

Does Green Pay Off?

by Robert Kravitz

Let's the classic case of style vs. substance. For years facility managers and building service contractors have been hearing that green cleaning pays dividends – saving money, cutting costs and improving worker productivity just by moving from conventional to environmentally preferable cleaning products. But many facility managers and BSCs are digging deeper and

asking for proof; in other words, they want the advocates of green cleaning to show them the money.

Several years ago, this would have been quite difficult. However, recent studies have been released that indicate green cleaning, along with the implementation of more-effective cleaning techniques and systems, does indeed pay off.

Case in Point #1: Worker Productivity

One of the benefits of environmentally preferable cleaning products is they have less negative impact on indoor air quality. One reason for this is they release fewer airborne volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which have been proven to contribute to a variety of respiratory and other health-related problems.

Researcher and consultant Dr. Judith Heerwagen studied the effects of improved indoor air quality on worker productivity. Evaluating numerous well-documented studies, Heerwagen found that productivity increases ranging from 0.5 percent to 7.0 percent, which translates into approximately 3 to 34 minutes saved per day, are not unusual when the indoor environment is improved, often as a result of using environmentally preferable cleaning products.¹

This improved productivity may happen because workers are not interrupted as often to sneeze, cough, or blow their nose, as a result of fewer airborne VOCs from conventional cleaning products. Or it can be because a worker simply feels better and more productive in an atmosphere free of respiratory irritants.

Increased productivity also means money on the table for business owners. According to the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), salaries and benefits paid to workers in a "Class A" office building total approximately \$300 per square foot.² This means that an increase in worker productivity of just 0.5 percent translates into \$1.50 per square foot. Multiply this times hundreds if not thousands of workers, and you can see how the savings mount up and do so quickly.

Case in Point #2: Healthier Cleaning Professionals

Often when we discuss the benefits of

Robert Kravitz is a former building service contractor and now writer for the professional cleaning and building industries. He may be reached at rkravitz@rcn.com.

green cleaning products, our focus is on how they help protect the environment. However, the emphasis should first be on how they help protect the health of cleaning professionals, the people who spend hours every day spraying and wiping chemicals on surfaces and performing a variety of cleaning tasks. And protecting their health is another place we see the financial benefits of using green cleaning products.

The U.S. Department of Labor ranks the use of some cleaning chemicals among the top hazards in the professional cleaning industry. In 2005 there were nearly 220,000 accidental poisonings, including 36 deaths, as a result of using or misusing cleaning chemicals, according to the American Association of Poison Control Centers. Additionally, exposure to some conventional cleaning products introduces concerns about the chronic, long-term effects on workers, which the association indicates are hard to measure or report.

It is believed that the average amount of time lost when a custodial worker suffers a job-related injury as a result of using a conventional cleaning chemical is about 18 hours. Each incident can cost an employer an average of \$650 or more in medical and related costs. On top of this, there may be added costs associated with productivity loss and potential litigation costs. By conservative estimates in the food industry alone, avoiding these costs could save employers

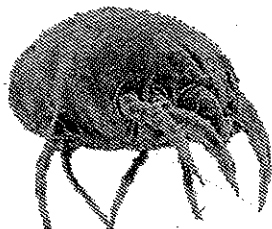
more than \$15 million annually. Similar if not much larger savings are possible in the education, hospitality, and health-care sectors, which employ thousands of custodial workers.

Case in Point #3: Eliminating the "Secret Costs" of Conventional Cleaning Chemicals

Ever hear of the expression, "Penny wise but pound foolish"? Usually, it refers to choosing one product over another because it costs less only to find that, in the end, it costs more to use – perhaps because more of the product must be used or it simply does not work as well – than the more expensive product. Ultimately, the buyer would have saved a tidy sum if he or she had just purchased the more expensive item in the first place.

Although most environmentally preferable cleaning products are now comparable in price to their conventional counterparts, some may still cost a bit more. So to save money on the "sticker" price, some industries readily use powerful cleaning chemicals that must be disposed of according to regulations established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, disposing of these chemicals can be costly. In fact, disposal can actually cost more than purchasing the product in the first place, an expense that could be eliminated by selecting a more environmentally responsible cleaning product from the start.³

Dust Mites Make People Sick and Give Carpet Cleaning Professionals a Healthy Dose of Added Income!



Hygienitech's Mattress Cleaning and Sanitizing System uses a combination of UV-C light, vibration and suction to kill and extract the millions of dust mites and their eggs found in the typical mattress. It's a dry, chemical-free process that takes less than 20-minutes to complete.

