

A Day in the Life of a Cleaner

So far you have read a lot information regarding the various types of cleaners. However, the best way to put this in context is to put it all together in an example of a typical day for a cleaner. After reading this example you will have a better idea of how challenging but rewarding being a professional cleaner is.

Here is a day in the life of a fictional cleaner named Nicola, who works as a cleaning service assistant at a hospital. **6:00:** Nicola wakes up early. She tidies up her own home and prepares for her working day, which begins at the hospital at 7:00. **7:00:** Nicola arrives at the hospital and begins working with her unit. She starts by cleaning the outer ward areas, including the visitors' room, the staff room and the nurses' station that are all in her designated area. They are relatively easy and often require just a general tidy up. **8:00:** It is time to begin the dirtier work. Nicola and her team begin to work through all the bathrooms on the ward. She cleans all the public toilets and additional shower and bathroom areas. These jobs are done every day. **9:00:** Nicola prepares to clean the actual ward. This requires her to work with her team and with the doctors and nurses, to follow them around the ward. This way they avoid trying to clean rooms that the doctors and patients occupy. The rooms are cleaned thoroughly. Because it is a hospital it is imperative that nothing is overlooked. The furniture is moved, the floors are mopped and the beds are wiped down. Every surface must be clean and sterile, to be safe for patients. Because most of the rooms are occupied, the cleaners must work around the patients. To keep patients at ease, the cleaners interact with them by saying "good morning" and chatting quietly while they work, if the patient is receptive. If they need to move the patient or any of the patient's belongings, they explain what they are doing to make sure that the patient is comfortable. Nicola likes to spend a few minutes chatting with the patient after she finishes, especially elderly patients who do not have many visitors. This is Nicola's favourite part of her job because she enjoys being social. The patients will often tell her what a good job she is doing which makes her feel proud of her work. **11:30:** Barring any major disasters, Nicola uses this opportunity to take her lunch. By this point she is tired. She gets cleaned up and then spends an hour in the staff canteen eating her lunch and chatting with the staff. **12:30:** Because Nicola is experienced she is often on call in cases of emergency. On this particular day a rare emergency occurs. An infection has broken out in one of the wards and all the patients are moved to another ward. Nicola must spend the rest of the day disinfecting the ward with her team. The whole ward has to pass a very high standard of cleanliness before it can be opened again. **14:30:** Nicola takes a break from the cleaning to meet with the infection control team. Because the outbreak was unexpected the systems need to be reviewed to ensure cleanliness standards are up to scratch. **15:30:** Nicola meets with her supervisor to check the recently cleaned area. Everything is scrutinised and her supervisor finds errors in the work. Nicola and the rest of her team then go back to correct these and ensure nothing further is missed. **16:30:** Because of the emergency Nicola has worked past her scheduled finish time. Although the later shifts could have taken over for her, it was better that Nicola finished the job for continuity of care. You cannot be too careful in hospitals. Also, Nicola is assured that she will not have an even bigger mess in store for her tomorrow. **17:00:** Nicola is almost ready to go home, but she has to make preparations for a training session scheduled two days from now. She needs to assemble her papers and her presentation and make sure that the email reminder has been sent to all relevant staff. **17:30:** Finally, Nicola is in the car park and on her way home. She had to stay late today, but sometimes this is necessary to keep the patients and community safe. Nicola is not alone. The infection control team and some of the ward nurses also stayed late to help transition the patients from the infected ward to the clean ward.

Nicola's life involves a lot of manual labour and some very long hours. Nicola cannot easily say that she has to leave when patients' lives are in danger, but most cleaners are not put in that position. However, it is important to note that Nicola stayed to ensure the job was finished. This is the mark of a good cleaner and a true professional. This is an important lesson to note regardless of whether you are employed or self-employed. It is inappropriate to

leave a cleaning job unfinished, and in commercial and hospital settings is dangerous to do so. Remember that your flexible hours are flexible in good ways and bad. If something crops up or a job is bigger than expected then you will spend more time than you previously allotted, working to complete it.