

# Green Cleaning

Careful and frequent cleaning is a cornerstone in the hospitality industry to ensure the health and safety of staff and guests. It is extremely important to comply with pertinent health and safety rules, but it is also possible to integrate “greener” cleaning supplies and practices into your facility. Green cleaning refers to cleaning practices that minimize negative impacts on humans (through direct or indirect contact) and the environment (through disposal) and that reduce waste. Selecting products and routines that keep staff, guests, and the planet healthy simultaneously can provide an impactful way to champion sustainability at your facility.

Green cleaning practices include procuring cleaning supplies with fewer harmful or toxic ingredients, evaluating cleaning practices to minimize waste, such as using reusable materials versus disposable, and fostering a healthy and safe environment for staff and guests. Using the best practices identified below can assist staff and managers in achieving healthy and sustainable cleaning procedures that benefit humans and our planet.

## POTENTIAL BENEFITS

**Financial savings.** Green cleaning practices, like buying supplies in bulk and purchasing non-disposable products, can cost less than purchasing disposable items or cleaning products in small quantities.

**Reduce the risk of cleaning product-spurred irritation.** Avoiding certain ingredients, such as bleach or those with volatile organic compounds (VOCs), can reduce the risk of associated irritation. Some common irritant reactions include allergies, eye or skin irritation, respiratory problems, nausea, and headaches.

**Minimize waste generated.** Reusable supplies or supplies that are purchased concentrated or in bulk then diluted create less waste compared to alternatives.

**Improve the indoor air quality.** Avoid cleaners and products with volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

## THIS GUIDE IS APPLICABLE...

### FOR

- ✓ Food & Beverage
- ✓ Travel & Tourism
- ✓ Lodging
- ✓ Recreation

### TO

- ✓ Management
- ✓ Event Planning
- ✓ Food Operations
- ✓ Housekeeping
- ✓ Maintenance & Operations
- Front of the House

## BEST PRACTICES

1

**Evaluate current cleaning practices and identify opportunities for change.** As a first step, look across all existing cleaning practices to find opportunities to switch to more sustainable practices. For example, transitioning from paper towel to reusable microfiber cloths for cleaning surfaces is a great way to minimize waste produced from cleaning and shift to a more environmentally preferred practice. Consider developing a green cleaning policy for your facility that contains information about handling and storage of cleaning products, promoting water conservation and waste minimization, and plans for cleaning practices.

2

**Preference cleaning products that are certified as environmentally preferred.** There are a variety of certifications available that designate products as protective of human and planetary health. These certifications include Green Seal, EPA's Safer Choice, GreenGuard, and EcoLogo. Consider procuring and using cleaning products that are certified through one or more of these programs as part of your facility's cleaning practices.

3

**Select products with minimal or no packaging.** Facilities go through cleaning products quickly, which means that packaging from these products can be a major contributor to solid waste generated. When possible, preference purchasing products that come with minimal or no packaging to reduce the waste footprint of cleaning practices.

4

**Select concentrated products that you can dilute in-house.** Many cleaning products contain a large amount of water. Buying products at the working dilution means that you are paying for the water used in those products – and, that the products are heavier and more environmentally costly to ship due to the large water volume. If possible, purchase cleaning products in a concentrated form and dilute products in-house to save money and reduce the environmental impact of these products.

5

**Avoid single-use products as much as possible.** Like packaging, there are many single-use products available for cleaning that, if used regularly, can contribute to a large solid waste footprint of your facility. When allowable without compromising the health and safety of staff and guests, consider switching from single- to multi-use products to lower the waste generated from cleaning activities. A simple switch is to use washable rags rather than paper towels when cleaning.

## BEST PRACTICES

**6** **Ensure staff are properly trained on how to handle and use cleaning products.** Cleaning products, especially in concentrated form, need to be handled according to certain protocols to ensure the health and safety of those in contact with them. It is extremely important to train staff who are in contact with these supplies on the proper protocols for handling and using cleaning products to lower the risk of health or safety problems and ensure their effectiveness.

**7** **Store cleaning products safely.** Some products used for cleaning need to be stored in specific manners to avoid reactivity, leaching, or other harmful consequences that might be a result of improper storage. To minimize harmful leaching to the environment or health consequences ensure that products are properly stored and maintained.

## RESOURCES

### Environmental Protection Agency

- [Safer Choice](#)

### New York University

- [Green Cleaning Policies and Procedures](#)

### Occupational Health & Safety Administration

- [Protecting Workers Who Use Cleaning Chemicals](#)