

Green Cleaning Products in New York State Agencies and Schools

The pragmatic promotion of transparently safer chemical products



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THE PROBLEM

Children are more vulnerable to environmental health hazards than the adults around them. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has estimated that half of the nation's schools have problems with indoor air quality. Conventional, commercial-scale cleaning products routinely used by PreKindergarten to 12th grade (P-12) schools contain an array of hazardous chemicals, including carcinogens, asthmagens, reproductive toxins, skin sensitizers, and endocrine disruptors.

THE SOLUTION

Healthy Schools Network champions federal, state, and local reforms that improve children's health and learning by preventing exposures to hazards at school, including the use of green and healthy products, equipment, and services. Since 2005, all public and private P-12 schools in New York State (including New York City, the nation's single largest school system) have been required to use "environmentally preferable" green cleaning products as defined by state agencies.



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MARKET IMPACT

New York State rivals the size of a Fortune 500 Company. Its fiscal year 2016 budget is \$142 billion, including \$8 billion in state purchasing for some 16,000 state facilities, such as hospitals, prisons, highways, and offices. The State's FY 2016 P-12 public education budget was approved at \$60 billion, to educate about 2.7 million children who attend over 5,000 local schools.

Certified green cleaning products ensure transparency and accountability by product manufacturers

Green Seal¹ and **ECOLOGO**² are the most reliable and required third-party certifications for green cleaning products. Both set certification standards through an open and transparent voluntary and science-driven process, then assess products and services against those standards through onsite audits prior to awarding certification marks. Chemical ingredients banned or restricted in general all-purpose green cleaning products today include: disinfectants, carcinogens, reproductive toxins, asthmagens, phthalates, and sensitizers. Other aspects of the product are also assessed, such as product effectiveness measures and packaging. Green Seal and ECOLOGO's criteria are not identical, but they are of sufficiently similar quality to ensure a valid bid specification for public agency procurement purposes.

Because both state agencies and P-12 schools were required to use "environmentally preferable" green products under New York's Executive Order and laws,

coming clean



These Success Stories of market shifts to safer chemicals were developed based on the campaigns and projects of partners in the Workgroup for Safe Markets (www.SafeMarkets.org), which is coordinated by the environmental health and justice collaborative Coming Clean.

the state awarded a 2006 grant to Green Seal to update its existing standard for green cleaning products to protect sensitive populations at risk, including children and custodial workers. ECOLOGO, Healthy Schools Network, state agencies, and industry participated on the project's steering committee that led negotiations engaging 399 stakeholders over 22 months to recommend stricter Green Seal certification criteria for commercial/institutional cleaning products typically used by large facilities, such as schools and government offices.

Disclosure of ingredients in fragrances in certified cleaning products is a challenge due to the lack of vertical integration in manufacturing and the historical use of trade secret claims by manufacturers. In lieu of a ban or restrictions, New York State marks which products on its approved list have added fragrances, giving buyers a choice to purchase fragrance-free products.

State and national market impact (2005–2015) achieved through state policy reforms on green cleaning

In spring 2015, New York State [reported](#)³ that 89% of state agencies in NY use green cleaning products all or most of the time, and 75% of state agencies report using fragrance-free cleaning products. Healthy Schools Network convened a collaborative workgroup on green cleaning and chemical policy reform in schools. Today, 11 states plus the District of Columbia have policies requiring or promoting the use of third party certified cleaning products in schools. By spring 2015, eight states had adopted “all-green janitorial state procurement contracts” for state agency purchasers.

Continuous improvement to third-party certification standards boosts green cleaning markets

Third party certifiers periodically update their hazard-based “leadership” certification standards, driving the overall market forward through increasingly tougher standards as

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— THIRD PROGRESS REPORT ON STATE GREEN PROCUREMENT

product safety improves. A leadership standard is commonly defined as capturing the top 10–15% of products/services/equipment in a category at the time the standard is adopted. During the period 2005–2015, Green Seal’s list of qualifying products tripled, as did ECOLOGO’s. During the same period, their pass-fail standards were updated to become more stringent, banning carcinogens and reproductive toxins, and further restricting or banning asthmagens, phthalates, and other toxic ingredients.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON GREEN CLEANING

Claire Barnett, Healthy Schools Network (author): www.healthyschools.org

Green Cleaning and Healthy Products *Toolkits for schools*: www.CleaningforHealthySchools.org

New York State Comptroller *report* on school supply purchasing: <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/research/snapshot/0810snapshot.pdf>

ENDNOTES

- 1 Green Seal Third-Party Certification: <http://www.greenseal.org>
- 2 ECOLOGO Certification: <http://industries.ul.com/environment/certificationvalidation-marks/ecologo-product-certification>
- 3 New York State Interagency Committee 3rd Progress Report on Green Procurement: <http://www.ogs.ny.gov/EO/4/Docs/ThirdProgressReport.pdf>

LEARN MORE ABOUT MOVING TO SAFE MARKETS

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- The Coordinators of the Workgroup for Safe Markets: <http://safemarkets.org/about-us/contact-us>
- Success Stories of Chemical Disclosure and Safe Substitution: <http://safemarkets.org/resources-to-promote-safer-chemicals-and-products/success-stories>
- Five Essential Practices for Retailers, Brand Owners & Suppliers to guide transition to safer chemicals: <http://safemarkets.org/resources-to-promote-safer-chemicals-and-products/essential-practices>