Frequently Asked Questions about ATP Cleaning Verification and Tracking Systems

1. What is ATP and why do we measure it? **Answer:** ATP is short for adenosine triphosphate, a chemical that is produced in every living cell. So its presence on a surface tells us that there is something on that surface that is, or was recently, alive. In a health care setting, that something is usually going to be the remnants of blood or other bodily fluids, skin cells, food and microbial organisms. This organic material can be the reservoir for environmental pathogens. An ATP test is, therefore, considered an indicator test for the possible presence of these pathogens.

2. Does an ATP system tell us we’ve removed C. diff or MRSA? **Answer:** No. As discussed in question one, ATP is an indicator of the potential for environmental pathogens. It is not specific to any one organism.

3. How can the use of an ATP system help us to reduce our HAI incidence? **Answer:** It is important to remember that simply adopting the use of an ATP system, or any other cleaning monitoring program, does not in itself guaranty anything. While there is usually some cleaning performance improvements gained from staff knowing they’re being monitored, the real improvements come from the information learned from the use of the system. You have to look at what’s working and what’s not working for your cleaning products, processes and staff and make the appropriate adjustments. You may have to try some new things to learn what combination of these items removes the organic material most effectively. But once you do, the logic works like this: the better we clean, the more organic material that is removed, the less likelihood there is for environmental pathogens to remain on a surface. That’s how you can make an impact on the environmentally transferred HAI’s in your facility. Studies have shown that C. diff, MRSA, Vancomycin-resistant enterocci (VRE) and other pathogens are transferred through touch and can remain viable on surfaces for months.

4. Can we use an ATP system at our hospital to test for hand cleanliness? **Answer:** Not recommended. **Why not?** Your skin is composed of cells that have ATP. While in theory it might be possible to establish a clean baseline for an individual, the baseline would likely vary between individuals so meaningful comparisons would not be valid. The amount of ATP on your hands is also likely to be effected by other factors like dryness and the amount of time since last washing (whether they’re “dirty” or not). Finally, “clean” hands will typically still contain a lot of ATP with resulting very high RLU scores.
An awful lot of potentially problematic microbial ATP can be disguised within even a 5% variation.

5. Are there established thresholds for test sites within a hospital?  **ANSWER:** There is no single universal standard that is applicable for every surface in every facility. While general guidelines are typically utilized for starting points, Neogen recommends that pass, marginal and fail thresholds be established by each facility based on current best practice methods for the unique mix of equipment, surfaces, cleaners, procedures, people and time allotted for cleaning. As better cleaning practices evolve, thresholds can be adjusted to reflect the new standards for clean.

6. If my hospital decides to implement an ATP system, how do we establish our thresholds?  **ANSWER:** Neogen’s approach is to use the system initially to validate the cleaning processes currently utilized by the facility. Following a two or three-week census, the test results can be plotted to determine the expected range of scores when the housekeeping staff has followed the proper cleaning protocol. This range now becomes the target and standard to which we hold our future cleaning efforts. Once these thresholds are established, we utilize them as benchmarks for comparison and verification that the procedure was followed. The facility can now try new products, procedures and other interventions, such as focused training, and see directly the results of those interventions. Now you have a performance benchmark. These metrics can also be used to establish performance improvement goals. In other words, you may choose to work toward reducing ATP scores on bedrails by 25% over the next six months.

7. Can there be incidences of false-positive readings with an ATP monitor?  **ANSWER:** Our AccuPoint HC system combines ATP with Luciferin and Luciferase to produce a chemiluminescent reaction in our samplers. A false-positive result would imply that something other than ATP could create this reaction. In fact, ATP is the only chemical that can create the chemiluminescent reaction with Luciferin and Luciferase so there is no potential for false-positives with our system.

8. Do bleach-based disinfectants interfere with the chemiluminescent reaction in an ATP System?  **ANSWER:** All popular ATP systems contain buffering solutions in their chemistry to counteract the pH effects of sanitizers and cleaners. Neogen Corporation has tested most popular cleaning and sanitizing products and found there to be no significant degradation in performance when applied at manufacturer’s specifications and allowed to dry on a surface. Since the AccuPoint HC Sampler features a sampling tip
that is saturated with an extraction solution, wet surfaces can reduce the tips’ ability to absorb the sample and produce a dilution effect.

9. Will your company help us pre-load our data into the software? **ANSWER:** One of the first steps in implementing the AccuPoint HC system is to create a Test Plan consisting of the Areas, Rooms and individual Test Sites that will be sampled in each room. A list of the facility’s housekeepers is also required if tracking of cleaning personnel is desired. The Test Plan and housekeeper list are created with the AccuPoint Data Manager HC software program and downloaded to the AccuPoint HC instrument. An important point of differentiation with Neogen and our AccuPoint HC Cleaning Verification and Tracking System is that we will pre-load your Test Plan and list of housekeepers prior to training you on how to use the system? This makes the process significantly less “painful” to implement and the training more effective by utilizing the facility’s Test Plan instead of a “sample” Test Plan. Actual testing of sites in the facility is an important component of the training program.

10. What is the warranty on your AccuPoint HC Monitor? **ANSWER:** Neogen offers a lifetime warranty provided that you are purchasing Samplers on a regular basis. In the event of a product issue, Neogen can deliver a replacement AccuPoint HC system the next business day.

11. How much does the AccuPoint HC Monitor & Software System cost? **ANSWER:** Your cost will depend on how you use the system at your facility. We have options that accommodate high volume to occasional testing programs. Contact us for a no charge Cost Analysis. Call 1-800-234-5333 ext. 2293 or email us at: AccuPointHC@neogen.com