

NASCO SAFETY BULLETIN



NATIONAL AQUATIC SAFETY COMPANY

Established in 1974

Title: **Where The Germs Are!**

Number: 20040628a

Keywords: germs, workstations, picnic tables, restrooms

Date: 10/31/2004

Dr. Charles Gerba, a University of Arizona microbiologist, and co-author of the book *Quantitative Microbial Risk Assessment* (Wiley, 1999) spends much of his time testing for bacterial contamination. NASCO has looked at several of his articles and is presenting the following information to help you keep your attractions clean and healthy.

- Most people think that toilet seats are off-the-chart germ wise -- but picnic tables actually have more germs, plus traces of bodily fluids including urine, mucus and saliva.
- "There are actually 200 times more fecal bacteria on the average cutting board ...than (on) the toilet seat," Gerba reported.
- At work, phone receivers harbor more germs than any surface -- even more than the toilet seats. Desktops, keyboards, and elevator buttons are also on the workplace top germ-covered list.
- In public places, ATM machines, playground equipment, escalator handrails, shopping cart handles, picnic tables, and Port-A-Potties are top germ carriers.
- Wipe down ...with a cleanser containing chlorine bleach. This will knock out 99.9 percent of fecal organisms. (Note: Some of Dr. Gerba's research was financed by Clorox)

What This Means To The Recreation Industry:

Most amusement parks and aquatics facilities know about keeping their restrooms and kitchen areas clean, but don't think that places such as picnic tables, hand rails, ATM machines, lockers, playground equipment, telephones, computer keyboards etc. could have hundreds of times as many fecal bacteria as a toilet seat. According to Dr. Gerba, wiping down those surfaces with a bleach solution is an effective remedy for bacterial contamination.

NOTE: The sources of the information are

<http://www.security-forums.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=12600>,
<http://my.webmd.com/content/article/89/100227.htm?lastselectedguid={5FE84E90-BC77-4056-A91C-9531713CA348}><http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2000/03/01/48hours/main166892.shtml>;
<http://www.straightdope.com/classics/a990416.html>