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Cleanlink News May 10 2011

**Outlining ROI to Sustainability**

One of the issues that typically arises when a business first considers operating in a more sustainable manner is what the financial returns might be, and when they can expect them. According to *Sustainability Dashboard* reporting, this is reasonable and has been amplified in the past three years due to the struggling economy. However, enough organizations have developed sustainable operations in recent years that studies are now underway and some have been published, indicating what these near- and long-term expectations are likely to be.

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One such study was conducted by the Corporate Executive Research Board in December 2007. According to their research, when business executives from a variety of companies that have adopted sustainable practices were asked, "Where have you seen the greatest benefit from your sustainability investments?" they received the following results:

- Energy savings, 41 percent
- Waste savings, 23 percent
- Raw material savings, 6 percent
- Water savings, 6 percent

As to when respondents expect a return on their sustainability investments, 35 percent indicated there was no "quantifiable cost savings necessary" for them to operate more sustainably or they simply were not expecting an "immediate cost savings."

Thirty-five percent answered they expected their investment to be "cost neutral." However, the others expected a return on their sustainability investments and indicated specific time frames, including:

- Nine percent expected a return in two to five years
- Four percent in five-plus years
- Seventeen percent in less than two years.

While the Corporate Executive Research Board is an advocate for reducing the environmental impact of doing business, they admit "quantitative evidence of the business impact of [sustainable] initiatives is often hard to come by." However, they do expect more studies to be completed in the near future that will help build the business case for companies to become more sustainable.




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Cleanlink News May 13 2011

**Study: HEPA Filters Reduce Risk of Cardiovascular Disease**

A study published in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* found that the use of HEPA (high efficiency particle air) filters can reduce the risk of heart and blood vessel disease. The researchers found that the HEPA filters reduce the amount of airborne particulate matter in the air. Doing so results in improved blood flow and reduced risk of cardiovascular disease.

The tests involved 45 adults and were conducted in 25 Canadian homes over a two-week period. HEPA filtration systems were added to the homes heating and HVAC systems. Concentrations of airborne particulates in the homes were measured before the test and most of the homes were found to have relatively low concentrations. The researchers wanted to know if reducing these concentrations even further would have health benefits.

"Specifically, the researchers were measuring for what is called reactive hyperemia," says Gary Pelphrey, marketing director for Powr-Flite. "In the simplest of terms, reduced reactive hyperemia means that the blood vessels are somehow impaired or restricted. This can have negative health repercussions over time," he says.

After analyzing the data, the researchers found that the HEPA filters reduced the concentration of fine airborne particulates by 60 percent. There was also an associated increase of 9.4 percent in reactive hyperemia, meaning blood flow improved, potentially reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease.

"This is important information for cleaning professionals who use vacuum cleaners every day in their work," says Pelphrey. "It adds to the evidence that HEPA filtration on vacuum cleaners is not only a greener way to clean, but a healthier way to clean as well."

Because of the health benefits, Pelphrey also advises cleaning professionals take HEPA a step further and look for true-HEPA vacuums.

"Airborne contaminants can escape through the casing of the machine. With a true-HEPA vacuum cleaner, the casing is airtight, providing even greater health protection."

*Source: Based on material provided by the American Thoracic Society, which focuses on respiratory health. Findings were first reported in January 2011.*

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Cleanlink News May 17 2011

**Bedbugs Found Carrying Superbug**

According to an article scheduled to be released in the June 2011 issue of *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention public health journal, bedbugs were reportedly refound to carry Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) and Vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus (VRE). Although bedbugs have not been shown to spread disease to date, Canadian researchers have now proven that they at least carry bacteria known to cause these sometimes hard-to-treat infections.

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At this time, there is no clear evidence that the bedbugs have spread the MRSA or VRE germs they were carrying, but according to Dr. Marc Romney, a medical biologist with St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver, "this is an intriguing finding" that needs to be further researched.

Five bedbugs were analyzed. MRSA was found in three of the bugs and VRE in two.

Romney also noted that the hospital is in an area of Vancouver that has recently seen a "boom in bedbugs" and a significant increase in MRSA cases.

Bedbugs are about 7 mm long, wingless and reddish brown in color and feed on the blood of their victims. Because they are so small, they are often hard to detect, and the situation is made worse because they commonly live in the cracks and crevices of mattresses.

In the past couple of years, finding ways to eradicate bedbugs has garnered considerable attention in the professional cleaning industry.

For instance, Michael Schaffer, president of Tornado Industries and a senior executive with Tacony's Commercial Floor Care division, has authored several industry articles on the subject. He has also published a white paper, *Effective Treatment of Bedbug Infestations*, which suggests ways the jan/san industry can help eradicate bedbugs and do so in a more environmentally responsible manner.

"The study does not indicate exactly how the bedbugs picked up the bacteria, but this is definitely a concern," says Schaffer. "In the past, bedbug bites were mostly bothersome. While more research is required, [this study] makes the bites far more serious."




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Cleanlink News June 6 2011

**Corporate Sustainability Issues on the Rise**

According to accounting firm Ernst & Young, we can expect continued growth of sustainability-focused shareholder resolutions. Since 2000, the number of such resolutions, which encourage companies to publish corporate sustainability reports (CSRs), has climbed by nearly 40 percent with most focusing on environmental and social issues.

The first CSRs, which measure, monitor and report on steps a corporation is taking to have a more positive impact on society, economy and the environment, began in the late 1980s. They are typically published for a number of reasons, but at their core, a CSR is to provide transparency and accountability to shareholders, investors and local communities.

According to Ernst & Young's Ann Brockett, "As shareholder resolutions related to climate change and other environmental issues increase, more progressive, forward-thinking companies [are preparing CSRs] to address these concerns."

However, many companies are not exactly sure how to go about creating a CSR, says Stephen Ashkin, chief executive offices of Sustainable Dashboard Tools, LLC. To address this, he suggests the following initial steps:

- First, top executives and corporate boards must be solidly behind a CSR program.
- A committee should be created to oversee the program and evaluate its opportunities as well as possible challenges for the company.
- The committee should determine which environmental, social, and sustainability issues are most relevant to the company now and in the future.
- Employ new technologies that can measure and monitor such issues as an organization's greenhouse emissions, energy, water, and fuel consumption.
- Regularly publish internal sustainability reports.

"The internal reports can grow into official CSRs," Ashkin says. "Along with providing greater transparency, a positive and improving CSR is an indication [that a company] is operating more efficiently, which typically means it is also operating more cost effectively."

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