

SCHOOLS CHEMICAL CLEANOUT CAMPAIGN

PROTECTING STUDENTS AND STAFF WITH GREEN CLEANING

The Schools Chemical Cleanout Campaign (SC3) aims to ensure that all schools are free from hazards associated with mismanaged chemicals. SC3 gives K-12 schools information and tools to manage chemicals responsibly.

GREEN CLEANING

Keeping schools sanitary is essential to maintaining a healthy learning environment. Some cleaning products and practices contain harmful chemicals that can potentially contaminate the environment and endanger human health.

Green cleaning products and practices can be less harmful to human health and the environment than cleaning products and methods used by many schools today.

Green cleaners and non-chemical alternatives can have some of the following attributes:

- Low or no Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC);
- Neutral pH levels;
- No known carcinogens;
- No ozone depleting compounds;
- Use of renewable resources.

Green cleaning practices include:

- Reading and following product labels;
- Using only the amount needed;
- Cleaning when the building is unoccupied;
- Using proper equipment to do the job;
- Storing and disposing of products properly;
- Training employees to read and follow product labels for use, storage and disposal.

HEALTH EFFECTS

Some cleaning products used in schools may contribute to poor air quality and health problems in students and staff. Health effects associated with these products can include:

- Asthma and other respiratory illnesses;
- Dermatological problems such as eczema, rashes, and contact dermatitis;
- Headaches;
- Nausea;
- Irritability.

BENEFITS

By using green cleaning products and practices, you can keep your school clean and prevent potential health, safety and environmental hazards. Other benefits of green cleaning may include:

- Protecting students, who are more sensitive to chemicals than adults;
- Protecting the health of custodial staff who have frequent interaction with cleaning chemicals;
- Preventing student and faculty absences;
- Increasing the lifespan of facilities;
- Increasing cost savings by using fewer products;
- Improving the school environment.



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What Can I Do?

As a school administrator, teacher, cleaning service staff person, or industry representative, you are concerned with making schools safe for children and staff to learn and teach. You can make a difference to student health and the environment by implementing some of these green cleaning practices:

- **Involve the right people.** Successful green cleaning programs result from collaboration between administrators, teachers and custodians. Whenever possible, schools should bring in organizations with an interest in safe chemical management such as chemical suppliers, industry leaders, and other community partners.
- **Take a look at all of your cleaning practices.** Green cleaning is about more than the products you use. Cleaning out outdated or unneeded chemicals, following Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), storing cleaning products based on their properties, and changing the frequency and time when chemicals are used are just as important as choosing products with positive environmental attributes.
- **Select products with positive environmental attributes,** such as: low toxicity, biodegradability, and less packaging. Encourage suppliers to stock products with positive environmental attributes. If necessary, evaluate contracts with suppliers and cleaning services to be consistent with your cleaning goals.
- **Properly store and dispose** of inappropriate, outdated, unknown and unneeded chemicals. Regularly monitor your cleaning product supply and usage through good inventory practices.
- **Regularly evaluate your green cleaning procedures.** Staying on top of the most current policies and practices and ensuring that they are implemented will help you protect students, staff and the environment.

Visit the Schools Chemical Cleanout Campaign (SC3) website <www.epa.gov/SC3> for more information on how to involve partners, links to green cleaning resources and building an SC3 campaign in your community.

