

When Old Reliable Must Go

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Sustainability

Replacing ill-performing vacuum cleaners with newer, greener versions is a sustainable step in the right direction.

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There are currently 186 vacuum cleaner manufacturers that have earned the [Carpet and Rug Institute's](#) (CRI) [Seal of Approval](#).

The CRI-certified machines they produce have been independently tested and proven to be more effective than conventional vacuum cleaners at removing soil and containing dust and contaminants while also protecting carpet fibers and appearance.

These machines also tend to be more durable than other models and perform effectively while protecting health and the environment.

This is why I am a strong advocate of replacing older, non-certified vacuum cleaners at the end of their lifespan — which, for commercial use, is typically four to seven years — with newer, greener machines.

However, while replacing old, inefficient machines is a must, it brings up a problem: How does one dispose of those old vacuum cleaners?

It is estimated that hundreds of millions of pounds of cleaning supplies and equipment — including vacuum cleaners — end up in landfills each year.

Fortunately, there are several more sustainable and responsible ways of disposing an older machine:

Recycle Or Reuse It

Many recycling centers accept small machines and appliances, including vacuum cleaners and their parts.

Some recyclers will even pick up old machines at your home or office.

A good resource for finding such a center is [Earth 911](#).

There are other reputable organizations and websites that provide similar services, which can be found with an Internet keyword search or by thumbing through a telephone directory.

Some vacuum repair shops and JanSan distributor service departments will also accept old vacuum cleaners and either restore them or find a way to reuse the parts.

For instance, the hoses, tubes, filters, wands and even roller brushes on older vacuum cleaners often have plenty of life still in them and can be reused in another machine.

Interestingly, when old vacuum cleaners are restored, they very often are more effective and eco-friendly than they were when they were new.

Sell It

If the vacuum is still in satisfactory working order, it might be possible to sell it via an online classified advertisement.

Many building service contractors (BSCs) keep a few "emergency" vacuum cleaners on hand just in case one of their machines breaks down.

Some vacuum repair shops will also pay for old vacuum cleaners that can be restored.

If you take the time to look, selling opportunities can materialize, allowing an older machine to have a new life with someone else.

Donate It

If the machine still works but is not worth the time and effort necessary to sell it, consider giving it to a nonprofit organization, shelter, charity, community organization or church.

Most thrift stores also readily take old vacuum cleaners that are in working order.

To find thrift stores in your community, visit [The Thrift Shopper](#) or perform an Internet search with the proper keywords.

There may even be a tax benefit to donating the machine.

Take-back Programs

Some vacuum manufacturers have already started what are termed "take-back programs."

This trend started several years ago when computer and electronic industry manufacturers began helping their customers to recycle their "e-waste."

These programs are actually quite simple: In exchange for purchasing a new machine, the manufacturer will take back the old model and recycle it.

Old vacuum cleaners should only be thrown away as a last resort.

This is true of other cleaning tools and equipment as well.

People are beginning to understand that, in today's world, sustainability is all about eliminating waste.

We do this by reusing or recycling as much as we can.

Fortunately, it is not only good for the planet, but also good business.

It's something we probably should have been doing decades ago.

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