



Green Cleaning

**UNICCO
moves towards
environmentally
preferable practices**

UNICCO

INTEGRATED FACILITIES SERVICES®

Transitioning from traditional cleaning practices to “green” practices is not a simple process. It requires planning, investments and, most of all, commitment. That’s why, as UNICCO Service Company moves towards environmentally preferable practices, it is dedicating itself to not only the technology and procedures but, more importantly, to the philosophy of environmentally responsible facilities services.

Why green practices?

Over the years, UNICCO traditionally selected products based on safety, performance and price. Our primary focus remains the protection of our employees, the occupants of the facilities we service and our clients’ property investments. To support our efforts we have established product review teams comprised of UNICCO operations, purchasing and safety staff working with major suppliers to identify products, procedures and Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) training to minimize potential risks. Our task has been made easier by the market shift to environmental responsibility which has encouraged manufacturers to reformulate complete lines of environmentally safe products from sustainable resources.

In the past, UNICCO experienced additional product cost and training expense, but reductions in lost time injuries and insurance claims mitigated the burden on business that would hurt competitiveness. Today, improvements in environmentally preferable products have virtually eliminated the need for harsher chemicals and, with expanding market share, the environmental benefits translate to real business benefits.

For facilities services companies and customers, “green” benefits include:

- Safer working conditions for UNICCO workers and our clients’ employees, tenants and visitors.
- Standardized inventory and product use training with green product programs.
- The continued enhancement of products and support from environmentally committed suppliers and equipment vendors.
- Reduced lost time injuries and insurance claims.
- Lower cleaning product costs.
- The elimination of caustic, acidic and abrasive cleaners extends the useful life of carpets, floor coverings and wall treatments.

Transition to green

The transition to environmentally friendly cleaning practices had been made more difficult by the lack of recognized environmental impact standards for the janitorial supply industry. Yet, despite the lack of standards, the entire industry is making the transition to more responsible practices. Through the efforts of service contractors, like UNICCO, coupled with demands of our customers in government, non-profit and commercial sectors, janitorial suppliers are recognizing the strength of the market demand for environmental facilities programs.

UNICCO has joined the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) (<http://www.usgbc.org>) -- an organization that promotes environmental responsibility within the buildings industry - - to pursue Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for client buildings and UNICCO practices.

Customers have also developed a growing interest in the program. A number have launched initiatives to meet the requirements for LEED designation. UNICCO has worked with these customers to convert to green practices. The initiatives coincide with UNICCO's goals, so UNICCO account managers are happy to help customers make the transition.

USGBC is leading a national consensus for producing a new generation of buildings that deliver high performance inside and out. Council members work together to develop LEED products and resources that support the adoption of sustainable building. Members also forge strategic alliances with key industry and research organizations and federal, state and local government agencies to transform the built environment.

UNICCO is also working with Green Seal, an independent, non-profit organization that strives to achieve a healthier and cleaner environment. Green Seal identifies and promotes products and services that cause less toxic pollution and waste, conserve resources and habitats, and minimize global warming and ozone depletion. Based in Washington, D.C., Green Seal can be found online at <http://www.greenseal.org>.

UNICCO representatives have also attended information and training sessions held by Stephen Ashkin of the Ashkin Group, (<http://www.theashkingroup.com>), a consulting firm focused on creating healthy, high-performing indoor environments through "greening" the cleaning process and products.

UNICCO has worked with Green Seal Executive Director, Arthur Weissman to advise the company on Green Seal's guidelines. Although neither the Green Seal nor LEED programs certify outsource facilities service companies at this time, the programs provide the framework which UNICCO followed to help its customer achieve an environmentally preferable building environment.

Among the services that Green Seal provides is one to set standards to test and certify products in categories as diverse as lighting, air conditioning, paper goods, packaging, office supplies and lawn care equipment. Another category that is of particular interest to UNICCO is general purpose cleaners.

Upon examining its operations, UNICCO found that its overall procedures, such as supervision, work scheduling and even general training, do not require major changes to move to environmentally preferable practices. What is required is a change in the selection and use of cleaning products, as well as a change in thought processes to seek the most environmentally friendly way of providing custodial services.

