



Three Keys to Green Carpet Care

By Doug Berjer — posted 07/02/2013



While the practice of green cleaning in schools and offices has become fairly common, green carpet care is a lesser-known exercise. This is unfortunate because in many facilities, carpet is the largest surface used on a daily basis, and some carpet-cleaning methods have the potential to negatively impact the environment.

To help facilitate the discussion and bring awareness to the subject, let's define green carpet care as using systems, products, and procedures to help keep carpets clean and healthy with the least amount of impact on the cleaning worker, building occupants, and the environment.

Green carpet cleaning can be accomplished when the following three key principles are employed.

1. **Building occupant involvement.** Green carpet care is a shared responsibility. This means building users must do their part by immediately pointing out stains, spots, and soiled areas of the carpet to cleaning professionals. This is important because stains and spots have a tendency to attract more contaminants, making the carpet unhealthy and stain removal all the more difficult. Attending to a problem area quickly also can mean that less chemical will be necessary to clean it. Whenever less chemical is used in any type of cleaning, it is better for the health of the user and the environment.
2. **Appropriate chemical selection.** Similar to other cleaning products, carpet care chemicals have evolved over the years and many green-certified carpet cleaning chemicals exist today. Many of these products can become more effective when a heated carpet extractor is used. In turn, this can mean that less chemical is necessary, again helping to reduce the chemical's impact on the user and the environment.

The problem with some older or more conventional carpet cleaning chemicals is that they may release high levels of volatile organic compounds—or VOCs—into the air. They also contain a number of ingredients that we now know can cause a variety of health-related problems. For instance, some traditional chemicals have been identified as triggering asthma attacks in children.

When considering a switch from conventional to green carpet cleaning, facility managers and cleaning professionals must be aware that not all green-certified chemicals are alike. Some chemicals may work better in different situations and on certain types of carpet. Trial and error may be called for; however, a chemical solution will invariably be identified that is not only effective but also environmentally preferable.

3. **Proper equipment selection.** Along with proven environmentally-preferable cleaning chemicals, portable carpet extractors have advanced over the years and now contribute significantly to making carpet cleaning greener and healthier. Low-moisture technology also can be a crucial component to green carpet cleaning. While climate and other indoor environment conditions can impact drying results, the ultimate goal of low-moisture carpet cleaning is for carpets to dry in about two hours after cleaning. This helps prevent mold and mildew as well as any resoiling that can occur when carpets are left damp for too long. And, of course, blocked-off areas can be opened to foot traffic more quickly with low-moisture cleaning.

However, achieving low-moisture carpet cleaning does not necessarily require the use of extractors that use less water. Instead, some of today's advanced machines employ a combination of powerful vacuum motors and more effective wands, which apply water or cleaning solution to carpets and extract so quickly that moisture never rests on the carpet. The process is often referred to as atomization and it can help ensure carpets dry quickly, helping to meet the goal of low-moisture carpet cleaning.

Ultimately, these steps can help make the largest-used surface in a facility healthier and greener. With consistent use, they can serve to make the entire facility healthier and greener as well.



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