



Moving from Green to Sustainable

The cleaning industry is changing once again. After several years of become Greener and more environmentally preferable, it is now also becoming much more sustainable.

Green, as it applies to the professional cleaning industry, is using tools, equipment, and chemicals that have a reduced impact on the environment. Sustainable has various definitions, but in essence it means using natural resources today in such a way that they will be available for future generations.

How can cleaning professionals act in a more sustainable manner? There are actually many ways, and just as with going Green, becoming sustainable must be viewed as an ongoing journey. There is no end point because new technologies and business practices will likely result in new ways to protect natural resources for future generations.

However, here are a few suggestions of things we can do right now to become more environmentally responsible and sustainable:

- Use more fuel-efficient cars, vans, and trucks; this can also be a considerable cost savings.
- When making deliveries or planning work schedules, try to book appointments in the same general area of the city to save fuel.
- Recycle, reduce, and reuse products used to conduct business as well as those used for cleaning.
- Purchase cleaning chemicals in large containers; this helps reduce packaging and shipping.
- Switch to certified-Green cleaning products. Many traditional cleaning products are made from petroleum products; Green products are not.
- Take advantage of “take-back” programs. Some manufacturers, especially of computers and related technology, have programs where they will take back a computer in order to salvage or recycle parts that can be reused.
- Become more water conscious; many tasks from cleaning kitchen floors to washing exterior walls traditionally involve huge amounts of water; look for alternative, less water-intensive ways to clean these areas.
- Become conscious of cleaning noise; some cleaning equipment such as truckmount carpet extractors are noisy, disturbing nearby offices and residents; studies in hospitals have found that vacuum cleaners are one of the chief “noise culprits” in medical facilities.
- Encourage customers to install eco-friendly matting systems; many of these mats are made from totally recycled materials.
- Encourage clients to select recycled paper products.

At a recent Chicago seminar, Stephen Ashkin, President of The Ashkin Group, addressed ways the janitor industry can positively influence the Green movement and become more sustainable. Ashkin stated our industry can influence more than 26 percent of all LEED-EB credits for existing buildings in the United States, which is substantial. This means janitor manufacturers, distributors, and cleaning technicians can have a dramatic influence on their customers’ sustainability as they become more sustainable themselves.

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