



green lodging news™
lodging's leading environmental news source

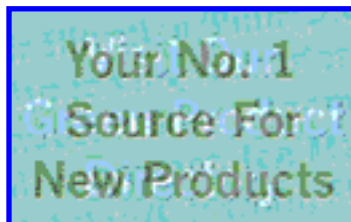


departments

[News & Features](#) [Vendor News](#) [Publisher's Point of View](#) [Guest Columns](#) [Energy Management](#) [Waste Management](#) [Lighting](#) [Water Conservation](#) [Heating & Cooling](#) [Cleaning & Maintenance](#) [Air Quality](#) [Kitchen & Laundry](#) [Sustainability](#) [Green Design](#)



[Sales & Marketing](#) [Green Associations](#) [Hotel Schools](#) [Events](#) [Money-Saving Tips](#) [Advertising/Media Kit](#) [Contact Us](#)



Read Cleaning Chemical Labels Before Using Them...Not After

By Mike Sawchuk
04/23/2007



A hotel housekeeper, ignoring the strong odors that filled the guestroom as she worked, always scrubbed the shower stalls with a commercial cleaner she had used for years. The housekeeper liked the product because it was powerful and effective, cutting her cleaning time considerably.

However, one day she began coughing uncontrollably. It was then that she wondered if this “tried and true” product might be more harmful to her health than she ever thought. In addition, she realized that although she had read the directions on how to use the product, she never read anything more on the label such as warnings, the list of ingredients, or what special precautions or procedures should be incorporated when working with the product.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers ranks cleaning chemicals, both residential and commercial, as among the leading sources for acute human exposure to toxic substances. In 2005, there were nearly 220,000 accidental poisonings as a result of using or misusing cleaning chemicals, including 36 deaths. There are also concerns about the chronic long-term effects on people from exposure to some of these cleaning products, which the Centers indicate are hard to measure or report.

Although conventional cleaning chemicals can cause allergic reactions and serious health problems, especially when misused, it is believed that many of these incidents can be prevented if cleaning chemical manufacturers make sure their labels are accurate and clear, and that housekeeping managers and workers take the time to carefully and thoroughly read them. And although they are safer to use, the same is true of environmentally preferable cleaning chemicals.

What Does 'Danger' Mean?

Commercial cleaning chemicals typically used in a hotel or other facility usually have terms such as “danger,” “poison,” “warning,” or “caution” listed on the label. Unfortunately, these are often

overlooked by users, or the information is written in such a way that it is hard to understand, especially for someone for whom English is a second language.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, certain words listed on labels have particular meanings that should be noted and understood:

- When the words “danger” and “poison” are found on product labels, they indicate that a product’s active ingredients are highly toxic and as little as a few drops can kill the average adult.
- The word “warning” indicates that the product is less harmful than one marked “danger” or “poison” but could still be fatal if just one teaspoon is ingested.
- “Caution” indicates that swallowing more than two tablespoons could be deadly. These products may also be carcinogenic or contain pesticides.

These “signal” words, as they are called, are based on testing the product on rodents with the chemical used measured in milligrams per kilogram of body weight. From here, a lethal dose (for example 50mg/kg) is determined if the product is deadly to 50 percent or more of the test subjects. Usually, just the active ingredients in a product are evaluated. Manufacturers are not required to list or test all the nonactive ingredients in a cleaning chemical.

How to Protect Yourself

One of the best ways to eliminate the potentially harmful effects of some cleaning chemicals is to transfer to certified green or environmentally preferable products. If a product is certified, this means it has been tested and the ingredients used have been proved to be safer to the user and just as effective as a comparable, conventional cleaning product.

However, if green cleaning chemicals are not being used, housekeeping professionals should avoid using products with “danger” labels whenever possible. Because these are so toxic and potentially harmful, even if used properly, an accident could occur that could be detrimental to someone’s health—the user or the hotel guest.

For the most part, products with “caution” written on the label should also be avoided if possible. And if they are used, the cleaning professional should use just enough to achieve satisfactory cleaning results.

Finally, we cannot sidestep how important it is for facility managers and cleaning workers to read the labels on the products they use—paying special attention to the proper procedures, dilution, dwell time (time for the product to sit wet on a surface), and required personal protection equipment. This should be a part of every custodial training program.

So often, at work or at home, we read product labels after there is a problem, whether the product is a

cleaning chemical, vacuum cleaner, or flat-screen TV. Getting into the habit of reading labels before the product is even selected is the best and safest way of using it correctly and preventing injuries.

Mike Sawchuk is vice president and general manager of Peterborough, Ontario-based [Enviro-Solutions](#), a leading manufacturer of green cleaning chemicals.

[Read Cleaning Chemical Labels Before Using Them...Not After](#)

Cleaning chemicals typically used in a hotel or other facility usually have terms such as “danger,” “poison,” “warning,” or “caution” listed on the label. Unfortunately, these are often overlooked.

04/23/2007

[Why Composting is Good For the Environment, Good for Your Budget](#)

Hotels spend a sizeable sum maintaining their landscapes. What if you could slash the budget for items such as fertilizer by making your own natural lawncare products? Consider composting.

04/11/2007

[The Truth Revealed: Green Hotels Can Be Profitable](#)

I believe we are at a critical moment when “green” will become more important than anyone ever imagined—with better results for all our lives and no less phenomenal growth.

03/28/2007

[<< Previous Results](#)

Displaying Page **1** of **6**

[Next Results >>](#)



[Home](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Advertising/Media Kit](#) | [RSS](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Copyright © 2007 Green Lodging News. All Rights Reserved.

Green Lodging News is a [Hasek Communications L.L.C.](#) publication.

search:

subscribe

to green lodging news' weekly e-mail newsletter



To
reach
thousands
of
industry
buyers
each week,
call
(440) 243-2055
today!

green
lodging
news™

