



Lessons from Japan for Cleaners

BLOOMINGTON, IN – If there's just one lesson from the nuclear crisis in Japan that can be applied to the cleaning industry it's that the importance of training and emergency planning cannot be overstated.

“One of the first lessons learned was that although "brilliant people" were likely behind the building of Japan's nuclear power plants, there are often "blind spots or things even brilliant people don't know," said Steve Ashkin, a green cleaning consultant, in his online newsletter, “Destination Green.”

Comparing this to Green cleaning, Ashkin says some users often mistakenly believe that just because a chemical is green, "they do not need protective clothing, proper ventilation, or [to] follow proper training and disposal protocols. This is a mistake."

Another example Ashkin addresses is the growing chorus of voices calling for an end to nuclear power generation.

"Although not an expert on the subject, I just wonder if less extreme steps, such as not building on a known [earthquake] fault line, is the issue we really should be discussing," he writes.

Drawing a parallel to Green cleaning, Ashkin says users should reconsider "shelving" a green cleaning product or green cleaning in general if either fail to meet performance requirements.

"There are other more viable options such as trying green products from other manufacturers or even combining green and traditional products," he writes.

However, Ashkin says, the most important lesson learned from the nuclear power

plant crisis and green cleaning involves training.

"Reports are now surfacing that the [nuclear] workers in Japan were never trained to handle a crisis of this magnitude," he says. "Nuclear reactor workers must be trained to handle virtually any emergency [just as] cleaning personnel must be fully trained on using all cleaning chemicals, tools and equipment properly and safely."