



E-BOOK

# HYGIENE ZONES

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Dive deeper into hygiene zones, where  
hygiene excellence begins at your facility

# Introduction

Explore hygiene zones, their design and how the people, place and product manufactured at your facility can impact these areas. In this eBook we'll review what a hygiene zone is, the five steps of core hygiene zones and considerations for your hygiene zone processes.

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SECTION **1** **What is a  
Hygiene Zone?**

A hygiene zone is created within the facility based on the risk of contamination to a product. It's designed to prevent pathogens from entering a facility or cross-contamination between production areas. There are three different types of hygiene zones:



## Core Hygiene Zone

This is the main hygiene zone at any facility where the majority of the staff are entering before going to the production area. This is the largest hygiene zone that the core of employees will pass through.



Watch this video to see our vision for hygiene zone excellence in food processing!

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## Supplementary Hygiene Zone

A supplementary hygiene zone is a zone that provides additional hygiene steps for workers in certain production areas. It may be within a core hygiene zone to provide additional hygiene steps specific to a staff member's main function. For example a production team member may need a supplementary hygiene zone that is interwoven amongst the normal core hygiene zone process for donning thermals because they work in a cold storage environment most of the day.

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## Satellite Hygiene Zone

A satellite hygiene zone is a zone that is in addition to the main hygiene zone. It may be placed in alternative entryways for visitors or between production areas for QA/QC or maintenance staff who travel between different manufacturing zones throughout the day.







SECTION 2 Hygiene  
Zone Design  
Considerations

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At Meritech we partner with our customers to make the world a healthier, safer place by reducing the spread of pathogens at their facility. One of the ways we do this is through [hygiene zone design consultations](#). Whether virtually or on-site, each visit to a facility is focused around three areas: the people, the place and the product, or as we like to call them, the 3 P's.



**People**



**Place**



**Product**

 [Learn more about the 3P's in our blog](#)

## People

When we first discuss hygiene zone design with leaders at an organization we ask them how many people are at the facility and what these individuals are doing on a daily basis. It is important to understand what people are routinely doing and interacting with throughout the day as well as how they move within a facility in order to determine where hygiene zones should be located, what needs to be placed in them, and how they should be designed to prevent circumvention.

Likewise, it's key to note the quantity of individuals going through a core hygiene zone at any given time. By knowing this, it's easier to determine if a **smaller, compact hygiene system** is better or if a **high-throughput hygiene station** is needed to help keep everyone flowing through the hygiene zone quickly. It's also important to keep in mind if the facility's employee population may grow in the future to ensure that these recommendations are sustainable during the growth of the organization. By knowing the quantity of individuals, you can also determine if additional barriers or signage is needed to help guide large groups of production team members through the zone, so crucial hygiene steps are not circumvented.

Not only is it important to understand how an organization's employees ensure hygiene best practices but also how visitors like third party contractors and auditors enter the facility and go through the hygiene zone. Is a separate hygiene zone needed near a visitor's entrance? Is it clear to visitors what steps are necessary? If a plant shoe is required, is there a space for them to easily change into this footwear and store their street shoes? By understanding how people visiting and working at a facility interact with hygiene areas you can design a hygiene zone that reduces cross-contamination and pathogen spread while ensuring staff and visitors can move through the necessary steps quickly and easily.

 [Learn more about hygiene zone design consultations](#)

