

# Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOPs) Writing Guidance

This SSOP writing guidance is specifically formatted to guide the reader through various topic sections using heading prompts.

## Responsible Employees

- Who is responsible for implementing, revising, and maintaining the SSOP Document?
- Who is responsible for the daily monitoring, recording, performing/assigning/documenting corrective actions, etc. of the pre-operation and operational SSOP procedures?
- SSOP signing, dating and version documenting at implementation and upon any modifications. Recordkeeping (on-site for 1 year, available within 24 hours upon request of USDA, etc.) can also be mentioned here.

## Pre-Operational Sanitation

**General Procedures, requirements, and corrective actions for food contact (Direct) surface sanitation. Include:**

Cleaning frequency (e.g. as needed or before each production day, whichever is greater).

1. If necessary, define pre-operational cleaning/inspection vs. mid-shift cleanings and inspections.
2. Step-by-step cleaning process requirements (cover/store product, equipment disassembly, "dry pick-up", observe and report any missing, broken, or damaged parts, pieces or equipment, rinse, soap scrub, rinse, sanitize--acceptable use ranges, final inspection before use, etc.)
3. Define any color-code system used for example:
  - a) Cleaning brushes: white = food contact surfaces only; red = non-food contact surfaces only; black = drains only, etc.
  - b) 5-gallon pails: green = sanitizer; yellow = detergent; red = inedible; black = trash (note: pails containing chemicals must still display a manufacturer's chemical identification tag).
  - c) Squeegees: red = non-food contact; white = food contact

**Pro tip:** color-coding systems reduce the observational & maintenance needs of relabeling containers over time.

**General Procedures, requirements, and corrective actions for non-food contact (Indirect) surface sanitation.**

Indirect and non-food contact areas can be a significant source of microbial contaminants if not properly maintained and must be addressed as a critical component of your SSOPs.

Address the process and frequency of cleaning floors, walls, ceilings (fixtures) in the following areas:

1. Processing area floors, walls and overheads (e.g. cooling units and drop cords)
2. Cooler/freezer floors, walls and ceilings (include details on protecting any product that is present during cleaning)
3. Pest Control measures to prevent pests, inspections, findings and action taken.

## Monitoring, and Documenting Sanitation of Food Contact and Non-food Contact Surfaces.

This section will address:

1. Who is responsible for inspecting, verifying, and documenting the effectiveness of the cleaning and sanitizing of contact surfaces?
2. How the inspection is performed (e.g. everything is inspected, randomized piece inspection, based on odor, visual, and touch), as well as the frequency at which inspections are performed must also be detailed.
3. What log(s) the findings are recorded as well as how corrective actions and trends are managed will also be described in this section. Any environmental testing completed must also be mentioned or can be detailed in this section if a separate "Environmental Monitoring" SOP does not exist.

## Operational Sanitation

Whereas the Good Manufacturing Practices provide a fairly generic view of plant-wide hygiene and maintenance requirements, the plant will detail more customized operational hygiene processes and requirements in this section. As plants generate their specific operational SSOPs, they may realize that categorizing them into department-specific sections may make the most sense. Each section must cover details regarding the sanitation procedures and requirements of the department, including start-up/change-over procedures for packaging materials, labels, spices, monitoring and record-keeping. Suggested departmental categories could include:

1. General Operational Sanitation: similar to GMPS, but with more plant-specific details included
2. Slaughter Operational Sanitation: slaughter floors are a unique part of processing that require their own specified operational sanitation requirements (in addition to Sanitary Dressing SOP), such as sterilizer use, operating temperature requirements, etc.

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- a). Stunning Equipment (this may also be located as a separate SOP within a Robust Systematic Approach to Animal Welfare program)
3. Raw Processing (non-slaughter): preventing cross-contamination of species, tested product, allergens, etc. How to manage condensation, pallets, garments, production tools, etc.  
**Pro tip:** facilities that do not frequently ship out whole carcasses, sides or quarters may want to specify that they do not stamp individual carcasses with the Mark of inspection. verbiage, such as the following can be utilized within ssops:  
*"All carcasses that are further processed within Est. xxxxx will not be individually stamped with the Mark of Inspection. Inspection personnel must be notified of any carcasses that will leave the facility without further processing so they can be properly marked prior to leaving the chill cooler. Any eligible carcass that enters the sales cooler without the mark of inspection must be further processed within Est. xxxxx."*
4. Ready-to-Eat: Due to the heightened risk of microbial contamination in this food category, there are extra measures that are expected within RTE areas to prevent cross-contamination within the department and from other departments. The section will include those additional risk mitigation steps.  
**Pro tip:** Include the following statement in your SSOPs to ensure you have covered all other regulatory requirements: *"The daily pre-op and operational sanitation check verifies the GMPs and SSOPs. All other sanitation issues not specifically listed in the SSOP must be cleaned and maintained per 9CFR 416.1 -416.5."*

## Cleaning Frequencies

This section is important to set & communicate requirements relative to a general plant cleaning schedules. For example:

1. Daily (all processing equipment, production area floors, waste containers, etc.)
2. Weekly (floors behind racking, production spice room, trollies, smokehouses, etc.)
3. Monthly (cooling units, hanging cords, gowning area walls)
4. Quarterly (main hallway, equipment overflow areas, dry storage area)
5. Semi-annually (freezer and cooler cooling units)
6. Yearly (production-related filters)

## Waste Removal

Solid (e.g. trash and dry pick-up inedible) & liquid waste (e.g. grease traps, blood) removal processes and requirements are often overlooked within plants both during and after operations. Plant requirements of who, how and frequency must be covered for clarity for all. This may be as simple as all production employees are expected to assist in the removal of full receptacles. In addition, production clothing changeout requirements after handling waste must be addressed.

## Signature and Date

SSOPs must contain the signature and date of the party responsible for generating/modifying the most current SSOP document.