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Don't Hide from Green Floor Care

3/15/2011 By Jolynn Kennedy

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When it comes to many of the more general cleaning tasks that hotel housekeepers perform every day, transferring to a green cleaning system may be as easy as simply selecting environmentally preferable cleaning products. While housekeepers may also need to be trained on how to use the green products, for the most part using many green cleaning chemicals is not that much different from using conventional products... it's just that the green ones are healthier.

However, that is not necessarily true when it comes to floor care. Although great strides have been made in developing green floor care chemicals such as strippers, finishes, scrubbing agents, etc., some housekeepers and other cleaning professionals claim many of these products are still not up to performance par as the conventional ones they were made to replace.

This can be a problem, especially in a large hotel property, and why some try to avoid implementing a green floor care program. But all is not lost. For instance, when it comes to selecting green or at least "greener" floor care chemicals, some options include:

- Working with an astute jansan distributor, familiar with the many green floor care products available, try different brands and see if one or more meets your property's expectations as to performance and usability.
- Select those products with a pH no higher than 11.5 and total phosphorous concentration of less than 0.5.
- Avoid chemicals that contain known carcinogens, heavy metals, or aqueous ammonia.
- Look for products that have total VOCs (volatile organic compounds) less than 7 percent after dilution.

A couple of tips should be mentioned here. First, often chemicals made by the same manufacturer are designed to work together, almost like a team. Select strippers, finishes, and other cleaning agents all from the same manufacturer when making your evaluation. Second, the ingredients, pH levels, VOC count and other information should be posted either on the product's label, marketing material, or MSDS. If in doubt, ask your jansan distributor.

The Equipment 'Complication'

Another shall we say "complication" when it comes to green floor care involves the actual equipment used for floor care. Many of the floor machines manufactured years ago were designed primarily to be durable and by the 1990s, more ergonomic and easier to use. However, little emphasis was placed on how environmentally responsible the machines were. Many were very dependent on ample amounts of cleaning solution and water to perform floor care tasks.

Today, some manufacturers are making the development of floor care equipment with a reduced impact on the environment, users, and building occupants their primary concern. For instance, David Frank, president of the American Institute of Cleaning Sciences, says housekeepers and other administrators should now select what he calls "low moisture" floor machines.

"They use less water," he says, "and [this] usually also means less chemical as well. "Together, floors dry faster, there is less impact on the environment, there is a cost savings because less chemical is used, and less water makes it more sustainable."

Some "world class" floor machines, especially automatic scrubbers that clean and polish floors all in one pass, now meet these criteria.* They are designed to more effectively scrub and clean floors, but without all the chemical and water of earlier machines. Some machines are even equipped with metering systems that help regulate chemical/water use so just the right amount is used to perform satisfactorily. Nothing is wasted.

Another option is cylindrical brush technology. The secret to the cleaning performance of these machines is that they use cylindrical, counter-rotating brushes instead of rotary pads. The brushes, which can be used over and over again, can reach deep into the pores and grout of floors, remove grit and soils with less need for chemical and water. Independent tests have found that because of this feature, the machine can use as much as 30 percent less water, and related chemical, as a typical rotary machine.

Look and Ye Shall Find

Conventional window cleaning chemicals contain several ingredients that can be potentially harmful to the environment. Switching to one of the many effective green window cleaners, without any of these ingredients, eliminates the problem.

Unfortunately, as we have discussed, greening floor care is not so simple. However, we can definitely reduce floor care's impact on hotel housekeepers, hotel guests, and the environment. It just takes a little time, study, and with the help of a knowledgeable distributor, the whole process can be much easier.

Jolynn Kennedy is marketing manager for [Tornado Industries](#) and [CEB](#), both makers of professional cleaning equipment. She has authored several articles including a white paper on green floor care.

*World class refers to floor machines that are designed to work on a wide variety of floors and that meet specific standards as to craftsmanship, durability, versatility, and comfort for a broad diversity of users.

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