



490A Constitution Drive  
Taunton, MA 02780

Telephone: (866) 878-9100  
Fax: (866) 366-9537  
www.supremeindustrial.com

## The Going Green Scene

Green cleaning has been the number one trend in the cleaning industry for the past five years. Implementing a successful green cleaning program in commercial facilities is an effective and even trendy strategy. But the green cleaning concept can be incredibly confusing, since there is no one universal standard. Despite the increasing importance of green practices in the cleaning industry, there is still some doubt among sellers and buyers as to whether going green is worth the effort. Many question the effectiveness and value of green cleaning? The following overview is designed to be an update to help build credible green cleaning initiatives.

- 1. Support is growing:** The cleaning industry has strongly endorsed green cleaning, with organizations like ISSA and BSCAI recently publishing a special edition of “Green Cleaning for Dummies” and hosting several regulatory and educational sessions on green cleaning.
- 2. Performance is comparable:** Green products weren’t always as good as they are now, but to meet industry standards today, green products must be at least as effective as traditional products.
- 3. Availability is up, prices are down:** There are more than 100 companies offering products that are certified green. Making available a wide variety of competitively-priced green cleaning products, and at prices lower than the past.
- 4. Documentation exists on health and productivity:** There is significant evidence that links building occupants’ improved health and productivity with green cleaning. Included is a reduction in reported symptoms of asthma, flu, sick building syndrome, respiratory problems and headaches.
- 5. There are measurable savings to the environment:** By just using toilet paper with recycled content, we can save between 12.5 and 25 million trees a year. Commercial and institutional buildings use more than 6 billion pounds of cleaning chemical, mostly made from nonrenewable natural resources easily be replaced with products that reduce our impact on health and the environment.

To get started, simply follow the “roadmap” now being used by many and set by the [U.S. Green Building Council’s \(USGBC\) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating system for Existing Buildings \(LEED-EB\)](#). LEED-EB can serve as a checklist of significant product categories and practices, ensuring you don’t overlook anything. Here is a small list of categories to get you started:

- **Cleaning chemicals:** At a minimum, use “certified” products from Green Seal or EcoLogo, GreenGuard or the EPA’s Design for the Environment (DfE) Partnership Program. These products minimize the risk for negative health impacts on cleaning personnel and building occupants, while simultaneously minimizing environmental impact. Using certified products will help assure the quality and performance of the product is on the same level as those competing products at a similar price.
  - The cleaning industry uses **six billion pounds of cleaning chemicals** annually. If we also consider the raw materials and processes used to produce them, we can reasonably increase this number by a factor of 10 — resulting in 60 billion pounds. Helping to ensure that this huge amount of material is purchased and used in an environmentally sound manner can have a drastically positive effect on the health of the planet, your staff and your buildings’ occupants.
  - As with all chemicals, we should look for products **with low volatile organic compound (VOC) content**, reduced levels of fragrances and those made from
-



490A Constitution Drive  
Taunton, MA 02780

Telephone: (866) 878-9100  
Fax: (866) 366-9537  
www.supremeindustrial.com

renewable resources. **Choose** water-based over solvent-based products, and those that can be used with cold water — these products have **huge environmental savings by reducing the energy** associated with heating water.

- To further minimize risk, always avoid products that have the potential to expose your staff or building occupants to harmful chemicals, such as substances classified as known human carcinogens or **reproductive toxicants, and ozone-depleting compounds**. Green products also move us away from the traditional chemicals that are derived from petroleum. We all are quite knowledgeable about the environmental impact **of reducing our consumption of this non-renewable, valuable resource**.
- As always when shopping for green products, **concentrated versions** of products are best for a number of reasons when compared to ready-to-use competitors. **Portion-control systems** reduce potential harm to staff and occupants by isolating the user from the chemicals. They also reduce environmental impact by reducing the amount of packaging materials used, not to mention the transportation and disposal impacts of the product. In the end, concentrated chemicals will save you money — and that is always a good thing.
- **Paper and trashcan liners:** If you are supplying paper products and liners, you should meet or exceed the EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines which covers the minimum post-consumer content for each product category.
- **Janitorial equipment:** Vacuum cleaners and carpet extraction equipment should be certified by the Carpet and Rug Institute's Green Label and Seal of Approval programs.
- In addition and perhaps even more importantly, **re-evaluate your actual procedures** to ensure effective cleaning focused on protecting occupant health and not merely switching to a green product or two. For example, change bathroom cleaning procedures to ensure all disinfectants remain on the surface for the proper amount of time; or use color-coded micro fiber cleaning cloths to reduce the amount of water and chemicals used and to minimize cross-contamination.

\*Excerpted from the following articles:

Proving The Value And Effectiveness Of Green Cleaning In Commercial Facilities

by [Stephen Ashkin](#)

Green Training: Extra Credit- *State-Mandated Green Standards Send Cleaning Crews Back To School* By Ronnie Garrett

Green ....By Nick Bragg

---