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[Strategic Partnerships](#)
[IFMA Foundation](#)
[Membership](#)
[What is FM](#)
[FM Credentials](#)
[GSA Schedule](#)
[Sustainability](#)
[Government Relations](#)
[Press Room](#)
[Conferences & Events](#)
[Corporate Sustaining Partner \(CSP\)](#)
[Research](#)
[Online Store](#)
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Top 10 Ways to Reduce Water Use When Cleaning

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 36 states anticipate local, regional or statewide water shortages by 2013.

These shortages will likely impact every aspect of building operations, including cleaning causing facility managers to analyze all building operations and look for new ways to reduce water consumption.

To help meet these water challenges, Michael Schaffer, a senior executive with Tacony's Commercial Floor Care division, which manufactures CFR carpet extractors that recycle water and cleaning solution has created the "Top 10 Ways to Reduce Water Use When Cleaning."

Here are his top 10 suggestions:

1. Eliminate the use of garden hoses when cleaning. "Very often, sidewalks, outdoor plazas, [and] even commercial kitchens are cleaned [with garden hoses,]" says Schaffer. "This uses millions of gallons of water and is a practice that simply is no longer sustainable."
2. Use sweepers for cleaning plazas and sidewalks.
3. Prioritize floor and carpet cleaning; clean lightly-used areas less frequently than heavily-used areas.
4. Use auto-dilution systems to mix chemicals; these systems precisely monitor chemical and water use to eliminate waste.
5. Select floor care equipment that uses less water; manufacturers are now introducing low moisture scrubbers.
6. Switch to cylindrical brush floor care technology. "These machines use rotating brushes instead of pads. Because the brushes do more of the work, less chemical and water are necessary," explains Schaffer.
7. Switch to floor care finishes along with floor care methods that minimize refinishing cycles.
8. Select carpet extractors that filter and recycle water and cleaning solution; these systems can save as much as seven times the amount of water that conventional extractors use.
9. Select microfiber mop heads and cleaning cloths, which use less water than traditional string mops or terry cloth towels.
10. Consider the use of pre-moistened cleaning wipes. If used properly, the wipes control the use of both water and chemicals.

"Just as our industry transferred to more environmentally responsible cleaning, we now face challenges dealing with sustainability and natural resources," says Schaffer, "and water conservation is at the top of that list."

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