

## SC3: PROTECTING STUDENTS AND STAFF WITH GREEN CLEANING

EPA's Schools Chemical Cleanout Campaign (SC3) is working to encourage schools to use green cleaning practices to safely clean their classrooms and grounds. From elementary school maintenance closets to high school chemistry labs, schools use a variety of chemicals. Some of the most essential chemicals are those that keep schools clean and safe for students to learn and grow. However, the chemicals used in cleaning products can sometimes be harmful to human health and to the environment.

### GREEN CLEANING – WHAT IS IT?

Using green cleaning products and practices can be less harmful to human health and the environment than some cleaning products and practices used by many schools today. The following are some easy tips that schools can take to start greening their cleaning products and practices:

#### PRODUCTS

Use chemicals that have:

- Neutral pH levels and have no known carcinogens;
- Low or no Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs);
- Energy and water savings benefits;
- Biodegradability;
- Less packaging;
- Other positive health and environmental attributes.

#### PRACTICES

- Read and follow product labels;
- Use only the amount needed;
- Clean when the building is unoccupied;
- Use proper equipment to do the job;
- Manage and dispose of cleaning products safely and in an environmentally friendly way;
- Train employees to use product Materials Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) and labels for use, storage and disposal.

### BENEFITS

The chemicals found in some cleaning products can cause health problems, including eye, nose, and throat irritation, as well as headaches. If these products contain VOCs, adverse health effects can include, asthma, upper respiratory irritation, fatigue, nasal congestion, nausea, and dizziness. Using green cleaning products and practices may avoid these health effects and also:

- Protects students, who may be more vulnerable to chemicals than adults,
- Protects the health of custodial staff who have frequent interaction with cleaning chemicals;
- Prevent student and faculty absences;
- Increase the lifespan of facilities;
- Increase cost savings by using fewer products; and
- Improve the school environment.

A growing body of scientific knowledge demonstrates that children may suffer disproportionately from environmental health risks and safety risks.

### WHAT CAN I DO?

#### BUILD A GREEN CLEANING PROGRAM

You can make a difference to student health and the environment by developing a green cleaning program. Below are some tips to get a green cleaning program started. Remember, no two programs are alike. Use the tips that make sense for your individual school or school district.

**Involve the right people.** Administrators, teachers, and custodians all have a role in designing and implementing your green cleaning program. Whenever possible, schools should bring in organizations with an interest in safe chemical management and healthy schools, such as chemical and product suppliers, industry leaders, and other community partners.

**Select products with positive environmental attributes.** Encourage suppliers to stock products with positive environmental attributes. Evaluate contracts with suppliers and cleaning services for consistency with your cleaning goals.

**Take a look at your current cleaning practices.** Green cleaning is about more than the products you use. Be sure that employees are properly trained to identify outdated or unneeded chemicals that need disposal and know what to do if there is a spill, know how to use products according to label directions, and have the proper equipment. Consider policies that allow for scheduling cleaning at the appropriate time and frequency.

**Properly manage and dispose** of inappropriate, outdated, unknown and unneeded chemicals. Regularly monitor your cleaning product supply and usage through good purchasing control and inventory practices.

**Regularly evaluate your green cleaning practices.** Stay on top of the most current policies and practices and ensure that they are implemented. This will help you protect students, staff and the environment.



#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Schools Chemical Cleanout Campaign (SC3) website:

[www.epa.gov/sc3](http://www.epa.gov/sc3)