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Outlining Green Certifications: *Updating the latest green certifications and what they mean to HS readers*

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February 13, 2011

Certifications are an important aspect of a department's custodial goal. In fact, the 2010 *Housekeeping Solutions* survey revealed that 86 percent of readers sought out products that were green certified. Sixty-seven percent commented that green certification for workers or the department was somewhat or very important. And another 67 percent commented that green certification for the entire facility was somewhat or very important.

Even though they are important, just like general [green or sustainable terms](#), new and revised certifications have caused some confusion among in-house managers. Here, *Housekeeping Solutions* defines common certifications that have caused confusion over the years to help managers stay up to speed.

CIMS-GB — Administered by ISSA, Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) is a management framework that aids in the development of departmental operations, performance systems and processes. CIMS-Green Building (CIMS-GB) is one of the standard's six areas of management best practices: Quality Systems; Service Delivery; Human Resources; Health, Safety, and Environmental Stewardship;

Management Commitment; and Green Building.

"The CIMS-GB certification program can help an in-house cleaning organization achieve operational excellence and validate the importance of its services in order to secure budgetary support in the boardroom," says Plamena Todorova, account executive — Facility Service Programs at ISSA.

CIMS applies to an entire department or organization, as oppose to a single product or person and compliance with this standard can earn points or credits towards other certifications, such as LEED-EBOM. Specifics on this program can be found at www.issa.com.

CleanGredients — This is not a certification, but is still worth mentioning. This is an online database of cleaning ingredients designed to help formulators identify ingredients that have potential environmental and human health and safety benefits. It is also designed to provide the opportunity for manufacturers and producers of cleaning ingredients to showcase their ingredients with potential environmental and human health and safety benefits. Originally funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Design for the Environment (DfE) program,

CleanGredients is managed by GreenBlue. A listing of products can be found at www.cleangredients.org.

CRI Seal of Approval — The Carpet and Rug Institute's (CRI) Seal of Approval program recognizes carpet cleaning solutions and equipment that, when used properly, removes soil and stains without damaging the carpet. The program currently focuses on vacuums, extractors, deep cleaning systems and carpet chemicals. CRI's Green Label and Green Label Plus programs take this one step further by testing for and certifying low emissions from carpet, cushion and adhesives. Equipment certified by this program reduce volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and emissions and contribute to the growing use of recycled content for building materials. Additional information can be found at www.carpet-rug.org.

Design for the Environment (DfE) — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's DfE program labels safer products — such as cleaners and detergents — that meet the requirements of its Standard for Safer Cleaning Products and safer ingredient criteria. The DfE Standard and ingredient criteria ensure that DfE-labeled products perform well and contain the safest possible ingredients. DfE authorizes the use of its logo under a signed partnership agreement that requires notification and pre-approval of ingredient changes, partnership renewal every three years, and annual audits, including an on-site audit during the partnership period. Additional information, as well as those products recognized by DfE, can be found at www.epa.gov/dfc.

EcoLogo — Formally known as the Environmental Choice Program, this used to be Canada's eco-labeling program. Over the years, the certifying body has been

embraced in the U.S. to become one of North America's largest environmental standards and certification marks. The EcoLogo Program is a Type I eco-label, which means that the program compares products/services with others in the same category (i.e. chemicals vs. other chemicals), develops rigorous and scientifically relevant criteria that reflect the entire lifecycle of the product and awards the EcoLogo to those that are verified by an independent third party as complying with the criteria.

"EcoLogo standards ensure that certified products are safer for human health and the environment by specifying criteria for: less harmful chemicals and materials; use of recycled and recyclable materials; minimizing pollution generated by the production, use and disposal of these products and their packaging; and more," says Dr. Angela Griffiths, executive director of the EcoLogo Program. "EcoLogo assesses multiple impacts throughout the life cycle of the product and addresses those that are most important."

More information can be found at www.ecologo.org.

EPA Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines — The Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (CPG) program is part of the EPA's continuing effort to promote the use of materials recovered from solid waste. Buying recycled-content products ensures that the materials collected in recycling programs will be used again in the manufacture of new products. Additional information about the CPG program can be found [here](#).

Green Cleaning in Schools — This is Healthy Schools Campaign's national partnership to promote green cleaning in

schools. The initiative brings together the cleaning industry, educational leaders, parents and advocates to support schools in the adoption of environmentally friendly policies, practices and products.

"There are so many benefits to having a green cleaning program in place," says Mark Bishop, vice president of policy and communications. "It is about cleaning with that safest available products and most current procedures, and that we are doing things to help promote the health and safety of the staff. In turn, we are educating and keeping children healthy as well as being responsible environmental stewards."