Using Green Seal guidelines, UNICCO has instituted programs for some of its customers that have since become templates for other accounts as UNICCO rolls out its environmentally preferable cleaning practices. The company developed a manual that addresses all aspects of custodial services including procedure modifications, dusting & dust mopping, restroom cleaning, carpet care, floor care, cleaning product considerations, measuring/diluting concentrated cleaning products, recycling and trash.

As it is being implemented, UNICCO's green program comes down to a few clear objectives -- to eliminate the waste stream and reduce volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

For UNICCO, that involves the following:

CHEMICALS AND SUPPLIES – A considerable amount of work had already been done by suppliers to develop and market green products. Associations, especially Green Seal, have set standards and certified products that are in compliance. In addition, in setting the standards, Green Seal gave UNICCO the environmental knowledge that it needed to make better decisions about all of the products it buys, regardless of whether or not they are certified. In general, by moving away from petroleum-based to citrus-based cleaners, UNICCO is able to make major steps in reducing environmental impacts and protecting workers.

UNICCO has collaborated with companies that offer environmentally preferable cleaning product lines. One of the distinguishing characteristics of these types of products is that they are purchased in concentrated form and are mixed in batches at the time of use. Using concentrated solutions cuts down on transportation, handling and storage costs.

Inherent with concentrated cleaning chemicals is the requirement for mixing stations that precisely mix the dilutions for use. This controlled process helps ensure proper usage of the chemicals which contributes to worker safety during mixing and application. It also cuts down on product costs because, in the absence of a measuring system, workers tend to overuse cleaning materials. This can be costly in terms of wasted product and in wear and tear on the surfaces being cleaned.

Companies that make environmentally preferable products pay attention to other details, as well. For instance, labels are generally screen printed on the products. This avoids a common problem of paper labels being removed or falling off of containers. In addition to the obvious safety considerations, a lost label can lead to fines from the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA).

Companies also use reference numbers and color codes for each cleaner, as well as icons that show how the product is to be used. A floor cleaner, for instance, will include an icon showing a person washing a floor. The solutions are packaged in recycled containers. Environmentally preferable suppliers generally view the product as one piece of a cleaning process that needs to be environmentally aware at every step of the way.



EQUIPMENT – In addition to mixing stations, environmentally preferable cleaning requires equipment that is designed with the environment in mind. In many locations UNICCO uses three-step filter vacuums (left) that adhere to HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filter standards that specify that 99.97% of all particulates are collected. Floor machines must also have dust collecting capabilities. Carpet extraction equipment uses controlled applications of cleaning materials and less water to meet specifications that carpets should dry within 24 hours to cut down on mildew and mold. Virtually every machine has an environmentally preferable

equivalent that, when combined with the right cleaning agents, makes a substantial impact on VOCs and worker and tenant safety.



UNICCO has also bought specialized equipment, such as portable carpet spotters (left), that quickly spot clean spills to cut down on the need for full cleanings. This particular procedure involves tenants in that they are asked to report a spill when it occurs so custodians can clean the spot before it dries.

TRAINING – There is no question that switching to environmentally preferable procedures requires a higher level of training. This can be a challenge for an industry that traditionally has high employee turnover. UNICCO, which invests heavily in general employee training, requires that its vendors provide training for their environmentally preferable products to ensure that the proper procedures are communicated to employees.

This fits well with vendors' programs since environmentally preferable product companies also see training as integral to the success of their products. Consequently, the suppliers have formal training programs for specific tasks, such as rest room cleaning, high dusting, etc., to ensure that their products are used properly. The education consists of intensive training for supervisors and employees at the outset with periodic retraining as necessary.



The training extends from equipment maintenance to mixing station (left) operations to proper application procedures. Seemingly minor techniques, such as applying a cleaner to a cloth rather than spraying it on a surface, are important. A big part of the training is explaining the importance of the procedures to workers. UNICCO's challenge is to let workers understand how they affect the environment as they go through their work day, as well as the benefits to our customers and to the workers' own health and safety.

Administrative procedures also have to be modified. In locations where UNICCO has implemented environmentally preferable techniques, the company keeps detailed training records for each employee. These records are used in scheduling workers to ensure that everyone is properly trained before he or she is assigned to any task.

