

CANADA'S PREMIER MAGAZINE FOR BUILDING OWNERS AND MANAGERS

Canadian PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

VOL. 26 NO. 5 • September 2011



escape

CANADA \$12.00

Publication Agreement #40063056

Keyed for Safety

VOICING EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS **WORKPLACE MISHAPS** **REMOTE MONITORING**
COMMISSIONING GUIDE **FIRESMART DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS** **SLIP & FALL RISK**



Nothing to Sniff At

Cleaning Technology Extracts Odour Causing Contaminants

By **Huong Pham**

LINGERING ODOURS can occur when acids, bacteria and other contaminants saturate the carpet and its padding, reaching the floor below. Even the most labour-intensive cleaning remedy is still likely to be less costly than replacement, however, so most property owners and facility managers will opt first for a thorough carpet cleaning.

Common sources of carpet odours in commercial and/or residential buildings include:

- smoke
- food and beverages that have seeped into the carpet
- urine and pet feces
- mould and mildew from water damage
- off-gassing of chemicals and other carpet materials

Individuals typically experience the intensity of an odour differently. Age, gender and smoking habits are contributing factors. Generally, women have a more acute sense of smell than men. Exposure to cumulative odours can also dull perception so that people arriving at a facility will detect odours that longer-term occupants don't notice.

Traditionally, cleaning technicians would douse carpets with disinfectants with the hope of killing the bacteria causing problem and/or attempt to mask the odour with powerful deodorants. Often this was only a temporary fix.

Today, new chemical technologies

coupled with improved cleaning equipment produce better, longer lasting results. Effective cleaning depends on four elements: heat, chemical, agitation and time, and modern odour-attacking methods are making use of new chemicals and improved heat applications.

Cleaning products include:

- Acid neutralizers are especially effective in eradicating odours from urine. Decomposing urine breaks down into alkaline salt and ammonia, which the acid neutralizers then absorb so that they can be removed from the carpet using a hot-water carpet extractor.
- Oxidizers form peroxide compounds when mixed with hot water generated by a carpet extractor. This creates an oxidizing effect that decomposes odour-causing bacteria and materials, which are removed via the carpet extraction process.
- So-called friendly bacteria produce enzymes that can eat away at the odour-causing bacteria, eliminating the problem. Many of these cleaning products must be applied using a heated carpet extractor. This not only heats the cleaning solution/water but also ensures the heat is consistent throughout the cleaning process.

Equipment with relatively high psi (pressure per square inch) is better able to flush out bacteria deeply embedded in the carpet fibres. Such equipment can release more water/cleaning solution into the carpet

with greater pressure, plus they have more powerful pumps to loosen and remove odours and facilitate faster drying.

If odours persist after cleaning, facility managers/owner can consider other options. Sometimes simply repeating the cleaning process will be enough to eradicate the odours that remained after the first effort.

Restoration companies often rely on ozone treatment for post-catastrophe clean-ups, especially after fires. Once the source of the odour is cleaned and eliminated, ozone generators can eliminate the residual odour. It is important to carefully follow the manufacturer's operating procedures, but ozone generators are safe for use in facilities.

If the odour doesn't dissipate, the carpet will likely have to be replaced. Flooring beneath the discarded carpet should be thoroughly cleaned before a new one is installed.

The non-profit Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC) offers training specifically focused on odour eradication. An IICRC certified carpet cleaning company is more likely to have the resources to deal with the task. ■

Huong Pham is Product Marketing Manager for Powr-Flite, a manufacturer of professional cleaning equipment. For more information, see the web site at www.powr-flite.com. For more information about the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification, see the web site at www.iicrc.org.