

## Is Going Green Worth It?

By Mike Sawchuk

In many of the seminars I present and the Green cleaning articles I write, I usually make the point that Green cleaning products are comparable to in performance—if not better than—similar conventional products used for the same purpose and are safer to the user, building occupants, and the environment. And, many times, I add that they are often cost neutral—when compared to the bundle of cleaning products replaced—and can produce a cost savings over the long-term as well.

It is this last expression, “cost savings over the long-term” that often requires some added explanation. What if the complete bundle of Green cleaning products actually does cost more than the comparable non-Green cleaning products? How can they produce savings over the long-term?

A good way to understand and define the expression, for ourselves and our customers, is to realize that if there are any added costs to select Green cleaning products, they will likely be offset by the many cost savings that will result.

For instance, allergies, often triggered by conventional cleaning products, can cause people to sneeze, feel fatigued, and can lead to significant lost work time, disability costs, and employee-replacement costs. One study estimates that more than 4 million workdays are lost each year in North America due to these health issues. This can cost sufferers and employers billions of dollars in health costs.

Switching to certified-Green cleaning products that helps reduce or eliminate these allergic reactions can improve worker productivity, reduce health-related expenses, and cut managerial expenses dramatically. In other words, in this example, any added expense for the Green cleaning products is far outweighed by the overall savings it produces.

Another example is in education. According to one study, nearly 2 million lost schooldays are the result of allergic reactions caused by a variety of factors—including cleaning products.

When students are away from school, their education can suffer. And, because many states fund school districts based on the number of children that attend school each day, the schools can lose money when students miss days due to allergies and illness.

Additionally, this can result in increased “parenting time,” requiring parents to miss work in order to take children to doctors or care for them while they are ill.

Lastly, if students are ill and out of school due to reactions to the cleaning products used, it is likely that the district’s teachers are often ill, missing school. This often results in additional costs for the school system, forcing them to hire substitute teachers and cover health-related liabilities.

Transferring to Green cleaning products can help keep students and teachers in school as well as parents at work. Here again, Green cleaning products show they can produce cost savings over the long-term.

### **Green Self-Esteem**

Finally, introducing Green cleaning to a facility often leads to increased training and education as well as greater self-esteem for cleaning professionals. Usually when a facility transfers from conventional to Green cleaning products, custodians as well as managers and building occupants become very involved in the process.

Cleaning workers are often taught more productive, efficient, and healthier ways to perform their cleaning tasks. Managers and building occupants learn how their facilities are maintained, and they realize just how important cleaning is to the overall well-being and productivity of their facility.

All of these factors help keep a facility healthier, improve worker productivity and reduce operating expenses. And, when cleaning

workers know they and their services are appreciated, they perform their duties more earnestly, efficiently, and professionally. Once again, the complete bundle of Green cleaning products proves their worth—in tangible and intangible ways as well.

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