



Are carpet cleaners ready for the seal of approval?

Survey results show a mixed reaction.

Related Information

[XRF technology](#)

[Equipment selection made easier](#)

By Jamie Van Vuren

From the January 2007 edition of Cleanfax magazine. For a free introductory subscription, [click here](#).

The Green Label program, developed by the Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI), has been one of CRI's most successful testing and certification programs.

The Green Label program was developed for all segments of our industry, including the end customer.

For those that aren't up to date on this program, it evaluates vacuum cleaners as to their effectiveness, performance and impact on indoor air quality.

Specifically for the carpet cleaning industry, especially in the commercial cleaning field, the program has raised the bar, resulting in the production of more efficient, healthier vacuum cleaners.

From vacuum to extractor

On the heels of the success of the Green Label program, CRI was anxious to develop a similar program to evaluate carpet extractors.

The organization sought a way to test that carpet extractors:

- More effectively remove carpet soils
- Use minimal amounts of water/solution in the cleaning process, or have effective vacuum or moisture-recovery systems to help

- reduce drying time after extraction, and
- Satisfactorily improve the appearance of the cleaned carpet.

CRI could finally announce that just such a testing procedure had been developed on September 12, 2005, at Florida's Kennedy Space Center.

On that same day, the organization also honored the first group of hot-water extractors awarded CRI's Seal of Approval (SOA).

These extractors were tested and evaluated using new X-ray fluorescence technology. (See XRF Technology, sidebar)

The unveiling at the Space Center was fitting since the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) had first used the technology.

NASA employed the technology for space shuttle components to search for impurities that could cause premature wear, and possibly result in a disaster if not discovered and repaired before takeoff.

Like many other inventions, the technology was first used by NASA, and it originally had nothing to do with carpet cleaning.

The testing system turned out to be exactly what CRI needed.

The XRF technology enables researchers to determine what soil and moisture are, and to measure both scientifically.

That way, it's easy to conclude how much soil has been removed by extraction and how effective the machine is.

Plus, the new testing system proved to be just as thorough — if not more so — than the testing process used for vacuum cleaners.

“Testing a vacuum is fairly straightforward,” says Werner Braun, president of the Carpet and Rug Institute. “You put a known quantity of soil on the carpet, vacuum it, and then measure or weigh what you picked up. The problem with extractors is that they expel a large volume of water, so you have the few grams of soil you're trying to

measure in this pond of water.”

CRI is using this technology to test extractors’ performances and, based on the results, honor manufacturers with a gold (the highest designation), silver, or bronze SOA if their machines pass the testing procedure.

Beginning this month (January 2007), some carpet warranties require the use of products approved by CRI.

What it means to carpet cleaning pros

Since SOA’s introduction, several extractors made by various manufacturers have been certified by CRI.

And many extractor manufacturers that have not yet had their machines certified are now in the process of re-engineering and redesigning them so they will pass the certification process.

While the effect on extractor manufacturers appears clear, what seems to be less obvious is how the SOA program will benefit carpet manufacturers, end consumers, and especially carpet cleaning professionals.

A recent survey of more than 500 carpet cleaners, conducted by AlturaSolutions e-Poll, a division of AlturaSolutions Communications, Chicago, found that more than 70 percent believed the CRI program would benefit carpet cleaning professionals and nearly half believed the entire carpet cleaning industry — carpet manufacturers, cleaners, and end customers — would benefit from SOA.

However, a closer look at the results offered some interesting — if not startling — insights.

For instance:

- Nearly 14 percent believed that the consumer would mainly benefit from the SOA program.
- More than 16 percent responded that carpet manufacturers would be the chief beneficiary.
- As many as 17 percent believed that no consumers, carpet

manufacturers or professional carpet cleaning contractors would benefit from SOA.

- Only 5 percent believed that the SOA program would benefit carpet cleaning professionals the most.

“It is quite surprising to me that so few carpet cleaning contractors would recognize that SOA will benefit them,” says Braun. “I am actually mystified by this.”

Braun identifies the many ways SOA will benefit contractors.

“SOA-certified equipment is tested and proven to be more effective than equipment that is not approved,” he says. “This means there will be improved soil removal, less re-soiling, greater colorfastness, reduced drying time, and several other benefits when using SOA machines and systems. This all helps the contractor.”

Additionally, Braun says many contractors are not yet aware that using SOA-approved equipment and systems will have “bread and butter” benefits as well.

“How many times do folks lose business because their work was not satisfactory, and how much does it cost the professional because he must ‘redo’ a job due to customer dissatisfaction or re-soiling?” he asks. “This costs the contractor both business and money, which can likely be prevented with the SOA program.”

Because of the survey, Braun believes CRI must do a more thorough job of educating carpet cleaning contractors, as well as end customers, about the important benefits of the SOA program for the entire industry.

“More efficient carpet extractors and cleaning systems will also help protect our environment. It is likely that with fewer cleaning chemicals they will more effectively remove potentially harmful contaminants embedded in carpet fibers,” he said.

“And I believe the SOA program will help further professionalize our industry and the role we play in keeping our homes, schools, and offices clean and healthy.”

Jamie Van Vuren is president of Bee Line Building Service and Supply, Schaumburg, IL. Bee Line was founded by her father in the 1950s. Van Vuren can be reached at jamie@beelineimage.com.

From the January 2007 edition of Cleanfax magazine. For a free introductory subscription, [click here](#).

All Content Copyright 2007
National Trade Publications Inc.

[Click Here](#) for details on our [Privacy Policy](#)

This site best viewed with: [NETSCAPE 4.7](#) or [Internet Explorer](#) .