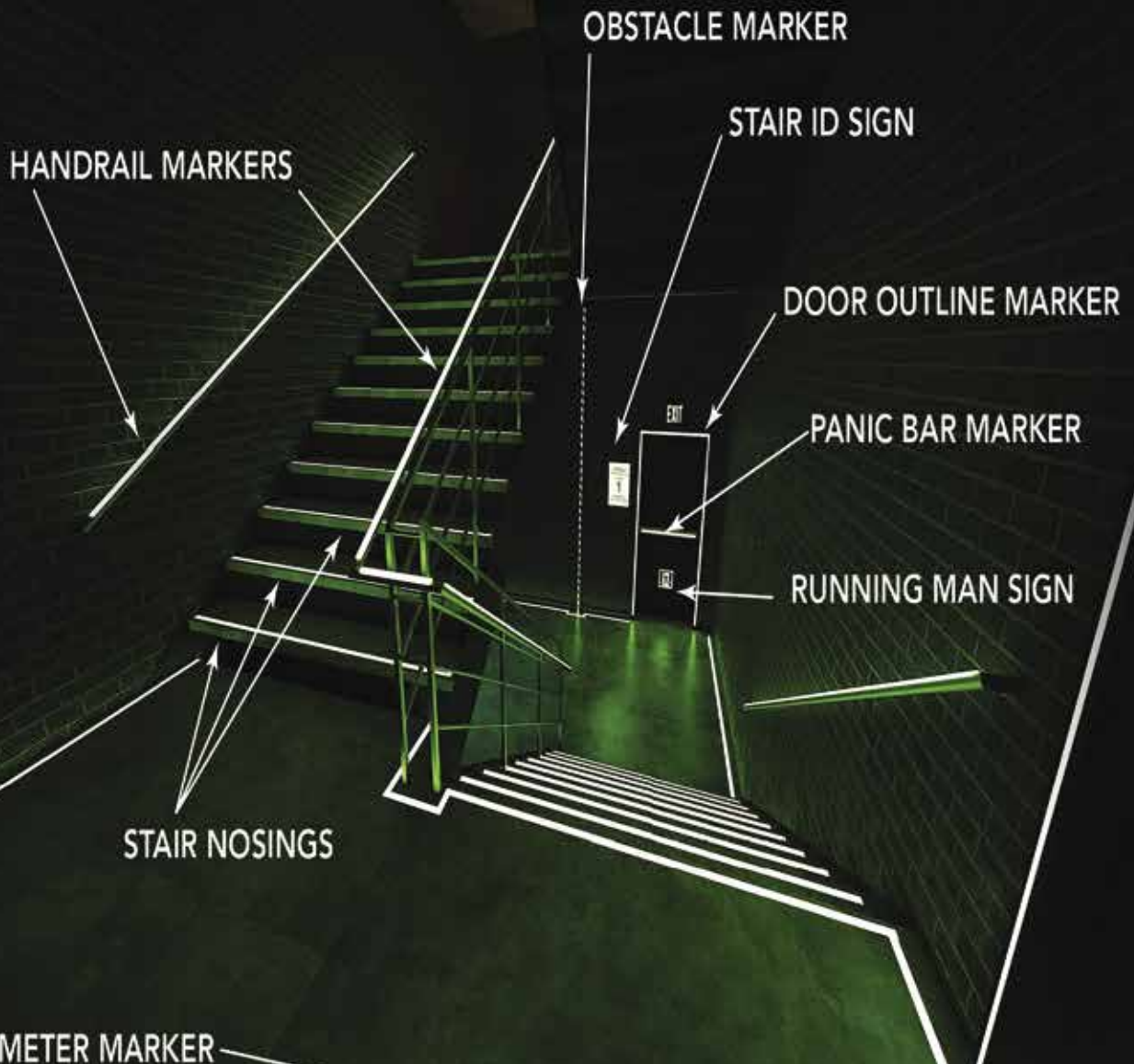
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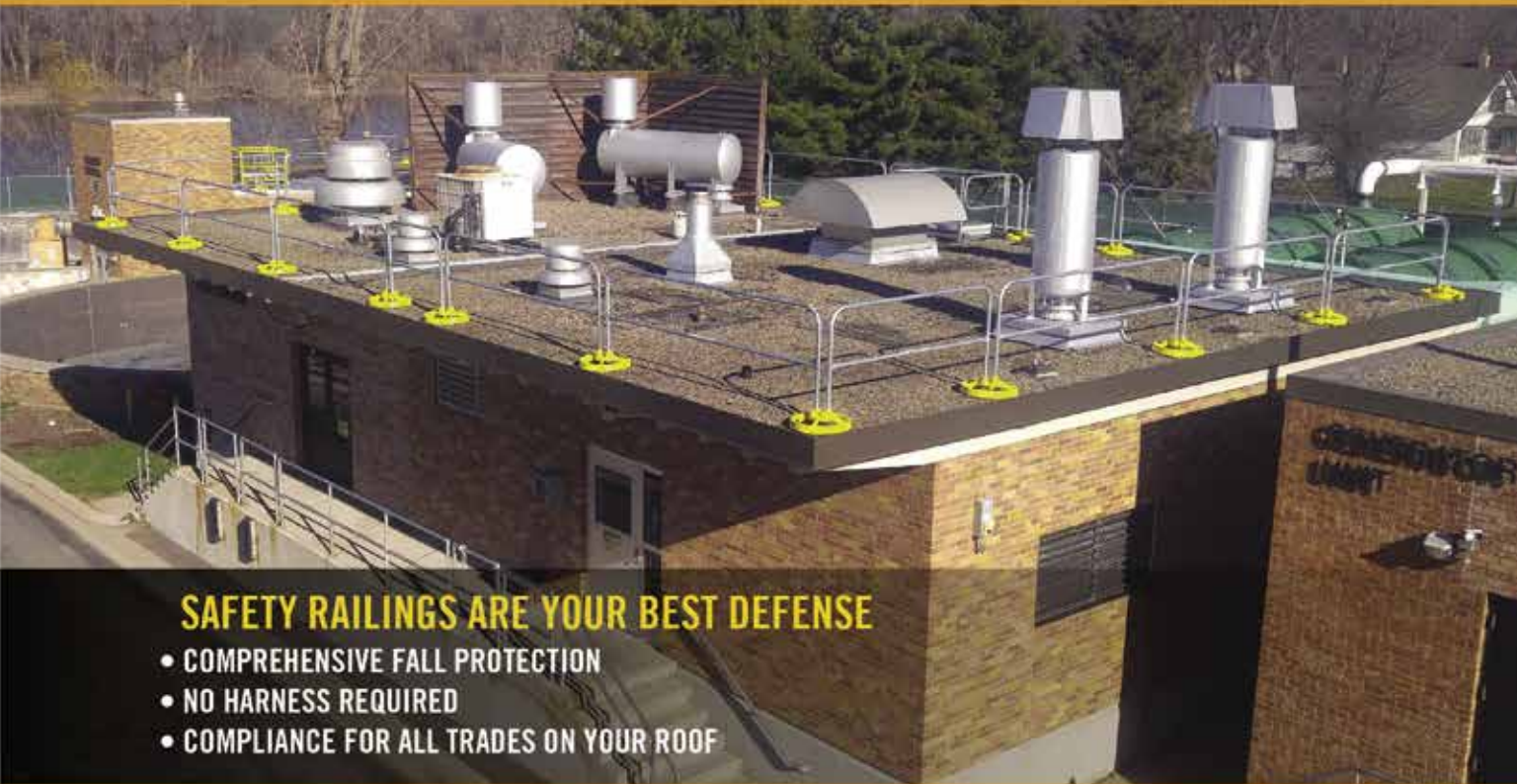


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
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