



Your cleaning service provider should be able to demonstrate quick and simple initiatives that reduce the environmental impact of their operations at your premises

The clean, green scene

We should always

be looking for new ways to improve our sustainability profile, reduce our carbon footprint and minimise our environmental impact. Your cleaning service provider should be able to demonstrate initiatives that contribute toward this effort.

1 Environmental management

Your cleaning contractor should be assessed and approved to ISO 14001, or working towards it. ISO 14001 is an international standard that specifies a process for controlling and improving a company's environmental performance. It includes identifying the elements of the business that impact on the environment and setting objectives for improvement, with a management program to achieve them.

2 Microfibre cleaning systems

The introduction of microfibre cleaning systems into the commercial cleaning regime can reduce the use of chemical cleaning fluids by as much as 70-80 per cent. Cleaning fluids and sanitisers should still be used in washroom and culinary areas to kill germs, however, general use areas, such as offices and receptions, can be cleaned effectively with a microfibre system.

3 Save paper

The best way to save paper is to stop using it. Ensuring that your cleaning contractors communicate only via email and introducing an online document management system will substantially reduce the amount of hard copy documents required for health and safety and other compliance. Modern hand dryers are an eco-friendly alternative to paper hand towels. Even recycled paper has a few drawbacks related to its green properties. To make one tonne of recycled paper, it takes 7,000 gallons of water, 360 gallons of oil, 158 million BTUs of energy and 86 pounds of pollutants go into the atmosphere. Today's 650W hand dryers provide considerable CO₂ savings when compared with conventional 2400W dryers.

4 Save water

Cleaning operatives should be encouraged and trained to minimise the use of water during cleaning operations. Examples of this would be making sure that mop buckets are not overfilled and that dishwashers are fully loaded before use. FMs should look to their cleaning provider to explore innovative cleaning-related water saving measures for the premises. An example is the use of biological urinal blocks which can dramatically reduce water usage from flushing urinal cisterns. Biological urinal blocks keep urinals free flowing and odourless with minimal flushing. Flushing frequency can be reduced to just four times each day and tests have indicated that approximately 115 thousand litres of water per urinal per year can be saved.

5 Alternative fuels

LPG (liquid petroleum gas) vehicles give a 10-15 per cent carbon dioxide reduction in comparison to petrol and are on a par with diesel vehicles. LPG also delivers 80 per cent lower nitrous oxide emissions than diesel, along with zero particulate emissions. Hybrid electric vehicles are powered by a combination of petrol or diesel and electricity. This cuts down on the amount of fuel needed, meaning drivers will produce fewer emissions. Green cleaning companies have already converted their car and van fleets to comprise vehicles that deliver lower emissions. Alternative fuel vehicles that comply with the strict emissions criteria are exempt from congestion charging and this will reduce costs.

6 Reduce deliveries

FMs can work with their cleaning company to limit the amount of deliveries required for cleaning materials, equipment and consumables by providing suitable, secure on site storage. Fewer deliveries mean a reduction in the fuel used and the resultant reduction in emissions. FMs should consider the use of vacant basement areas as traditional cleaners' cupboards are often inadequate.

7 Eco-friendly systems

Wherever possible, cleaning companies should implement environmentally friendly systems of cleaning. An example could be a dry carpet cleaning technique such as the Host system. Host dry extraction system uses a natural product moistened with water, detergent and a small amount of safe-to-use-solvent. When compared with high flow wet extraction systems, the use of chemicals and water can be reduced by as much as 97 per cent. Another example is the use of an extended pole window cleaning system such as the 'reach and wash'. Cleaning is carried out without the use of any chemicals or detergents, using only the ionic cleaning action of pure sterile water.

8 Recycling

The quality of recycled paper products has increased significantly over the last few years. Green cleaning companies are able to supply you with good quality 100 per cent recycled toilet rolls and hand towels and provide a mixed recyclables waste collection service. This will comprise office 'corridor' boxes for disposal of paper, cardboard, magazines, aluminium cans, steel cans and plastic bottles. The contents of the corridor box are taken to a dedicated mixed recyclables container, without the need for separate bins. Once collected, the waste is taken to a materials recovery facility where all recyclable materials are separated and baled. The recycled bales are then reprocessed into goods.

9 Concentrated detergents

The Detergent Regulations 2005 specify that all detergents sold in the UK have to be biodegradable. It sets standards for how long surfactants should take to break down in the environment. If your cleaning company supplies concentrated detergents to its staff, they must be able to demonstrate procedures and staff training to ensure overdosing does not occur. **EN1**

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