



Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Fact Sheet

All Purpose Cleaning Products

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Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Considerations

- Air quality
- Reduce toxic chemicals
- Water Efficiency

Benefits of Purchase

- Better indoor air quality
- Better health for building occupants
- Fewer toxic releases during rinsing down the drain
- Less exposure to carcinogens and reproductive toxins

How To Buy

- Western States Contracting Alliance (WSCA) Janitorial Cleaning Contract # [00307](#).
- Call the vendors to verify products with DfE recognition.

★ **GOAL: To reduce or eliminate the use of toxic cleaning chemicals.** ★

Overview

All purpose cleaning products include window cleaners, carpet cleaners, hand soaps, and disinfectants. According to the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) custodial staff are most vulnerable to the health risks posed by these cleaning products since they have the highest level of exposure.

The EPA cites the [Green Report](#) published by Green Seal in 1998 for the health problems associated with cleaning chemicals. These include reproductive disorders, organ damage, permanent eye damage, asthma and other respiratory ailments, headaches, dizziness, and fatigue.

Chemicals used for cleaning either evaporate into the air, where they can be inhaled, or they are flushed down the drain and enter the environment.



Standards

Toxicological data is not available for many chemicals found in cleaning products. Material Safety Data Sheets used to certify cleaning products often do not list proprietary and inert ingredients. As a result, some standard-setting organizations register products as “green” when the toxicology of some of the ingredients is unknown.

Ecology recommends products certified by Green Seal, Canada’s EcoLogo, and/or those recognized by [EPA’s Design for the Environment \(DfE\)](#). DfE recognizes products and partners using safer chemical formulations.

Ecology also encourages agencies to promote the use of safer chemical alternatives. Global standards such as Europe’s [Registration, Evaluation, Authorization, and Restriction of Chemical Substances \(REACH\)](#), place more responsibility on manufacturers to manage the risks associated with their products.

Success Story: Western States Contracting Alliance

The new Janitorial Cleaning Contract managed by the State of Oregon for the Western States Contracting Alliance (WSCA) offers safer cleaning products than in the past.

Both Waxie and Coastwide have products certified by Green Seal or recognized by DfE.

These products are no more expensive than conventional products according to sales representatives for both companies.

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Washington State Department of Ecology

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing

The Department of Ecology offers tools and resources to make environmentally preferable purchasing easier.

Learn about environmentally preferable products, standards and certifications, state EPP directives and more at our website:

www.ecy.wa.gov/beyondwaste/epp.html

Contact:

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Web Resources

[City of Seattle's Environmentally Preferable Cleaning Products](#)

[Green Clean Schools](#)

[California Proposition 65 List of Chemicals Known to the State to Cause Cancer or Reproductive Toxicity](#)

[Center for a New America Dream - Cleaners: Overviews 2007](#)

[Design for the Environment \(DfE\) Safer Detergents Initiative](#)

[INFORM -- Strategies for a Better Environment](#)

[Janitorial Products Pollution Prevention Project](#)

[National Toxicology Program: Eleventh Report on Carcinogens](#)

[REACH](#)

[U.S. EPA Greening Your Purchase of Cleaning Products](#)

Product Performance

Safe cleaning products perform as well and cost the same as cleaners with toxins and are widely available. Custodians can test the safer products and select those that perform best.

[Kate Davies, PhD. of Antioch University](#), published a study in 2005 of the economic costs associated with environmentally related diseases and disabilities in Washington State. The study looked at asthma among other diseases. Davies evaluated the fractions of the costs that can be attributed to environmental contaminants.

Davies found that when employers account for absenteeism, medical bills, worker's compensation, and insurance claims related to asthma, the costs were significant.

When choosing a vendor, evaluate the ability to train custodial personnel on:

- safety issues;
- proper mixing of chemicals;
- proper cleaning techniques; and
- strategies to reduce chemical use and exposures.

Laws and Directives

Executive Order 02-03	Requires sustainable practices by state agencies. This includes practices that do not sacrifice the needs of future generations.
Executive Order 04-01	Directs state agencies to adopt measures to reduce the use of equipment, supplies, and other products that contain persistent, toxic chemicals.

End-of-Life

Non-environmentally preferred cleaning products can release toxins into the air, water and soil through waste water, improper use, and accidents. End-of-life (disposal) issues associated with toxic cleaners can be costly.

Some cleaners may be replaced with new high pressure sprayers or steam cleaners that do not require the use of chemicals. Microfiber mops and cleaning rags also reduce the need for chemicals. Water is, after all, the universal solvent.

Using steam cleaners, high-pressure sprayers, microfiber mops and cleaning rags, and safe chemicals avoid most, if not all, end-of-life issues.

