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What to Consider When Implementing a Green Floor Care Program

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NATIONAL REPORT—Most everyone has heard of green cleaning, but not everyone is familiar with green floor care. Floor care costs can account for up to 30 percent of the hotel housekeeping budget. Considering the cost and impact floor care has on appearance, safety, indoor air quality, and staff/guest health, it should not be overlooked when implementing a green cleaning program.

Green floor care involves the use of preventive measures, more environmentally protective or green certified chemicals, and more advanced floor care equipment. It also includes cleaning processes that help reduce the need and frequency of more hazardous and time-consuming restoration procedures such as sanding, grinding, or stripping and refinishing hard-surface floors.

Green cleaning products, which are necessary in a green floor care program, contain less or no petroleum materials, as well as zinc and other metals. They also use less environmentally harmful, naturally derived extracts from plants such as soy, corn, citrus or seeds and trees.

There are key elements that play a significant role in helping to green floor care. Among these are:

Soiling Prevention

Capture and remove soil at its source. This is the first basic line of defense, and the least expensive and easiest to do, yet the most under utilized. Place 12 feet of entry matting inside/outside of all entries and exits or other areas where soil may accumulate or be generated. Focus on high traffic areas such as the first 30 feet inside and outside a building. Frequent dust mopping, vacuuming, wet mopping and burnishing capture soil at its entry source.

Scheduling

Do not overdo it. Floor care is very strenuous work. Expend only the appropriate amount of effort necessary to obtain desired results. Additionally, excessive floor care cleaning often means more chemicals may be necessary than needed, which runs contrary to a green cleaning program. Establish a written yet flexible schedule based on previous experience and actual floor care needs.

Training

Of all cleaning tasks, floor care requires some of the most thorough training. Involve employees and supervisors in an ongoing education program. Outside classes, offered by various cleaning associations and organizations should also be attended by supervisory personnel to learn about new techniques and programs in floor care.

Safety

Every program must include the filing of Material Safety Data Sheets, the wearing of protective clothing, record keeping and safety meetings. Use wet floor signs, barricade tape and avoidance scheduling to make floor care safer.

Documentation

Establish quality assurance guidelines, inspect to verify compliance and make corrections if necessary. Document the process, watch for trends, and improve. Use quantitative tests to validate results. Use environmentally preferable purchasing. Validate your green cleaning program with an independent third party auditor.

Chemicals

Reduce the number of chemicals used in floor care to three or four items or less. Use products certified green by recognized organizations such as EcoLogo, EPA, or Green Seal. Use neutral pH products for daily cleaning. Eliminate finishes that contain heavy metals or solvents. Eliminate hazardous acids, alkaline and bleach. Use natural disinfectants versus quats and phenols. Use concentrates with automated dilution systems. Use dry vapor cleaning as a sanitization process. Properly dispose of wastewater and slurries in sanitary sewers; never dump on ground, in parking lots or storm sewers.

Floor Care Equipment

In order to protect indoor air quality, an essential component of a green cleaning program, floors should be vacuumed instead of swept or dry mopped. Additionally, the actual floor equipment used—buffers and burnishers to strip, clean, or polish a floor—can play a significant role in a green floor care program.