

When Contamination Hits, and You Need Answers Fast

The Operational Hygiene Index responds to an active contamination crisis with a rapid, on-site investigation. It finds the real cause using Six Sigma methodology, and delivers both an immediate fix and a plan to stop it from happening again.

The Scenario

Contamination has shown up somewhere in your production: a failed batch, a customer complaint, an out-of-specification test result. Production is continuing, but nobody yet knows exactly where the contamination is coming from, or how far it has spread.

This is not a planning exercise. It is an active problem, and every day without an answer means more product, more cost, and more risk to customer trust.

Why This Cannot Wait for a Normal Planning Cycle

A standard OHI engagement is scoped and scheduled in advance. A contamination crisis does not work on that timeline. What is needed is a spontaneous, on-site audit, triggered by the incident itself, not by a calendar.

That is exactly what this use case provides: experts who can be on-site on short notice, ready to investigate while the evidence, and the pattern behind it, is still fresh.

Finding the Real Cause, Not Just the Symptom

The investigation follows Six Sigma methodology: define the problem precisely, measure where and how it is occurring, analyze the data to isolate the actual root cause, and only then move to a fix. This structure exists for a reason. It is what separates a real root cause from the first plausible explanation.

Microbiology, process engineering, and chemistry are examined together, not in isolation. A contamination pattern that looks like a cleaning failure on the surface can just as easily trace back to a process parameter, a raw material, or a piece of equipment with a hygienic design flaw. Finding which one it actually is requires all three lenses at once.

There is another reason an outside perspective matters here. The people who know a facility best are often the least likely to spot what is wrong with it. Operational blindness sets in when the same layout, the same routines, and the same equipment have been walked past every day for years. What looks completely

normal to the internal team can be exactly where the problem is hiding.

An outside investigator does not carry that blind spot. They ask why a step is done a certain way, instead of assuming it is fine because it has always been done that way.

What an outside view reliably adds is objectivity, together with experience from handling similar cases elsewhere. Combined with a structured root cause method, this is probably faster than working from the inside alone. But that speed only materializes when the outside investigation works closely with the competence already on-site, not around it. The internal team knows the plant. The outside investigator brings the objectivity and pattern recognition to ask it the right questions.

Two Kinds of Measures, Not Just One

Many crisis responses stop once the immediate problem is under control. A short-term fix is put in place, production resumes, and the underlying cause is never fully addressed. Prevention for the future is not the priority for most responders in this situation.

This engagement is built to do both, deliberately. Short-term measures bring the active contamination under control as quickly as possible. Long-term measures address the root cause directly, so the same failure does not simply reappear once attention has moved elsewhere.

Why the Engagement Continues

A contamination event rarely stays fully isolated. If a gap produced this problem once, in this location, there is a real chance a related gap exists elsewhere in the facility, simply because it has not caused a visible failure yet.

That is why the response does not stop at the immediate fix. Once the crisis is under control, the engagement continues into a Questionnaire phase and a follow-up on-site audit, checking the rest of the facility systematically rather than assuming the problem stayed contained to one spot. What started as an emergency response becomes a complete operational hygiene engagement, with a full hygiene concept, Process Landscape, and Roadmap to show for it, not just a patch on one incident.

How the Engagement Works

Phase 1 — Extended Kick-off

An expedited, in-person visit focused specifically on the affected process or area, scheduled on short notice rather than months in advance. The goal is direct observation, while conditions on the ground still match what caused the contamination.

Phase 2 — Root Cause Analysis

A structured, Six Sigma-based investigation across microbiology, process engineering, and chemistry, narrowing down from every plausible cause to the one actually responsible.

Phase 3 — Action Plan

Two sets of measures, delivered together: what to do immediately to contain the problem, and what to change so it does not come back.

Phase 4 — Questionnaire

Once the immediate crisis is under control, a systematic check of the rest of the facility, area by area, for related risks the initial response did not have time to cover.

Phase 5 — Follow-Up On-Site Audit

A further on-site visit, this time covering the full facility rather than just the affected area, closing out with a complete Process Landscape and Roadmap.

What You Get

Root Cause Findings

A clear, evidence-based account of what actually caused the contamination, not the first plausible guess. This is the basis for everything that follows.

Short-Term Containment Plan

Immediate, practical steps to bring the active contamination under control and get production back on a safe footing as quickly as possible.

Long-Term Roadmap

Prioritized measures that address the root cause directly, so the same failure does not resurface once the immediate pressure is gone.

A Complete Hygiene Concept, If You Continue

Where the engagement continues through Phases 4 and 5, a full Process Landscape and Roadmap covering the whole facility, not only the area where the contamination showed up.

Why This Is Different

Plenty of responders can help you contain a contamination crisis for now. Fewer are structured to ask why it happened at all, and fewer still treat prevention as anything more than an afterthought once the immediate pressure is off.

The Six Sigma structure behind this engagement exists specifically to prevent that gap. Containment and root cause analysis are not two separate projects, one of which might get skipped. They are delivered together, by design.

Further Support, If You Want It

Training for hygiene staff. — if the root cause traces back to a gap in daily practice, training closes it directly with the people doing the work.

Periodic re-assessment. — once the full engagement is complete, a recurring check-in, once or twice a year, confirms measures are holding and catches new risks before they become the next crisis.

Both are optional. What you actually need depends on what the root cause analysis finds.

Common Questions

How quickly can someone be on-site?

This is handled on short notice, not on the multi-week scheduling of a standard engagement. Reach out directly to discuss your situation and the fastest realistic timeline.

What if we already have a suspected cause?

That is a useful starting point, not a conclusion. The Six Sigma process tests it against the evidence rather than assuming it is correct, since acting on the wrong cause wastes time and lets the real one keep going.

Does this replace our internal QA investigation?

No. It works alongside your team, bringing the microbiology, process engineering, and structured root cause methodology that most internal QA investigations are not resourced to run on their own, especially under time pressure.

What happens after the crisis is resolved?

The engagement does not stop at the fix. It continues into a Questionnaire phase and a follow-up on-site audit, checking the rest of the facility and building out a complete hygiene concept, so the same gap does not resurface somewhere else.

Where to Start

If contamination is active right now, the priority is getting a structured investigation started, not waiting for a convenient time. This engagement is built for exactly that: fast to mobilize, rigorous in method, and focused on making sure this is the last time you deal with this specific cause.

Reach out directly to discuss your situation: zeeg.me/grosseronald.

