

Durable, self-disinfecting coating applied on all HDB lift buttons



The coating, called sdst, was applied in all 26,000 HDB lifts over the past two weeks, following a donation of 650 litres of sdst by the Changi Airport Group's philanthropic arm Changi Foundation. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG



[Lester Wong](#)

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A self-disinfecting coating that lasts for three months has been applied to buttons in all HDB lifts and lift lobbies in Singapore.

The coating, called sdst, has been used at Changi Airport and kills bacteria, viruses and fungi upon contact. It remains in place, even with repeated scrubbing and cleaning, as chemical bonding agents help it to adhere tightly to surfaces at a molecular level.

It is sprayed on surfaces in liquid form like regular disinfectants, and is safe on human skin.

Teams from Singapore's 16 town councils applied the coating in lifts over the past two weeks, following a donation of 650 litres of sdst by the Changi Airport Group's (CAG) philanthropic arm Changi Foundation. This amount was found to be sufficient to coat all 1.5 million lift buttons in 26,000 HDB lifts.

Dr Teo Ho Pin, coordinating chairman of the 15 People's Action Party town councils, noted yesterday that a large proportion of Singapore's population - around 3.2 million - live in HDB flats, and lift buttons are one of the most frequently touched components in estates.

Asked if there are plans to roll out the coating to other public areas, he said: "We know residents have been very concerned and we are focusing on high-risk surfaces such as lift buttons for a start. So let's see how effective this solution is."

Now that the coating is in place, he added, residents should avoid continuing to press lift buttons with hard objects such as keys as this could scrape the coating off.

But Dr Teo also cautioned in an e-mail response that lift users "should not be complacent and must exercise stringent personal hygiene to wash their hands frequently irrespective of the coating at the lift buttons".

He added that their hands can get contaminated by touching other surfaces, and it is thus good practice to wash hands frequently.

The coating is manufactured in the United States and has been approved by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Since February, CAG has been using sdst on frequently touched surfaces in Changi Airport such as lift buttons, touch screens and trolley handles.

Mr Jayson Goh, CAG's managing director of airport operations, noted that there is always "an exposure time between cleaning when someone can come in and contaminate the surface".

"So, the good thing about this coating is that it creates a protective shield over the surface, and this was something that we wanted to extend nationwide with the help of the town councils."