Environmental Health & Safety

Procedure for Cleaning the Incubator

Purpose

The purpose of cleaning a biological incubator is to maintain a sterile and controlled environment essential for the growth of cell cultures, bacteria, or other microorganisms. Contamination in an incubator can compromise experimental results, endanger valuable cultures, and damage equipment.

Responsibilities

Laboratory Manager / PI: Initiates and oversees the mothballing process

Laboratory Staff: Assists in cleaning and documentation

EHS Biosafety: Verifies compliance with biosafety protocols

Scope

This scope covers the thorough cleaning and decontamination of a laboratory incubator to ensure a sterile and contaminant-free environment for future use. Activities include removal of all shelves and components, cleaning of interior surfaces with appropriate disinfectants, inspection for contamination or damage, and proper reassembly. The procedure follows biosafety and manufacturer guidelines, ensuring compliance with laboratory hygiene and safety standards.

Procedures

1. **Move all the cultures to a different incubator.**
    a. Followed by Turning off the Incubator and Turning off the gas supply
2. **Remove all the shelves, the shelf supports, and any brackets or air ducts.**
    a. Empty water reservoir
3. **Clean all the internal surfaces, ducts, shelves, shelf supports, inner door, fan and door gaskets with mild detergent in warm water using a lint free cloth**
    a. Be sure to reach all the corners and crevices where dirt, dust and germs can hide.
    b. Scrub the water reservoir using the same method
4. **Rinse these surfaces and parts using distilled water and wipe them dry again using a clean, lint free cloth.**
5. **Wipe the interior surfaces and parts with a diluted quaternary ammonium disinfectant; CaviCide.**
    a. Follow this by wiping with 70% alcohol to remove any remaining traces of the disinfectant.
    b. Again, be sure to reach all the corners, and remember to treat the door gasket as well.
    c. Replace the cleaned internal parts.
6. **Now you can turn the incubator heat back on and allow the incubator to dry completely.**
    a. Close the door. The heating process should only take a few minutes.
7. **If you have an automated decontamination cycle, you can run it now.**
    a. After that cycle is complete, fill the water reservoir with sterile distilled water, and turn on the gas supply
8. **Remember to clean the incubator exterior to eliminate dirt and microorganisms that could find their way inside**
    a. If the top of your incubator is very dusty, it's likely that dust is passing into the incubator when you open the door, so it's important to clean the top as well.

b. Use a lint-free cloth dampened in mild soapy water. Then wipe clean using a clean cloth slightly dampened in clear water. Dry the outside with a clean, dry cloth. Pay special attention to the door handles where everyone touches.
c. Do not use any liquids or spray cleaners to clean a touch sensitive surface or display. Instead, use a dry microfiber cloth to clean these.