

10 Stewardship Principles for Green Cleaning

1. Commit to people, education and communications.

Buildings don't get dirty or get cleaned by themselves. These activities are dependent on people! A successful green janitorial program should involve both the cleaning personnel and building occupants. Get people involved, keep them involved by celebrating and communicating successes, and let them know the value/benefits that are in it for them.

2. Clean to protect health and the environment first, and appearance second.

It is not what is seen that is the real area of concern. Even clean appearing buildings can be extremely unhealthy. Thus, focus on cleaning for health and the environment, and in most cases the appearance will be addressed at the same time.

3. Clean and maintain the building as a whole, not just as separate components.

Cleaning and maintenance in one area of a building can have a major impact on other areas. For example, the fumes from the stripping and recoating of a floor in one area can contaminate adjacent areas or even the entire building via the HVAC system. Appropriate actions must take place to insure the health and safety throughout the entire building.

4. Schedule routine maintenance.

Scheduled maintenance that is frequent and thorough is the most efficient and effective method for building maintenance. Concise plans and records are a must.

5. Plan for accidents.

Specific procedures need to be developed to address accidents. Plans should address weather related problems, as well as common spills (e.g., coffee), water leaks, smoke or air contamination by a noxious chemical reaction.

6. Minimize human exposure to harmful contaminants and cleaning residues.

Workers should always use the appropriate personal protective equipment, areas where work is taking place should have adequate ventilation, work schedules should be established to minimize exposure to building occupants, and the products used should be the most benign to accomplish the task.

7. Minimize chemical, particle and moisture residue when cleaning.

The products that are used for building maintenance due to their ability to quickly and efficiently remove oils, soils, living organisms, etc., can also contribute to a building's problem if used incorrectly.

8. Ensure worker and building occupant safety at all times.

9. Minimize the amount of pollutants entering the building, while maximizing the amount of pollutants extracted.

It is significantly more effective in terms of both time and money to keep contaminants out of the building, then to try to remove them once they have entered.

10. Dispose of cleaning waste in environmentally safe ways.