

LEED EBOM and Green Cleaning

by Arely Castellón

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he U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) released the third and last draft of the 2012 LEED Rating System for Existing Buildings Operations and Maintenance (LEED-EBOM) on March 1st. Upon conclusion of the comment period, LEED 2012 will be submitted for a vote by members of the USGBC and is expected to be published in November 2012.

LEED is defining how buildings are not only designed, but, how they are cleaned and otherwise operated. The impact is tremendous across a broad industry spectrum, including property and facility professionals, manufacturers, and service contractors. Currently, 44,600 LEED projects are participating in the commercial and institutional LEED rating systems, for a total of 8.3 billion square feet of construction space. The largest growth is coming from existing buildings looking to obtain LEED-EBOM certification.

Not long ago, green cleaning was considered the wave of the future. It then morphed to sustainability, so as to make the right green decisions ensuring long-term sustainable practices. The new LEED-EBOM standardizes these sustainable practices and is leading the way to healthier buildings. After all, the goal is a building with improved operational efficiencies that will result in lower operational costs.

But what if you don't have plans to obtain LEED certification? Can you still benefit?

Efficiencies can be obtained from a cleaning perspective, regardless of LEED certification. The following are a few changes that can have an easy, quick, and positive impact on any building:

- Third party certification of chemicals is increasing, especially with new government designations and ingredient disclosure requirements. Expect new formulations and more accurate labels and designations. The goal is to reduce the use of toxic ingredients, building on the success of the EPA's DfE label, which are safer for human use and the environment.
- Water-saving technologies will continue to be incorporated in new restroom fixtures. New and creative retrofits for existing restroom fixtures will extend the life of some older fixtures, while reducing water usage. These include low-flow aerators, motion sensor faucets, and water-saving flush handles. All provide a quick payback as a result of water conservation.
- Options for other restroom improvements include drain filters, which eliminate sewer odors that are often due to dry traps that require chemicals or pesticides to resolve. New alternatives include a one-way valve that creates a seal, which also prevents potential backflow issues and even bugs from arising—all chemical free. "Green Cartridges" eliminate the need for frequent cartridge replacement and chemical sealants in waterless urinals, providing an odor-free, hygienic solution that does not damage drainage pipes. Both solutions eliminate sewer gases from entering through the plumbing, improving indoor air quality.
- Reduction in transportation costs can be expected with concentrated chemicals, as opposed to ready-to-use—a practice that continues to increase. The next step is to develop more efficient packaging and disposal of paper goods packaging (via recycling and biodegradation).
- Options for restroom paper supplies will continue to expand from the original recycled options to paper made from 100 percent sustainable resources, including fast-growing trees that require less land. Sourcing practices will impact quality positively, as virgin paper can be made from 100 percent sustainable resources.

The good news is that the changes in the cleaning industry will benefit all involved. The manufacturers will produce more efficient and better-engineered products that adhere to conservation practices. These healthier products provide a healthier environment for building occupants and visitors. That's good news for building owners and property managers because sound LEED-based cleaning practices enhance asset values.

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