HSC's Quick & Easy Guide to Green Cleaning in Schools helps to communicate information and resources on infection control, sustainability, green cleaning for food service, laundry care, new technologies and more. Learn more at www.healthyschoolscampaign.org/programs/gcs.

Green Seal — This is a non-profit eco-label that creates green standards for a variety of products, as well as provides product certification. Over the years the reputation of the Seal brand has grown to symbolize environmental leadership, and it continues to represent green products and services. As states continue to pass legislation that requires green cleaning practices, Green Seal product certification has become more prevalent. Many of these legislations do require the use of Green Seal certified products. An outline of all the Green Seal standards can be found at www.greenseal.org and are available for free to all interested parties.

One Green Seal standard that directly relates to this industry is GS-42, for

Commercial and Institutional Cleaning Services. According to the website, this standard "establishes environmental requirements for cleaning service providers of commercial, public, and institutional buildings, including in-house and external cleaning services, to create a green cleaning program that protects human health and the environment." More information specifically pertaining to GS-42 can be found at <http://www.greenseal.org/GreenBusiness/Standards.aspx?vid=ViewStandardDetail&cid=0&sid=30>.

Greenguard — The goal of the Greenguard Environmental Institute (GEI) is to improve human health by enhancing indoor air quality and reducing exposure to chemicals and other pollutants. To do so, GEI certifies products and materials for low chemical emissions. Specific product certifications include: Greenguard Indoor Air Quality Certified, Greenguard Children & Schools Certified, and Greenguard Premier Certified. Only one facility certification — Greenguard Building Construction Certified — is available for new construction. More information on Greenguard and all the certifications available can be found at <http://www.greenguard.org/>.

LEED-EBOM — Formally LEED for Existing Buildings (LEED-EB), this certification was revamped by the U.S. Green Building Council in spring 2009 to become LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance (LEED-EBOM). The rating system now features streamlined reporting, fewer prerequisites, greater focus on operations and maintenance, ease of scale for use in greening large portfolios of existing buildings and more rewards for measured environmental performance.

Green cleaning, for example, is now a prerequisite for LEED-EBOM and can contribute at least six additional points to organizations seeking certification. It has been consolidated to one credit category and emphasis has been added on achieving a comprehensive green cleaning program and use of performance metrics for cleaning effectiveness.

Revisions to LEED-EBOM are again under review and updates are expected to be announced in November 2011. Up-to-date changes can be found at www.usgbc.org.

(OS1) — This is a cleaning management system that forms teams of workers, of which specialize in specific tasks. Workers are outfitted with the tools specified to complete their particular job function and tasked with conducting that individual task as part of the team. According to the ManageMen website, developers of the program, "This simplification of the cleaning process results in a safer, healthier and easier working environment."

In addition to data tracking, benefits to the program include improved safety, reduced product and personnel waste, lower environmental impact, balanced employee workload, improved training and standards compliance.

"The tools are standard (selected by benchmarking best practices), the rules are established and scientifically validated, and with competition the various (OS1) organizations help "raise the bar" for cleaning performance," says Ben Walker, director at ManageMen. "(OS1) is the simple path for a busy in house manager to add professionalism to their program."

More information can be found at <http://www.managemen.com/os1/green> and training for the program is available through Janitor University.

Practice Greenhealth — This is a membership only community of institutions in the healthcare industry that have made a commitment to sustainable and/or eco-friendly practices. Members include hospitals, healthcare systems, businesses and other stakeholders engaged in the greening of healthcare to improve the health of patients, staff and the environment, according to the website. More information can be found at <http://www.practicegreenhealth.org/>.

Transpare — Originally referred to as the Information-Based Environmental Label (IBEL), Transpare outlines critical information regarding the environmental, safety and health attributes of cleaning products, empowering purchasers to make informed choices that are consistent with their organizational sustainability goals. Currently under development, Transpare is first being designed to address chemical products, but will soon be modified to address other major product categories, including those for which there are currently no third party eco-label programs such as microfiber, brooms and some equipment. ISSA and Ecoform will soon begin Beta testing of Transpare with an eye toward launching the system in late Summer 2011.

"Transpare will enable the user community to compare and contrast green cleaning products and select those that possess preferred environmental and safety and health attributes," says Bill Balek, director of environmental services at ISSA. "This capability is critical in today's marketplace where there are over 2,500 certified

products. While this statistic is a compliment to the industry's progressiveness, the fact remains that at the present there is no effective way of distinguishing one certified product from another based on its environmental profile. Current eco-label certification programs do not make the underlying environmental data transparent, and as a consequence there is no way to identify, let alone select, the greenest product. Transpare will make this information transparent to purchasers, who can use it to make informed purchasing decisions."