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The Future Of Cleaning

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If I had to select two words to describe the future of the professional cleaning industry and the ways parks and recreation facilities will be cleaned in coming years, those words would be “green” and “sustainable.”

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Embracing the green clean.

In the past decade, consumer demand, government regulations, and economics, as well as increased concerns about health and safety, have resulted in a growing number of facilities converting to green cleaning, and manufacturers developing environmentally preferable and responsible cleaning products.

Advancements in research and technology, along with significant investments made by manufacturers, have also resulted in dramatic improvements in the effectiveness of green cleaning products over the past several years.

Many users originally reported finding green chemicals to be less effective than the conventional products they historically had used. But with few exceptions today, green-equivalent cleaning chemicals now meet or even exceed the performance standards of the conventional products they were designed to replace.

In addition, most are no longer more expensive than conventional products. In fact, most are considered cost-neutral today and cost-effective, resulting in green products being welcomed and used throughout the professional cleaning industry.

In coming years, the market will see an increased focus on green cleaning equipment—from hand tools to floor machines. Not only will greener, more environmentally sensitive features be added, but machines that use fewer natural resources than older types of cleaning equipment will become the norm.

The following is an examination of what to expect.

Recycling Units

As the cleaning industry has become greener, it has also shown greater interest in sustainability and conservation of natural resources. Some equipment manufacturers have responded with systems that recycle the water and solution they use. Not only do these units save natural resources, but they provide tremendous increases in productivity, as trips back and forth to a drain and water source are reduced.

In the case of carpet extractors as an example, there are units that can filter and recycle the water and cleaning solution, allowing the carpet-cleaning technician to eliminate as many as seven changes of liquid. This can help speed up the carpet-cleaning process significantly.

In addition to carpet extractors that recycle, there have been advancements in what is referred to in the industry as “moisture-controlled” wand technology. These units are proving to be effective at cleaning, controlling the amount of water used, and reducing the amount of moisture left in the carpet after the cleaning process.

Manual Push Sweepers

While units such as recyclers might be considered high-tech, there is also some low-tech equipment that will play a growing role in cleaning. An example of this is manual sweepers.

Why are they green? The answer is simple—they use manpower in place of electricity, fuel, or water.

While manual push sweepers are not new, there have been significant changes to them over the past few years, in both effectiveness and filtering. Today, there are push sweepers on the market that are several times faster than conventional push brooms.

Some are designed to clean nearly 30,000 square feet in an hour, greatly enhancing worker productivity. Further, to enhance performance and productivity in edge cleaning, some units feature side brooms that rotate and sweep soils out of corners and edges.

Additionally, unlike brooms or gas-powered air sweepers that can generate clouds of dust with possible contaminants and allergens, manual sweepers contain and control what they recover.

Steam Cleaners

Sometimes innovations are ahead of their time and their true value is not immediately appreciated or realized. This can be said of steam cleaners, which have been around for many years.

These systems can effectively and quickly clean a variety of surfaces, from gym and medical equipment to food preparation areas and restroom fixtures. What makes them green is they use no chemicals, operating purely on water heated to more than 240 degrees Fahrenheit. Their popularity is growing rapidly in the market.

Evolving Machines For Care Of Hard Floors

Equipment used to maintain and clean hard-floor surfaces is undergoing tremendous changes relating to being



It's important to know what ingredients—green or otherwise—are in your cleaning products.

green and sustainable. Because hard-floor surface cleaning has traditionally involved the use of powerful cleaning chemicals, manufacturers are developing equipment that requires fewer chemicals, and in certain applications can even be used with no chemicals.

Additionally, smaller equipment is playing a larger role in floorcare. Instead of large, cumbersome, and difficult-to-maneuver units, smaller machines are being used to tackle floorcare projects, often saving water and dramatically reducing the use of chemicals.

Further, these units are powered by a new generation of batteries that are safer and more environmentally responsible.

Labeling

As referenced earlier, green cleaning chemicals are now well-accepted and are no longer deemed a passing trend in the professional cleaning industry. However, it is expected that in response to growing demand and increased regulations, ingredient disclosure on all chemicals—including green products—will continue to evolve.

For parks and recreation facilities, this will likely prove to be important. For instance, otherwise-green ingredients in a cleaning chemical may potentially trigger an allergic reaction among children. Other products used for the same purpose may not include this ingredient.

Full disclosure of all ingredients will allow facility managers to select only products that do not contain specific ingredients, helping to protect the health of children and others.

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Sidebar: Sweeping Trends

Many facilities are accustomed to hosing down walkways and other exterior surfaces. However, as water becomes more expensive and more areas of the country experience drought conditions, hosing outdoor areas with a garden hose is increasingly prohibited.

Sweeping is a logical alternative that helps conserve water.

And many municipalities around the country are now limiting or banning the use of gas-powered leaf blowers for a variety of reasons.

As a result, many parks and recreation departments are now selecting manual sweepers for park and facility maintenance.



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