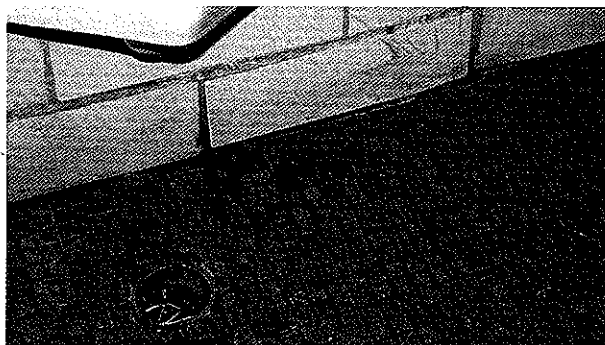
We have the best equipment, proven marketing tools and skills to show you how easy it is to add this highly profitable process to your existing roster of services. Call us Toll Free at 888-999-9030 to request our video and dealer info pack.

Toll Free 888-999-9030

HYGIENITECH

MATTRESS CLEANING SYSTEMS

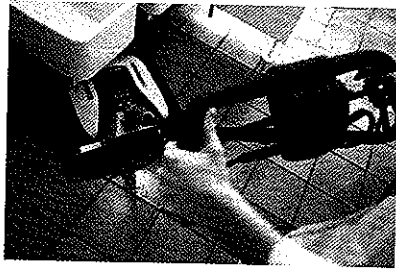
6600 W. Rogers Circle, Suite 15, Boca Raton, FL 33487
www. Hygienitech.com



The Role of More-Effective Cleaning

These examples and others show us that the use of environmentally preferable cleaning products can offer a significant cost savings, especially when it comes to improving worker productivity and protecting health. However, saving money can best be accomplished when the most-effective cleaning systems and techniques are employed.

At the Cleaning Industry Research Institute symposium held earlier this year, the importance of more-effective cleaning in eliminating surface-area germs and bacteria that can harm human health was addressed. Studies presented indicate that many traditional cleaning methods, such as the conventional cleaning of floors with string and even micro-fiber mops, are not that effective in eliminating potentially harmful contaminants when compared to newer technologies such as spray-and-vac cleaning systems.



Cleaning systems and environmentally preferable cleaning products are working together to help protect the health of the indoor environment as never before. These benefits are tangible—they do show us the money.

Selecting Safer Environmentally Preferable Cleaning Products

At one time, it was difficult for facility managers and BSCs to select green cleaning products because there were no formal, universally accepted, con-

sensus-based green cleaning standards.

In fact, some manufacturers simply self-declared their products green, often using the best studies and information of the day; others sought to take advantage of green marketing opportunities with little or no proof that their products were actually helpful to the environment. The result: confusion among end users, manufacturers, and governments—which also stymied the adoption of green cleaning.

Today, much of this confusion has been eliminated because of groups such as GreenSeal and EcoLogo. Certification by these third-party organizations means, among other things, that the products and their ingredients:

- Have been analyzed and verified by independent, accredited laboratories
- Have a reduced impact on the environment
- Are rapidly biodegradable and non-toxic

- Meet specific ISO (International Organization for Standardization) guidelines
- Are not known to be human health hazards

In addition, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) provides an extensive catalog that lists many products considered safer to the environment and the user under the category "Cleaning Equipment, Accessories, Janitorial Supplies, Cleaning Chemicals and Sorbents." *If you liked this article, circle 153 on the Reader Inquiry Card.* **ICS**

¹The Sustainable Office: Links to Worker Health, Well-Being and Productivity, U.S. General Services Administration, September 2003

²The Ashkin Group, 2003

³Federal Regulations, Title 40—Protection of the Environment, 40, CFR, Part 261

“Imagine... Extracting nearly all the water out of sloppy, soaking wet area rugs in 3 minutes or less”

If you own a company that specializes in Flood Restoration, Oriental Rug Cleaning or Carpet Cleaning, then you know drying area rugs isn't easy. You need:

- ▶ Man-power to handle the heavy wet rugs
- ▶ Electricity to run dehumidifiers
- ▶ Energy to heat drying rooms
- ▶ Time to properly dry a fully soaked rug

But now you can reduce all those huge expenses and increase your profits at the same time with the new all stainless steel RugRevolution Centrifuge Wringer!

See The Free Online Video!



The New Rug **REVOLUTION** Centrifuge Wringer by RugBadger.com

Spinning at 1200 RPM and exerting a pressure of over 36,000 lbs of radial force, a rug will come out of your RugRevolution feeling almost dry in only minutes! This fast water extraction means:

- ▶ Rugs are lighter & easier to handle when loading on Dry Towers.
- ▶ Rugs will dry in just a fraction of the time you deal with now.
- ▶ Virtually no post cleaning and correction of water stained fringes.
- ▶ Dramatically less color bleed in dry rooms
- ▶ Wick-backs are virtually eliminated
- ▶ Massive savings in labor because of less corrective or repeat work.
- ▶ Dry rooms can run at a lower temperatures resulting in huge energy savings!

Watch the RugRevolution in action *right now* and discover how it automatically reduces your workload and increases your profits!

See the free online video now by going to: **www.RugBadger.com**

Circle 13 or go to <http://icscleaning.hotims.com/15623-13>