
CLEANING FOR HEALTH RESEARCH AND OUTREACH FOCUS

Cleaning for Health

In 2002, INFORM published *Cleaning for Health: Products and Practices for a Safer Indoor Environment*, the first-ever manual about a new generation of cleaning products and practices that are cost competitive and meet cleaning performance expectations but do not contain many of the toxic substances found in traditional cleaners.

Less-toxic cleaners are important because of the mounting evidence that traditional cleaning chemicals pose serious public health threats. Ingredients in common cleaners can be known or suspected carcinogens, and they can be cardiovascular, developmental, endocrine, gastrointestinal, liver, kidney, central nervous, reproductive, respiratory, and skin toxicants. Cleaning chemicals can also cause or exacerbate asthma. A review of recent journal articles shows a correlation between asthma and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), floor maintenance materials, and other common cleaning products. A study published in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* concludes that janitorial workers experience the highest rates of occupational asthma, nearly twice the rate that affects other workers.

***Cleaning for Health* is a one-stop guide** to environmentally preferable cleaning products and methods that have been effectively used in schools, office buildings, hospitals, and other facilities across the US and Canada. It describes the information that purchasing agents and facilities managers need to know when making informed decisions about the cleaning chemicals and methods they are using.

INFORM provides technical assistance to a wide variety of organizations and institutions that seek to reduce the human health and environmental impact of their cleaning practices. Using our *Cleaning for Health* research, we have been helping government agencies, municipalities, schools, colleges, hospitals, healthcare facilities, and business communities across New England, New York, and New Jersey develop and implement environmentally preferable cleaning programs and minimize the purchase of products containing toxic substances.

Resources

Since 2002, manufacturers have been offering an ever-increasing array of green cleaning products, and localities across the country are requiring their constituent agencies to take advantage of the health and environmental benefits of switching to those products and practices.

INFORM's research has assisted government and private organizations across the Northeastern US in making the change to less-toxic cleaning products.

We offer the following publications and information to assist you in designing and implementing a less-toxic, “green” cleaning program for your facility:

Cleaning for Health

INFORM’s extensive report on cleaning products and practices for a safe indoor environment

General Guidelines for Healthier Cleaning Practices

A complete outline of basic “green” cleaning practices

Implementing Environmentally Preferable Cleaning Practices

A fact sheet outlining the eight essential steps to designing and implementing an environmentally preferable cleaning program

Site Survey

An easy-to-use information gathering tool designed to assist facilities in taking stock of the products and practices they use to maintain their building interiors, available at www.informinc.org/

Ingredients to Avoid in Institutional Cleaning Products — Draft

A simple and quick guide that identifies which industrial cleaning chemicals to avoid

Asthmagens in Institutional Cleaning Products

A fact sheet that tells how to avoid using institutional cleaning products that are respiratory irritants and asthmagens

How to Contract for Products That Do Not Contain Asthmagens

Explains how you can purchase – or – Explains the steps to take and language to use to purchase products free of respiratory irritants and asthmagens

Restroom and Urinal Deodorizer Blocks

Everything you need to know about replacing toxic restroom deodorizers with PBT-free air freshening urinal blocks

Environmentally Preferable Cleaning Products, Sample Specifications

Basic specification language you can use and adapt to your organization’s specific purchasing requirements

Our Senior Consultant, Carol Westinghouse is available to conduct site visits, evaluate current cleaning methods and products, recommend practical, cost-effective and less-toxic products, and offer guidance on the use of these products.

INFORM is a national, nonprofit research and outreach organization that examines the effects of business practices, technologies, and products on the environment and human health. For more than 30 years INFORM has sought practical solutions to the environmental challenges of safeguarding ecosystems from toxic chemicals, shifting to pollution-free transportation, and preventing solid waste. Combining groundbreaking research with strategic outreach, INFORM works to turn findings into change. INFORM’s objective and constructive recommendations have helped guide members of government, industry, environmental groups, and communities around the world in decisions that promote economic and ecological sustainability.
