

## Public Toilet Safety Checks

**Summary** This Guideline provides a standard approach to monitoring public toilets in NSW Health facilities for the safety of people who may be unwell and need clinical assistance.

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**Distributed to** Public Health System

**Audience** all staff

## PUBLIC TOILET SAFETY CHECKS

### PURPOSE

This Guideline provides a standard approach to monitoring public toilets in NSW Health facilities for the safety of people who may be unwell and need clinical assistance.

### KEY PRINCIPLES

The Guideline recommends measures to be taken with regard to:

- Safety checks in public toilets in health facilities
- Signage to be displayed in public toilets in health facilities
- Emergency call buttons

Districts and Networks should develop formal procedures and protocols to support compliance with this Guideline.

### USE OF THE GUIDELINE

The Guideline applies to every public hospital in NSW and facilities that are operated under a Public Private Partnership. In addition the Guideline relates to all health services outside of hospitals including Community Health Centres and Dental Health Clinics.

### REVISION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Amendment notes
June-2019 (GL2019_005)	Deputy Secretary Patient Experience and System Performance	Initial document

### ATTACHMENTS

1. Guideline Public Toilet Safety Checks

## Public Toilet Safety Check



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**Issue date:** June-2019

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## CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1	About this document .....	1
1.2	Key definitions.....	1
<b>2</b>	<b>SAFETY CHECKS IN PUBLIC TOILETS</b> .....	<b>1</b>
2.1	Cleaning staff checking toilets during routine cleaning .....	1
2.2	Clinical staff checking toilets.....	2
2.3	Staff checking public toilets in the evening and night .....	2
2.4	Close down Safety Checks.....	2
2.5	Escalation procedure .....	2
<b>3</b>	<b>SIGNAGE</b> .....	<b>3</b>
3.1	Concerns reported by persons other than hospital staff .....	3
<b>4</b>	<b>EMERGENCY CALL BUTTONS</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>ATTACHMENTS</b> .....	<b>4</b>
6.1	Signage – what to expect .....	5
6.2	Signage – what to do .....	6
6.3	Implementation checklist .....	7
6.4	Audit form.....	8

## 1 BACKGROUND

### 1.1 About this document

This guideline provides a standard approach to monitoring public toilets in NSW Health facilities for the safety of people who may be unwell and need assistance.

The guideline applies to every public hospital in NSW and facilities that are operated under a public private partnership. In addition, the guideline relates to all health services outside of hospitals including community health centres and dental health clinics.

Districts and networks are encouraged to develop formal procedures and protocols to support compliance with the guideline.

### 1.2 Key definitions

Public areas in NSW public hospitals and health facilities include: foyers, waiting areas of emergency departments, outpatient clinics, patient admission areas and public waiting areas attached to specific hospital units such as intensive care units. Corridors and public access ways throughout the hospital are also included in this definition.

The guideline applies to toilets that are accessible to the public. They do not refer to toilets within inpatient wards or other clinical areas.

## 2 SAFETY CHECKS IN PUBLIC TOILETS

### 2.1 Cleaning staff checking toilets during routine cleaning

Every facility should have a routine, documented cleaning schedule for public toilets which is in line with the NSW Health Environmental Cleaning Policy (PD2012\_61). Routine cleaning checks also provide an opportunity for safety checks. Safety checks should take place in line with the cleaning schedule frequency outlined in the Environmental Cleaning Standard Operating Procedures.<sup>1</sup> Compliance is to be documented and monitored by cleaning staff or Patient Services Assistants supervisors.

Supervisors may inspect toilets at scheduled or unscheduled times and conduct safety checks.

Cleaning staff will announce that they are entering a toilet block by knocking on the door and verbally announce that they are about to commence inspection and cleaning.

If a toilet stall is occupied, the cleaner will knock on the door to announce that they are there to clean the toilet. If no verbal response is received to the initial attempt, staff are to knock on the door again.

If no verbal response is received, on the second attempt the cleaner will report the situation to clinical staff for immediate review and action (see Section 2.5). The cleaner should identify the toilet location and any other relevant detail

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<sup>1</sup> Clinical Excellence Commission, *Environmental Cleaning Standard Operating Procedures*, retrieved from <http://cec.health.nsw.gov.au/patient-safety-programs/assurance-governance/healthcare-associated-infections/environment-cleaning>

Induction training for cleaners should include instructions on the processes for conducting safety checks and the subsequent procedures to be followed if there is no response from the occupant in a toilet.

### **2.2 Clinical staff checking toilets**

The importance of safety checks in public toilets should be emphasised as part of induction training for clinical and other staff working in areas accessed by the public. Induction training would include procedures to be followed when no response is received from the occupant in a toilet during a routine safety check.

### **2.3 Staff checking public toilets in the evening and night**

Security or other nominated staff should conduct and record checks on public toilets during routine patrols in the evening and night when the facility is closed to the public, escalating to clinical staff (see Section 2.5) or management.

