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Green Carpet Care

By floorcareco

Keep your carpets green, no matter the color, by using these green-cleaning tips

By Stephen Ashkin



Traditional extractors use an excessive amount of water, especially when compared to newer low-flow models, which can use less than one gallon of water per minute.

Building managers, working with their custodial crews, are transferring to

environmentally preferable cleaning systems and products in record numbers. What started as a trickle just a few years ago is now beyond a trend. For many building managers in many industries, having their facilities “green-cleaned” is a given.

However, the situation gets a bit more complicated when it comes to tasks such as carpet cleaning. Maintaining carpets can require frequent cleaning, sometimes using very powerful cleaning chemicals, making “green” a challenge. The following are some key steps building owners and managers can take to reduce carpet cleaning’s impact on the environment:

Prioritize carpet cleaning. Many facilities schedule carpet cleaning throughout the year, with certain areas cleaned on a set schedule. This may work in some parts of a building as long as those carpeted areas do need to be cleaned. But what often happens is the executive areas of facilities, where carpets tend to stay relatively unsoiled, get more than their fair share of attention. Carpet cleaning should be prioritized: clean those areas that get more soiled more frequently and the less soiled areas less frequently.

Vacuum frequently. It is estimated that 80 percent of the soils in carpets are dry, such as dust and grit. An effective vacuum cleaner, employing a HEPA or similar filtration system, can remove these soils from carpets, which prevents them from further soiling the floor covering. In addition, a high filtration system protects indoor air quality.

Employ interim carpet cleaning methods. Although the extraction method is the most thorough carpet cleaning procedure, it uses a lot of water. Older extractors may use as much as two gallons of water per minute, as well as large amounts of chemicals. Often a shampoo, bonnet, or dry carpet cleaning method can be used on an interim basis. These processes use far less water, [energy](#), and chemicals, which reduces cleaning’s impact on the environment.

Low-flow technologies. Even when incorporating an interim carpet cleaning system, switching to low-flow or low-moisture extractors can reduce water use dramatically. Some systems use less than one gallon of water per minute and the carpets dry in two to four hours. This expedited cleaning time helps prevent mold or mildew from developing.

Use cold water when cleaning carpets. While this is a somewhat controversial suggestion, most soils will be removed from carpets by using cold water, depending on the degree of soiling. Why is this important? The heating of water,

especially when using portable extractors, can draw large amounts of power. Using cold water eliminates this. Additionally, depending on how the chemicals are used with the system, hot water can cause the development of fumes that can be harmful to the user and indoor air quality.

Use green-certified cleaning chemicals. Today, this is a “no-brainer.” Several manufacturers now have green-certified carpet cleaning products or products that meet or exceed certification standards. Most users find these products compare favorably with, if not exceed, the performance standards of conventional carpet cleaning chemicals.

Maintain the equipment ... and know when it is time to select new machines. One 23-story building in Chicago has employed the same portable carpet extractor for more than 15 years. The machine breaks down regularly, is an excessive water and power user, and due to its lack of cleaning power, requires large amounts of chemical solution to perform adequately. Fortunately the building's managers have decided to replace the machine. Newer machines require far less water and energy and use less chemical more efficiently than machines produced just a few years ago. Consider new equipment if current machines are more than seven years old and be sure to maintain them properly to keep them operating most effectively.

Touching on Sustainability

As you may have noticed, many of these tips now include sustainability issues. Green and sustainability are becoming intertwined. Whenever any type of cleaning can be performed using less water, less chemical, or less energy, not only is it greener and healthier, but it is using natural resources more responsibly. This is why the next step in green carpet cleaning, or for that matter all cleaning, is sustainable cleaning.

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