

"Green Cleaning in Schools" Wastebusters Video

Discussion Points & Background Resources

➤ **What makes a cleaning product "green"?**

In CT schools, the 2009 School Green Cleaning law defines it as:

- The procurement and proper use of environmentally preferable cleaning products as defined by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) for all state-owned buildings. DAS currently requires that environmentally preferable cleaning products be independently certified by one of two third-party certified organizations: Green Seal or Eco Logo. Green Seal certification criteria are:
 - No carcinogens, reproductive toxins, skin sensitizers; asthmagens
 - Low volatile organic compounds
 - Biodegradable and non-toxic to the environment
 - Packaging is recycled, recyclable, or significantly minimized
- The types of cleaning products covered in the legislation include: general purpose cleaners, bathroom cleaners, glass cleaners, floor finishes, floor strippers, hand cleansers and soaps.
- Green cleaners do not include "any disinfectant, disinfecting cleaner, sanitizer or other antimicrobial product regulated by the federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act is not covered by this law."

➤ **What are some harmful ingredients to look for and avoid in "regular" cleaning products?**

- Sodium hypochlorite is the main chemical in chlorine bleach. It is corrosive, which means it can damage your eyes, lungs and skin. Sometimes people mistakenly mix bleach with ammonia, another hazardous cleaner, creating a very toxic gas.
- Quaternary ammonia compounds found in products like window cleaners are very toxic. They give off unhealthy fumes that can irritate your eyes, nose and lungs. And they also can trigger asthma or allergy symptoms.
- All-purpose cleaners may have glycol ethers in them, like that one with 2-butoxyethanol. When you breathe these chemicals, or get them on your skin, they can have negative impacts on your body's organs. Some are even suspected of causing cancer or disrupting the hormones in your body.

➤ **What are the types of cleaning products, and when should they be used?**

- All-purpose cleaners remove dirt and most organisms. When considering which cleaner to use, choose less toxic, third party certified green cleaners.
- Sanitizers reduce bacteria (e.g., MRSA) by 99.9%. These should be used in school kitchen facilities to clean before and after preparing foods.
- Disinfectants destroy multiple organisms including bacteria and many viruses (e.g. influenza). Disinfectants are regulated by the U.S. EPA. They may contain active ingredients such as chlorine or hypochlorite, phenolics, aldehydes, quaternary ammonium compounds (quats), alcohols, or hydrogen peroxide compounds. Hydrogen peroxide-based disinfectants are the least toxic and are recommended. Disinfectants do not clean - therefore it is important to use an all-purpose cleaner first before applying disinfectants. Overuse of disinfectants increases exposure to the chemicals in the disinfectant and could result in toxic effects or increased sensitivity in exposed individuals.

➤ **What is “dwell time”?**

Dwell time means the number of minutes that a product must be in contact with the surface, and remain wet, in order to assure proper efficacy, or effectiveness to kill viruses, bacteria or fungi. Dwell time also means the contact time green cleaners should be allowed to remain to clean the surface.

➤ **Where should disinfectants be used?**

High touch points are surfaces such as hand railings and door knobs that are touched by multiple people. Disinfectants should be used on these surfaces during flu or virus outbreaks. Be sure to clean these surfaces before applying disinfectants.

➤ **What are best practices for addressing flu/bacteria outbreaks in schools?**

- Learn more about the organism you are dealing with – bacteria or virus – and its route of transmission – droplets (respiratory) or direct contact. Consult with the local health director (LHD) or the CT Department of Public Health for guidance (860-509-7994).
- Communicate clearly to faculty, staff, parents, and the community the risks associated with the virus/bacteria and the risks associated with using toxic chemicals.
- Employ good infection control procedures throughout the school. Coordinate with the school nurse and LHD to educate staff, students, and parents on good personal and hand hygiene including cough etiquette and social distancing.
- Assure that the school is cleaned daily according to established protocols. It is NOT necessary to disinfect the entire school or close the school for the purpose of disinfection.

➤ **For More Information and Resources:**

- **CT School Green Cleaning Products Law:** <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2009/ACT/Pa/pdf/2009PA-00081-R00HB-06496-PA.pdf>
- **CTDPH:** <http://www.ct.gov/dph/schools>
- **CTDEEP Pollution Prevention Program:** www.ct.gov/deep/p2
- **Toxic Use Reduction Institute (TURI):** <http://www.turi.org/>
- **INFORM Cleaning for Health:** <http://informinc.org>
- **Informed Green Solutions:** www.informedgreensolutions.org
- **CT Foundation for Environmentally Safe Schools:** <http://www.pollutionfreeschools.org>
- **Reference:** <http://www.epa.gov/oppad001/influenza-disinfectants.html>
- **Best Cleaning Practices Guidance for Infection Control:** http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/lib/ctfluwatch/h1n1/72209/cleaning_schools.pdf