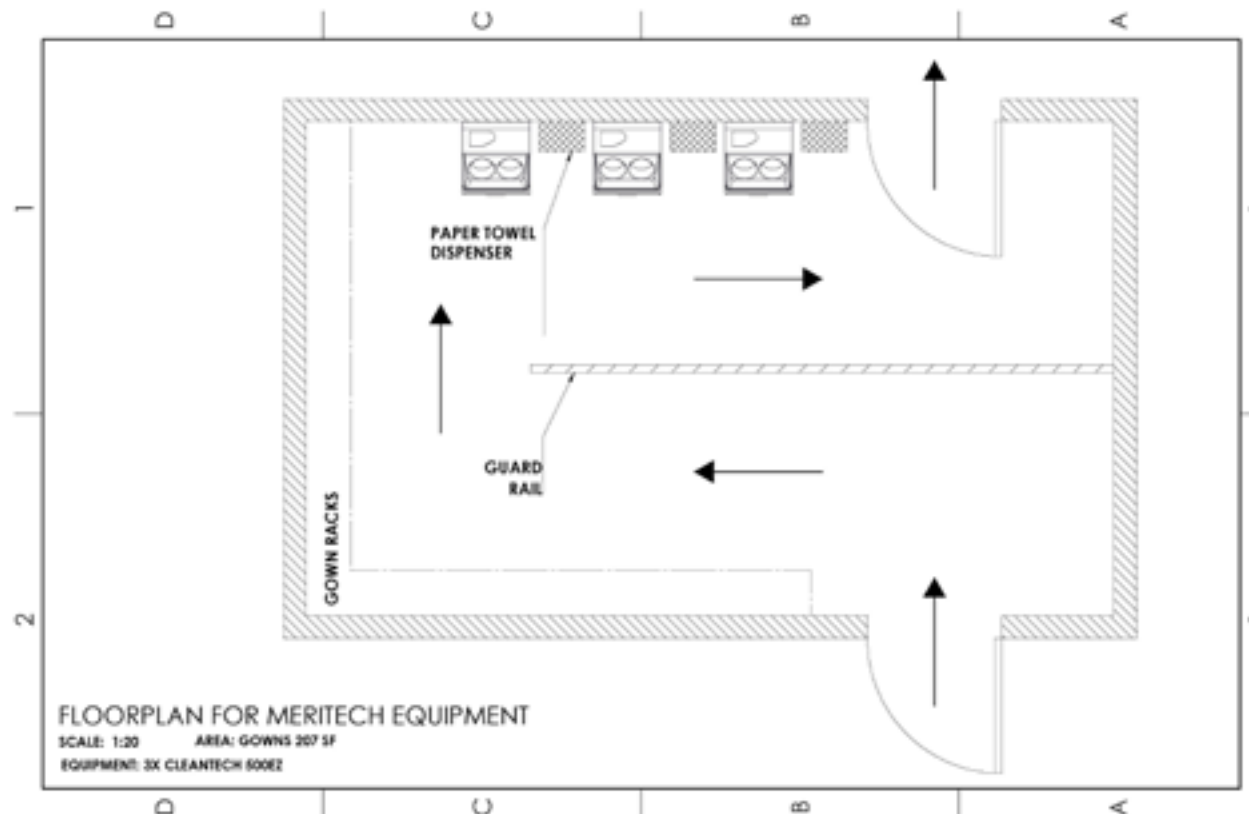




# Place

When considering hygiene zone design, it's key to take a close look at the facility and the hygiene zone(s), or the “place.” Look at all the different areas at the facility including: the entrance, to the locker rooms, restrooms, break rooms, production areas, packing and shipping, as well as QA and QC areas. By understanding the facility layout and how people move through the facility, you can conduct a more accurate risk analysis of each area. If necessary, place satellite hygiene zones in areas where outside contaminants can enter production areas or cross-contamination between allergen and ready-to-eat areas may occur.

Keep in mind that different areas of the facility may require different hygiene equipment. For instance if you're dealing with an area where lots of machinery, like forklifts, are used, a sanitation method that works for both wheeled and foot traffic should be considered. By taking a close look at how the facility is designed and how people and equipment are moving throughout those areas, you can determine if additional satellite hygiene zones or sanitation methods are needed.



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## Product

One of the first things to consider for hygiene zone design is the commercial goods which are being sold or manufactured. Production areas for wet goods like dairy can utilize a footwear hygiene method such as a **boot scrubber** or **boot dip pan**. Wet production environments also have increased slip hazards, so it's important to consider what type of footwear is used and find a sanitation method that is suitable to use with the facility's chosen footwear.

A dry production environment for baked goods or medical cleanroom environments may not support a sanitation method that uses more moisture. Therefore a shoe cover or a **low-moisture sanitation method** for footwear may need to be considered. Ready-to-eat areas may need an additional step after gloving to **sanitize the gloves and footwear of employees**. Overall, the type of product being produced has a direct impact on the type of equipment used for the design of any hygiene zone.

 [Learn more about hygiene zone design consultations](#)





SECTION 3 Core Hygiene  
Zone Steps



There are 5 main steps that individuals should take when going through the core hygiene zone:

## Personal Protective Equipment

Donning Frocks  
& Smocks



Handwashing

Footwear Donning  
& Sanitation



Hand Drying



## 1. Footwear Donning & Sanitation

Team members should don plant shoes or boots, thoroughly sanitize their footwear and don shoe covers if necessary

## 2. Donning Frocks or Smocks

Team members should don their frock, smock and sleeve covers making sure all sleeves are pulled down to the wrist and all buttons are buttoned.

## 3. Personal Protective Equipment

Team members should don PPE in the correct order: hearing protection, beard net, mask (if applicable), hair net, and eye protection.

