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September, 2005

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## Green Cleaning Pays

### Save money and the environment

The North American cleaning industry and much of its global counterparts are being swept away by green cleaning. By using green products and more environmentally sensitive services, hotel operators can help reduce the impact cleaning has on the environment. Many hotels are now taking steps to reuse, reduce, and recycle as well as use green cleaning chemicals, systems and products in their daily routines. Because of these actions, many operators are reporting water, energy and money savings; at the same time, they're protecting the environment.



Use of low-moisture extractors solves a lot of problems.

When green cleaning measures are implemented, operators also discover that their housekeeping staff stays healthier, reducing absenteeism and improving productivity. Hotel guests have also responded favorably.

Green cleaning systems are also being incorporated into hotel carpet cleaning and extraction. Innovative cleaning chemicals and spotters have been developed and are now Green Seal-certified. This certification verifies that the product is not only environmentally preferable, but it is as effective as traditional cleaning products and is also cost-competitive.

However, one problem that remains with carpet cleaning—whether environmentally preferable products and procedures are used or not—is the time it takes to dry carpets after extraction.

#### PROBLEM WITH WET CARPETS

Most hotels have deep cleaning carpet extraction schedules, which allows for guestrooms to be cleaned throughout the year at a regular frequency. This helps remove embedded dust and soil, which can otherwise harm carpet fibers and, if they become airborne, impact the health of a building's occupants. Most experts agree that extraction is the most thorough way to remove these soils and clean carpets, even though a considerable amount of water and chemicals are used.

"The problem many hotels encounter in regards to carpet extraction is the

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nature of the guestrooms," says Stephen Hanig, vice president of sales for U.S. Products, a manufacturer of professional carpet, floor and restoration equipment. "In these small, often air-tight environments, the wet carpets can take several hours and sometimes more to dry."

Not only can this have serious financial implications for hotel owners—who can't rent a room with wet carpets— but, according to Hanig, mold and mildew can develop, marring indoor air quality and harming occupant health.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) advises that carpets should be completely dry within 48 hours of extraction to prevent mold and mildew from developing. However, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-Existing Buildings group says 48 hours may be too long; carpets should dry in less than 24 hours, says LEED-EB, while some experts say even this is too long.

"One way hotel owners and managers can reduce carpet drying times—as well as the amount of chemicals used— is through the use of new low-moisture carpet extractors," says Hanig.

### **LOW-MOISTURE EXTRACTORS**

Depending on weather and other environmental conditions, carpets can dry in as little as 30 minutes when using a low-moisture system. "This is ideal for hotel guestrooms as well as other parts of the facility," Hanig says. "These areas are often heavily used for extended hours each day and therefore require carpets to dry quickly."

Some low-moisture machines are also tankless, which means they have auto-fill/auto-dump. This improves hotel housekeeper productivity as well as the fact that they don't have to place air movers and fans over carpeted areas to expedite drying time. Not only is less water used, the vacuuming systems on tankless low-moisture extractors have also been improved. "Some low-moisture extractors have the vacuum's motor placed very close to the unit's base," says Hanig, "so water is moved inches, not feet, from the carpet area being cleaned, thus better dry times."

Another green component of some low-moisture portable extraction systems is their ability to heat cleaning solution. According to Hanig, "Heat improves carpet cleaning by increasing the chemical's cleaning action. And, high-temperature cleaning has also been found to improve drying times considerably."

Low-moisture systems are not only proving to be greener and healthier, but many experts believe they actually enhance the appearance of carpets after cleaning.

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