WASTE STREAM MANAGEMENT – Waste stream management seeks to minimize trash and maximize recyclables. It starts with using environmentally preferable cleaning

products. This simplifies handling and waste disposal. Hand towels and toilet paper for green sites have 40% and 30% post-consumer paper, respectively.

Recycling requires the cooperation of building tenants. UNICCO works with building management and tenants at many accounts to establish recycling for paper, paperboard, plastic and metals. We publicize the program and facilitate recycling by conveniently placing receptacles and making sure that they are regularly maintained and emptied. Properly set up, a recycling program can save money to help fund other initiatives.

UNICCO – Next steps

UNICCO is fully committed to moving towards environmentally preferable facilities practices. We recognize the benefits and understand that customers and tenants often want a green approach to cut down on allergic reactions and improve the indoor air quality for their employees. UNICCO encourages building owners and tenants to get involved and makes adjustments to its cleaning programs based on this feedback.

UNICCO is also moving towards green practices by using environmentally preferable techniques, products and equipment from the outset when bringing new customers on board. The difference in startup costs is minimal and the benefits to UNICCO employees, as well as the customers' tenants, are enormous.

UNICCO has offered to convert all of its current customers to green practices. This transition involves an investment in new equipment but the chemical costs and other expenses are largely neutral. Some customers have decided to make the conversion. For some others who do not want to make the equipment investment, UNICCO is gradually converting to environmentally preferable cleaning products and procedures in order to start them on the path to a cleaner environment.

What makes a cleaning product green?

In times past, using a green product often meant settling for lower performance and higher cost. But times change. Cleaning technologies and procedures have improved enormously. Today, not using green cleaning products as part of a total healthy, high performance cleaning program means missing a crucial opportunity for cost-effective improvements in facility management.

Answering the question, what makes a cleaning product green, entails examining the product itself, the methods by which it is manufactured and used, and finally taking into the entire facility where the product is used.

Green now means exceptional performance, a healthy indoor environment and lower overall costs, as well as reduced environmental impact. If all these factors are not in play, it is not green. Performance, health, cost and environment: four key outcomes to keep in mind for measuring green, whether talking about a product, a program or a facility.

(continued)

PRODUCT

So what makes a cleaning product green? Certainly, the science and chemicals that go into a product make a difference. Standards developed by independent third parties exist today that were not around 15 years ago. Independent organizations such as Green Seal, the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization, have set forth comprehensive criteria for certifying cleaning products for their greenness. Earning Green Seal Certification for a product is a badge of accomplishment. For more information visit, www.greenseal.org.

Additionally, one must consider a product's entire life cycle to fully appreciate all the important health and environmental impacts. Evaluating the whole of the manufacturing spectrum is work of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Their Design for the Environment office develops partnerships with manufacturers to change the way in which products are made by encouraging substitution of traditional and perhaps harmful ingredients for environmentally preferable raw materials. Learn more at www.epa.gov/dfe.

PROGRAM

Another big difference today from 15 years ago is that Green Seal also has developed criteria that include performance standards. Simply put, the product has to work as intended. Just as critical as the product's ingredients, therefore, is how the product is used. Facility managers that want the best quality indoor environments with minimal natural environmental impact are establishing a healthy, high performance cleaning program. Such a program provides the processes and protocols for maintenance staff and for building occupants, as well.

FACILITY

Finally, purchasing green products and implementing green procedures for their use are only two parts of the story. Creating a holistic approach to facility management is the important third part for being green. For example, preventing contaminants such as dirt, microbes, dust and pests from entering a building in the first place means facility managers will have a more cost-effective, healthy, high performance cleaning program.

Taking a holistic view toward a facility is the approach of the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Existing Buildings rating system. LEED EB is emerging as the most comprehensive program for certifying the greenness and indoor environmental quality of facilities. To view the rating system standards, visit www.usgbc.org.

To be truly green, one must go beyond merely having a few environmentally preferred cleaning products. Leading facility managers are adapting comprehensive green cleaning programs and are in fact making efforts to green their entire facility.

SOURCE: JohnsonDiversey Inc.

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