## 4. Handwashing

Either a full 20 second manual hand wash or a 12 second hand wash using an automated handwashing station

## 5. Hand Drying

Hands should be thoroughly dried using paper towel or an air dryer before gloving or entering a production area

Download these posters to guide your team →  
through these steps in the hygiene zone





SECTION **4** Hygiene  
Zone Process  
Considerations



The importance of hygiene has been thrust to the forefront of organizational processes and procedures in light of the recent pandemic. The immediate knowledge of the level of disruption and danger a pandemic poses, all businesses need to adopt more stringent hygiene practices in their hygiene zones. While COVID-19 has made hygiene more important, the threat of pathogens has always existed and illness from poor hygiene zone practices has always been a life or death matter. As such, it's important for food processing leaders to build on the added hygiene practices they've implemented during this time and ensure processes further protect their consumers moving forward. With this in mind, here are some process considerations for your hygiene zone:

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## Make More Space

Look at the facility and the hygiene zone and create processes that allow for social distancing. It's important to create the gap by blocking out center handwashing stations or air dryers to do so. Another way to create more space is to stagger shifts and create groups within each shift with assigned times to enter the hygiene zones - e.g. shift one group A goes through the zone from 7:00am - 7:15; shift one group B from 7:15am - 7:30, and so forth.

## Allowing More Time

Not only is it important to create more space in the hygiene zone, it is equally important to give production team members additional time to move through the area and perform each process correctly. It's important that the quality of hygiene processes are not diminished because team members are feeling rushed through the handwashing, footwear sanitizing or other areas of the hygiene zone.



## Hygiene Zone Coaching Guide

Continued education and reinforcement not only helps maintain a safer working environment but also helps ensure food safety. This checklist is designed to provide talking points to bring up with your team about following proper hygiene zone procedures.

### Reference Data Points Around You:

- Make sure that you're following proper steps - refer to posters and training materials
- Maintain awareness in the hygiene zone to ensure quality hygiene events

### Ensure Proper Hygiene Events:

- Make sure you take the appropriate amount of time for each of the hygiene steps
- Be mindful of cross-contamination touch points that can lead to pathogen spread
- If something is empty, alert the team leader that the hygiene zone needs attention

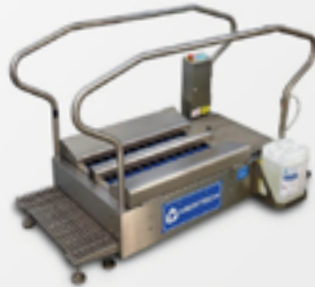
### Be Mindful of Others:

- Don't waste time in the hygiene zone, get through in a timely manner so everyone can have a proper hygiene event
- Be careful about social distancing, follow cues throughout the hygiene zone

It's also important to talk about and reinforce proper hygiene steps in each of the hygiene zone areas including:

### Footwear Sanitation:

- If using a boot dip or low-moisture sanitizing pan, make sure that you fully step into it
- Be mindful of slipping or tripping hazards when exiting boot dip pans or boot scrubbers
- Make sure shoes are securely tied before entering a boot scrubber or footwear sanitation pan



## Monitor and Guide Team Members

Hygiene practices should always be monitored to ensure their effectiveness. Humans are prone to variability, and some employees will take short cuts, either intentionally or unintentionally during the 5 core steps. Human behavior is among the top causes of pathogen spread, so for the safety of your consumers and employees it's key to overcome the variability of human behavior. One of the ways to start doing this is by using visual cues, like posters. Visual cues are tremendously helpful to inform visitors and remind team members of the proper procedures to follow in each area of the hygiene zone as well as the correct order of the 5 core hygiene zone steps.

## Use Automation Where Possible

Using **automatic handwashing stations** or **automated footwear sanitizing methods**, you can improve the effectiveness of hygiene processes by taking human behavior out of the equation entirely and ensure that employees always have clean hands and footwear prior to entering production areas.

## Continually Coach and Retrain

Not only is it important to create more space in the hygiene zone, it is equally important to give production team members additional time to move through the area and perform each process correctly. It's important that the quality of hygiene processes are not diminished because team members are feeling rushed through the handwashing, footwear sanitizing or other areas of the hygiene zone.

← Download the hygiene zone coaching guide seen here with points to bring up during team huddles!

## Diligently Maintain the Hygiene Zone

It's not only important to have processes in place for how team members navigate the hygiene zone but also how this area is maintained. Having the right PPE and hygiene solutions in stock is more important than ever so it's key to assign someone for hygiene zone maintenance for each shift. This hygiene zone leader is responsible for the upkeep of the hygiene zone and ensures that it is clean and stocked at the:

