



Why Target Janitorial Cleaning Chemicals?

Adoption of environmentally preferable cleaning chemicals is important for many reasons:

Worker health and safety: Janitorial workers are one of the most likely worker classifications to suffer injuries on the job, primarily burns and blinding from caustic substances. One study found that 35% of conventional cleaning products can cause blindness, severe skin damage or damage to organs through the skin.

Environmental damage: Cleaning products that contain phosphorous are associated with algal blooms in water bodies that kill aquatic organisms. Some contain alkylphenol ethoxylate surfactants, which persist in the environment and are linked to hormone disruption in exposed organisms. When paper is manufactured with chlorine or any of its derivatives, it releases dioxin into the environment, a persistent bioaccumulative toxic chemical.

Patient and staff comfort: Many cleaning products contain high levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which can give rise to respiratory irritation, headaches and other symptoms.

Long term health issues: A surprising number of cleaning products contain known or probable carcinogens, and substances associated with reproductive organ damage, birth defects, kidney damage, neurological impacts and other serious health effects.

What Should Purchasers Look For?

As the market for environmentally friendly cleaning products has expanded, many manufacturers make environmental claims that are difficult to verify or assess. Clearly, product review committees or contract staff would find it challenging to take on the immense burden of reviewing individual lab data on specific products to assess environmental impacts. Third party certification can provide assurance that a given product has been independently tested and found to meet a specific set of criteria which verifiably reduce its negative environmental and health impacts. It also ensures that a program of repeat verification and factory inspection is in place to ensure continuing compliance.

There are two certifying organizations for cleaning products that are widely accepted. In the US, a nonprofit organization called Green Seal has established product standards for cleaning products based on a combination of performance specifications and environmental criteria. Their process is open, and includes feedback from health and environmental experts as well as manufacturers and end users. In Canada, UL Environment (formerly TerraChoice) offers the "EcoLogo" certification program for cleaning products and supplies operated in a similar fashion to Green Seal. Both have developed environmentally preferable standards for janitorial chemicals and paper products.

Additional Resources

- [Greening Your Purchases of Cleaning Products: A Guide for Federal Purchasers](#)
- [Responsible Purchasing Network's Purchasing Guide for Cleaners](#)

Supplier Disclosure Questions for Janitorial Cleaners and Paper Supplies

#	Question	Preferred Answer	Rationale for asking suppliers this question	Explanations and Other considerations
Janitorial Cleaners				
1.	Is the product Green Seal or EcoLogo Certified? (Yes/No) If yes, please specify	Yes	<p>Data from Washington State shows that about 6 percent of janitors experience a job-related injury from chemical exposure to cleaning products every year. Certain ingredients in cleaning products can present hazard concerns to exposed populations (e.g., skin and eye irritation in workers) or toxicity to aquatic species in waters receiving inadequately treated wastes (note that standard sewage treatment effectively reduces or removes most cleaning product constituents). For example, alkylphenol ethoxylates, a common surfactant ingredient in cleaners, have been shown in laboratory studies to function as an "endocrine disrupter," causing adverse reproductive effects of the types seen in wildlife exposed to polluted waters.</p> <p>Green Seal and EcoLogo certify products that meet consensus-based third party environmental standards. Using Green Seal-certified or EcoLogo-certified cleaning products can help facilities qualify for credit ES 4.1 in the Green Guide for Health Care (http://www.gghc.org), and can help facilities "green" their operations.</p>	<p>The Green Seal standards for products relevant to cleaning contracts include: Degreasers (GS-34);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning Products for Industrial & Institutional Use including general-purpose, bathroom, glass, and carpet cleaners(GS-37); • Industrial & Institutional Floor-Care Products (GS-40); • Industrial Hand Cleaners (GS-41); and • Specialty Cleaning Products for Industrial and Institutional Use (GS-53) covers furniture polish, graffiti remover, metal cleaning, and upholstery cleaning, among others. This standard includes antimicrobial pesticide products, such as disinfectants and sanitizers but does not include sterilizers or high level disinfectants for critical medical devices. (Green Seal's Position Statement on this) It also covers GS-37 products that contain enzymes or microorganisms until GS-37 can be modified. (This is a new standard and products may not be available.) <p>EcoLogo standards include Carpet and Upholstery Cleaners (CCD 143), Cleaning and Degreasing Compounds-Biologically based (CCD 110), Floor Care Products (CCD 147), Hand Cleaners (CCD 104) and Hard Surface Cleaners (CCD 146).</p>
2.	Will this product NOT be classified as hazardous waste (under RCRA) if disposed as delivered? (Yes/No)	Yes	<p>Some cleaning products, as a result of particular ingredients or other attributes, must be disposed of as hazardous waste in the event of a spill or outdated product. Facilities can avoid these potential liabilities and costs by preferring products that are not hazardous waste if disposed "as delivered," meaning before the product is used. Because state laws for hazardous waste definitions vary, this question asks about the product's status under the Federal RCRA hazardous waste law.</p>	<p>Hazardous products may pose harm to patients and staff. Prefer safer products when available. If there are the words "Caution", "Warning", "Danger", "Flammable" or "Poison" it is a hazardous product and may need to be treated as hazardous waste.</p>