The security manager or other nominated staff should inspect the checklists on a monthly basis in line with other regular auditing processes such as checking of call bells.

The importance of carrying out safety checks in public toilets should be emphasised as part of induction training for security or other nominated staff. Induction training would include instructions on how to conduct safety checks and the procedures to be followed when no response is received from a person in a toilet.

### **2.4 Close down Safety Checks**

In clinics, community centres and other facilities that are not open 24 hours a day 7 days a week, routine lock up procedures are to be clearly documented which include steps to check toilets. Safety checks should be carried out by security staff, administration staff or clinical staff depending on the protocol of the facility.

Where possible, it is recommended that public toilets are locked after hours when the adjacent clinical areas is closed, after a safety check has occurred.

### **2.5 Escalation procedure**

Each district and network will develop an escalation procedure to be followed by staff to alert clinical staff to a situation where there is no verbal response to a safety check in a toilet or where the response indicates a concern.

When a concern is identified, the toilet area should be immediately closed to the public.

On receiving a report of a concern for a person in a public toilet, clinical staff will contact security or appropriate staff member to gain access to the toilet cubicle. Ideally, clinical staff are present when the toilet cubicle is opened to render clinical assistance and/or escalation if required.

### 3 SIGNAGE

Notices should be displayed in toilets to explain that cleaners will be entering the toilets and that safety checks will take place. Attachment 6.1 is an example of such a notice.

Notices are to be displayed prominently, if possible on the back of toilet doors.

Districts and networks are to be encouraged to have notices translated into at least the top three languages most commonly spoken by the local community.

Notices on what should be done if a member of the public is concerned about a situation should also be displayed. Attachment 6.2 is an example of such a notice.

#### 3.1 Concerns reported by persons other than hospital staff

Signage should encourage reporting from staff and the general public, together with details of how to report a concern.

To avoid unnecessary reporting, toilets that are closed for repairs and maintenance should be clearly marked as such.

### 4 EMERGENCY CALL BUTTONS

The Australasian Health Facility Guidelines do not recommend emergency call buttons in hospital public toilets.

However, it is encouraged that emergency call buttons are considered in public toilets in emergency department waiting areas as they are used by patients awaiting care possibly prior to assessment and treatment.

Where call buttons are installed there needs to be a formal protocol that outlines the required response from staff.

Emergency call buttons should not replace safety checks described in Section 2.

### 5 IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Three monthly audits of compliance with the requirements of the guideline should be undertaken as part of facility management processes. Attachment 6.3 is an example of an implementation checklist for this guideline and Attachment 6.4 is an example of an audit form.

## **6 ATTACHMENTS**

- 6.1 Signage – what to expect
- 6.2 Signage – what to do
- 6.3 Example implementation checklist
- 6.4 Example audit checklist



6.1 Signage – what to expect

This toilet is cleaned throughout the day.

Cleaning staff will knock and announce  
their presence.

**- Please respond -**

If you do not respond, a safety check by  
clinical staff will follow.

6.2 Signage – what to do

If you notice that a toilet door indicates “occupied” over a long period of time:

- knock and inquire if the occupant needs assistance

If you do not receive a response:

- notify the clinical staff in charge immediately

**This could potentially be an emergency**

### 6.3 Implementation checklist

<b>District/Facility:</b>			
<b>Assessed by:</b>		<b>Date of Assessment:</b>	
<b>IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>Not commenced</b>	<b>Partial compliance</b>	<b>Full compliance</b>
1. Procedures for safety checks on toilets included in orientation for cleaning, security and clinical staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Notes/Actions:</u>			
2. Procedures for safety checks on toilets formalised, including an escalation procedure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Notes/Actions:</u>			
3. Toilet cleaning timing documentation also includes reference to security checks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Notes/Actions:</u>			
4. Procedures for safety checks on toilets included in orientation for cleaning, security and clinical staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Notes/Actions:</u>			
5. Communication and training on new guideline, and how to conduct safety checks for existing cleaning, security and clinical staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Notes/Actions:</u>			
6. Lock up procedures for community centres and other facilities not open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week are updated to include toilet checks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Notes/Actions:</u>			
7. Signage displayed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Notes/Actions:</u>			

### 6.4 Audit form

<b>District/Facility:</b>			
<b>Assessed by:</b>		<b>Date of Assessment:</b>	
<b>IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>Not commenced</b>	<b>Partial compliance</b>	<b>Full compliance</b>
1. Signage in place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>Notes/Actions:</u>		
2. Escalation process in the toilet check procedure still relevant and achievable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>Notes/Actions:</u>		
3. All relevant staff have completed training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>Notes/Actions:</u>		
4. Documentation from toilet cleaning checks confirm security checks have been conducted with recommended frequency for the specific area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>Notes/Actions:</u>		