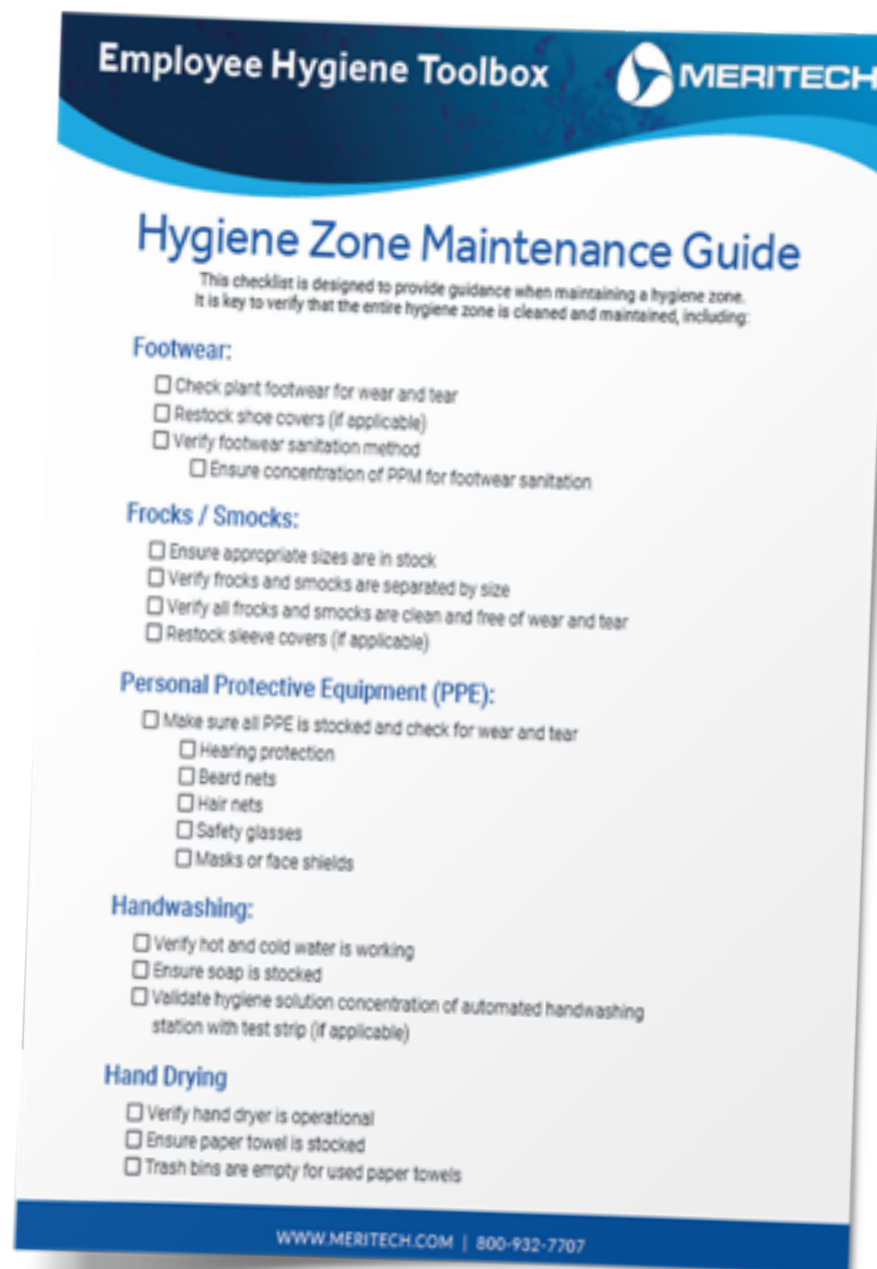
- Start of their shift
- 1st break
- Lunch
- 2nd break

If something is out of stock, it is up to this leader to order the necessary supplies or alert the individual responsible for procuring them.

[Download the hygiene zone maintenance checklist seen here](#) →  
to help your hygiene zone leader check the hygiene zone

## Create a Hygiene Culture

Having a hygiene zone leader consistently check and maintain the hygiene zone is critical, but it's equally important to create a culture of hygiene excellence among your team. In this environment employees should be empowered to uphold themselves and others to hygiene best practices and be responsible for ensuring the cleanliness and supply availability in a hygiene zone. Overall, each individual should feel like they are a key part in upholding consumer safety and encouraged to follow proper procedures during each of the 5 hygiene zone steps, even when no one is watching.





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## Conclusion

Hygiene zones are the first line of defense against pathogens and cross-contamination within your facility. Their design should take into account the people, place, product and the core five hygiene zone steps. With so many nuances to consider for core, satellite and supplementary hygiene zone designs it may be beneficial to have an expert in hygiene help. At Meritech, we don't just sell **automated hygiene equipment**, we truly partner with each of our customers to ensure that their hygiene zones suit their organization's needs. Use the tools in this module to help your team get started designing and implementing hygiene zone best practices today and reach out to our team to inquire about our **hygiene zone design consultation** services.





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