3.	(a) Is this product NOT covered in cleaning product standards by Green Seal or EcoLogo standards? (Yes/No)	Yes or No	This question is asked to allow for products which may not be contained in standards by Green Seal or EcoLogo but may be covered by other programs. If Yes, then another opportunity for environmentally preferable products will be to consider products that have had their formulations reviewed for reduced impacts under the EPA's Design for Environment Program (DfE). If no, the product is covered under Green Seal or EcoLogo so either answer is acceptable.	There are other programs that some recognize as offering products with environmentally preferable attributes.
3.	(b) If Yes, is this product labeled by the U.S. EPA's Design for Environment (DfE) label? (Yes/No)	Yes	The U.S. EPA Design for Environment Program (DfE) is a voluntary, technical assistance program operated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It draws on the expertise of EPA's Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics to encourage businesses to incorporate environmental and health considerations into the design of products. A key goal is to reduce or eliminate the use and generation of toxic materials during the manufacture, design, use, and final disposition of products.	This program is a partnership with manufacturers and U.S. EPA's Design for the Environment program has improved its transparency and easily accessible and verifiable health and environmental quality standards in revisions in March 2010. There are hundreds of products labeled by DfE. However, the standards set by Green Seal and EcoLogo have been recognized as more robust and transparent. ⁱ
4	Does the <i>primary</i> packaging for this product contain postconsumer recycled content? (Yes/No)	Yes	Primary packaging surrounds the product. Postconsumer recycled content material is a material or finished product that has served its intended use and has been diverted or recovered from waste destined for disposal, having completed its life as a consumer item. ⁱⁱ Basically, it is the material collected from recycling programs. It is calculated as a percentage of total weight of the product. Steel is excluded from consideration as it commonly contains recycled content. This does not include preconsumer (sometimes referred to as postindustrial) recycled content which are recovered materials obtained from manufacturers. ⁱⁱⁱ	Buying recycled-content products ensures that the materials collected in recycling programs will be used again in the manufacture of new products. According to EPA, recommending postconsumer recycled content levels for items will have the most positive impact on reducing the amount of solid waste requiring disposal. ^{iv} Purchasers should prefer products with the highest postconsumer recycled content that also meet other considerations. Use of postconsumer recycled content supports closing the loop in the recycling process, and, based on EPA's ReCon Tool , helps avoid generating greenhouse gas emissions.

Optional Consideration

	Question	Preferred Answer	Rationale: Why ask suppliers this question?	Other considerations or options for this question
6	Is there a full ingredient list available publicly (website, label, etc) or through a third party for this product?	Yes	Facilities may prefer products for which a full and complete ingredient list is available, because it will assist the facility industrial hygienist in the case of an occupational health incident, or if facilities wish to compare products to choose the least toxic.	Fragrance ingredients are not required to be listed on products (FDA).

	Question	Preferred Answer	Rationale: Why ask suppliers this question?	Other considerations or options for this question
Paper Products				
7.	Is the product supplied Green Seal or EcoLogo Certified? (Yes/No)	Yes	Green Seal and EcoLogo certify products that meet consensus environmental standards. Using Green Seal-certified or EcoLogo-certified cleaning products can help facilities qualify for credit ES 4.1 in the Green Guide for Health Care (http://www.gghc.org), and can help facilities green their operations. Green Seal certified paper products are not bleached with chlorine or any its derivatives.	The Green Seal standards for products relevant to commercial janitorial paper are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanitary Paper Products (GS-01) which covers bathroom tissue, facial tissue, paper towels, napkins, and placemats. EcoLogo standards that cover these products are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCD 082 Toilet Tissue • CCD 083 Facial Tissue • CCD 084 Hand Towels An additional source for commercial janitorial paper with environmental products attributes is at Conservatree.org
8.	Is this janitorial paper product “coreless” so it does not have a cardboard core to dispose of when the product is empty? (Yes/No)	Yes/NA	Coreless paper towels and tissue offers an opportunity to reduce waste for healthcare facilities at the point of purchase. Coreless towels and tissue are readily available.	The rationale for preferring coreless products is to eliminate waste for these products.
9.	Does this product meet or exceed the U.S. EPA Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (CPG) for recycled content? (Yes/No)	Yes	EPA’s CPG guidelines set minimum recycled content standards for paper products, trash can liners, waste and recycling containers. In all, it covers over 50 products. For a list of products, see http://www.epa.gov/waste/consERVE/tools/cpg/products/index.htm	Facilities may prefer to use recycled content products when possible to support closing to loop by buying products made with recycled content. Janitorial paper products with recycled content may cost less than comparable products. EPA recommends the following postconsumer recycled content minimums: Bathroom tissue: 20% Paper towels: 40% Facial tissue: 10%

10.	Is this product made without the use of chlorine or any of its derivatives?	Yes	Chlorine used in manufacturing paper produces chlorinated pollutants, including dioxin, in the wastewater stream. EPA states dioxin is toxic industrial pollutant that persists in the environment and bioaccumulate.	Choose janitorial paper products that are labeled “unbleached,” “bleached without chlorine or chlorine derivatives,” or “processed chlorine free.” Elemental chlorine free (ECF) means the paper was bleached using a derivative of chlorine – and would respond “No” to this question. ECF products are prevalent in the marketplace.
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(NOTES)

*Information on SIDS is available in the Manual for Investigation of High Product Volume (HPV) Chemicals at http://www.oecd.org/document/7/0,2340,en_2649_34379_1947463_1_1_1_1,00.html.)

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ⁱ New York State Guidelines Considering EPA’s Design for the Environment, Implementing Green Cleaning Executive Order and 2005 Law, Response to Comments on EPA’s Design for Environment Program, <https://greencleaning.ny.gov/Guidelines.asp>, Accessed March 2012.

ⁱⁱ Glossary, Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/tools/cpg/glossary.htm> viewed September 2011

ⁱⁱⁱ Reusable Vocabulary, U.S. EPA, <http://www.epa.gov/osw/wycd/catbook/you.htm> viewed September, 2011

^{iv} Background Document for the Final Comprehensive Procurement Guideline (CPG) III and Final Recovered Materials Advisory Notice (RMAN) III, U.S. EPA, September 1999, EPA530-R-00-002