

A green and sustainable 'heads up'

LEED-EBOM certification to measure cleaning performance



BY STEPHEN ASHKIN

The United States' Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program has been one of the most significant developments in that country's green cleaning movement over the past decade. For a facility to be LEED certified, it is required to be cleaned using environmentally preferable products, tools, equipment, and procedures. No facility can be LEED

certified without a green cleaning program in place.

The LEED program has been very worthwhile for the US's professional cleaning industry for a variety of reasons. First, it connects the dots between the potential negative impact of conventional cleaning products on health and the environment and how this can be rectified with green cleaning products. And it has also elevated the value of our industry, the services we provide, and the role we play keeping people healthy has never been better understood than it is today.

The LEED program has also helped all of us involved with building operations, including business and building owners and managers, to better understand why green cleaning is important and how we can all play a role in protecting the environment. And now, it is helping us evolve to an even higher plane: sustainability. This is the next step in green cleaning. Our industry will be called on to help our end customers protect the Earth's natural resources and use them more responsibly, as we do the same with our own businesses.

Change is brewing

Since the LEED program and the green cleaning movement have become so crucial to our industry, I have been giving US industry executives the following 'heads up' about possible changes in the program. This notice is not because the discussed changes may in any way minimize the role or importance of green cleaning. Instead, I have been bringing this to their attention because it is an opportunity for our industry to get more involved with the LEED-Existing Buildings, Operations and Maintenance (EBOM) program, encouraging the implementation of new programs and procedures that will benefit our industry, green cleaning, and other sustainability initiatives.

The US Green Building Council (USGBC), which developed the LEED rating system that awards points to facilities that implement strategies to be greener and more sustainable, is considering making revisions to LEED-EBOM. Very soon, the Council will allow industry professionals to comment on the current Green Cleaning credits and provide suggestions on improving the program for 45 days. This will be the first comment period, but it is very important because the feedback will influence what types of changes, if any, will be made and which have the potential of impacting our industry and building operations in general for many years to come.

As someone who has worked with the Council's Technical Advisory Groups, there are three changes impacting our industry that I believe will be forthcoming. These are:

1. Requirements that facilities increase their purchase of environmentally preferable chemicals, paper products, liners, and equipment;
2. Allowing more Green certification programs and organisations to be honoured; for instance, along with Green Seal and EcoLogo, environmentally preferable criteria developed by such organisations as the EPA's Design for the Environment (DfE) program and ISS. A new information-based environmental label program will be recognised; and
3. Changes dealing specifically with custodial effectiveness and how

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The first two items, regarding raising and expanding the requirements for the use of green chemicals, products, and equipment and allowing more criteria to be honoured, are somewhat self-explanatory. However, the third item, dealing with custodial effectiveness, requires more explanation.

The Council is coming to the conclusion that just the use of greener products does not necessarily equate to a cleaner, healthier building.

The effectiveness of the custodial workers also must be given greater scrutiny. New provisions may require building managers or owners seeking LEED-EBOM certification to begin measuring cleaning performance and reward more effective cleaning procedures and systems.

To measure performance, the Council will not use programs recently developed by Green Seal (GS-42) or ISSA's Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS). Instead, it is turning to a program with a proven track record, having been developed nearly 20 years ago by the Association of Physical Plant Administrators of Universities and Colleges. This program is called the Custodial Staffing Guidelines and includes an audit tool the Council believes has proven its usefulness, flexibility, and adaptability in all types of facilities.*

There are other items in the LEED-EBOM rating program that may also be reviewed and possibly changed which can impact our industry. Instead of exploring those now, I am encouraging all US cleaning professionals to visit a Web site we soon will launch that specifically addresses these issues and allows them the opportunity to express their views. The address is www.ashkinleedeb.com



**Note: Only the audit tool will be used in the LEED-EBOM program because it concentrates on outcomes and performance and not on any particular cleaning system or custodial staffing requirements. Editor's note: Unhappily, the Green Building Council of Australia has not recognised the importance of cleaning's potential contribution to enhancing building sustain*

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