

# GREENING NEWSLETTER

## Clean & Green Hotels find innovative ways to make housekeeping eco-friendly

When it comes to “going green,” hotels look at every department and area of the property, but housekeeping may be the most obvious one in which to make changes. There are washers and dryers that can be replaced with more efficient models, cleaning chemicals that can be traded for environmentally friendly products, and traditional practices such as washing sheets and towels daily that can be updated by giving guests more options.

While many hotels have taken those steps, some are going even further, getting creative and finding new green initiatives to add to their programs. The Hilton Waterfront Beach Resort in Huntington Beach, CA, has a list of approximately 40 green initiatives it has implemented, many of which involve housekeeping.

“About two years ago we recognized that we needed to take a proactive step toward making sure we were doing all we can to preserve natural resources and improve the environment,” says hotel manager Paulette Fischer, “especially in our location with the beach right across the street from us.”

To do that the hotel formed a green committee, which includes 25 people representing every department of the property and meets monthly. At its inaugural meeting, the committee members brainstormed and thought of some simple things they could do to get greener, as well as some that take more work and investment.

Among those initiatives are some creative ways to reuse what many hotels would throw in the trash. “We donate all of our reject linen and terry to homeless shelters,” Fischer explains. “We also take our pillowcases and terry and use them for dust rags in the back of the house areas. Our housekeeping seamstress takes any rejected linens and turns them into aprons for our kitchen and stewarding staff. That’s been very well received and is a cost-saving measure for the hotel as well.”

The property replaced its odor control products with a non-toxic, biodegradable alternative, and replaced its paper towel dispensers with automatic ones. But perhaps the most unusual measure the Hilton Waterfront Beach takes is turning its rejected duvet covers into pet beds. This reduces waste and allows the hotel to offer beds for pets that match the ones their owners are sleeping in.

Another highlight of the program is the “Green Room,” a space where guests can do their own laundry in a completely green manner—literally and figuratively. It features an Energy Star-rated washer and dryer, efficient light bulbs, low VOC paint, flooring and countertops made from recycled materials—even a clock made from old boat boards and a mirror made from old CD covers. Detergent selection, of course, includes a nontoxic, biodegradable option. The décor fits the concept with green

flooring and lighting just to get the point across. And a framed sign on the wall outlines the green committee’s commitment to its guests. “Guests think it’s great,” Fischer says. “They feel good about using it and about staying at the property knowing that we’re taking steps to reduce our carbon footprint.”

About half of the measures the hotel has put in place were for cost-savings, while the others required an investment upfront. “Our owners were very supportive,” Fischer says. “We spent some substantial dollars on a new HVAC system and CFLs, which aren’t cheap. Ownership really supports our efforts, which is nice.”

**Saving Time, Too:** While the Hilton Waterfront Beach outsources some of its laundry (to a LEED-certified vendor), other properties are upgrading their onsite equipment to save money in the long run and be greener.

As part of Hampton Inn’s “Take Care” program, its properties have started using environmentally-friendly products and following other guidelines to conserve resources. Alpesh Patel, general manager of the Hampton Inn in Mentor, OH, replaced the two washers and dryers in his 90-room property with Maytag models that are more environmentally friendly.

“I decided to upgrade our system because of the speed of the washer,” Patel says. “It uses less water, a little less chemicals, and when it comes out it’s almost dry, so it takes less time in the dryer too. It spins faster so there’s less water. It also rotates clockwise and counter-clockwise, which means it comes out of the dryer with fewer wrinkles. The dryers also have a temperature sensor, so as soon as it’s dry it automatically adjusts the time.”



In addition to saving on water, power and chemicals, the machines also save time. “Earlier, I couldn’t put a whole load from the washer into the dryer,” he explains. “Now I can do that, so I don’t have to split it into 2 dryers, and that saves the time of the housekeeper who’s doing the laundry. The drying time is also less. Maybe I’m saving 35 to 40% of the drying time. That reduces a lot of overhead of the laundry person.”

**Changing the Mindset:** Eco-friendly housekeeping programs may look easy to implement on paper, but one of the hardest parts of the process is training staff members.

Debra Archibald, assistant executive housekeeper at The Peabody Orlando, says her property has added a linen reuse program, as well as an amenity reuse program partnering with the Clean the World Foundation. The hotel also recycles newspapers and plastics from guest rooms, and partners with

vendors to get supplies shipped in bulk. The property is about to undergo a major expansion, which will include new laundry equipment and other green measures.

"The biggest problem we had was changing the mindset of people who had been working here for 20 years," she says, "but they're getting there. You have to constantly motivate and train them, but it gets there eventually." The Peabody Orlando uses a mentor system for training new staff members, and that, combined with daily reinforcement, got the staff up to speed.

Through the nonprofit Clean the World Foundation, the hotel recycles and distributes soap and shampoo products to impoverished countries, including Haiti. The foundation also delivered a presentation at the hotel to educate the staff. "A lot of our staff members are from Haiti," Archibald explains, "so that really had an impact on them." The foundation delivered 2,000 pounds of soap to Haiti in July, all of which came from 80 luxury hotels in Central Florida and Daytona Beach.

**Do Guests Care?:** Does all of this really matter to guests? Increasingly, the answer is yes. Most leisure guests may not make decisions about where to stay based on a hotel's green practices, but they do appreciate it once they're there. Archibald says that a few years ago hotels weren't comfortable putting recycling bins in guestrooms and public spaces, but people are getting used to them and appreciate it.

For meeting planners and corporations, environmental practices can be a deciding factor in their choice of hotels, so properties can use green initiatives as a selling point as well. "The leisure guests aren't seeking it," says Fischer, "but when they're here they're happy to participate with recycling and other things we offer. They feel good about using it and about staying at the property knowing that we're taking steps to reduce our carbon footprint. But with meeting planners, we find that more and more it's something they ask about upfront."

Colchamiro, Jeff, "Clean & Green," Lodging Magazine, January 2010

## Designing the Future

**The 10 Best Green Tech Innovations of 2009:** It's always exciting to spotlight "green" innovations that could change how we view and live in the world. Thanks to the breathtaking pace of development, many items that appeared to be science fiction at the beginning of this decade have become prototypes or commercial products here at the end. Here are E magazine's 10 favorites.

**Serious Windows™:** Serious materials boasts windows that deliver performance four times higher than current Energy Star standards. They soak up waste heat from commercial building appliances, and can even serve as the main heat source in certain applications. [seriouswindows.com](http://seriouswindows.com)



**RainTube™:** This rain gutter filter from GLI Systems is made from 100% post-consumer, high-concentration polyethylene, and is cradle-to-cradle certified—that is, GLI Systems must implement a post-use recovery plan with every product that ships out. [raintechnologies.com](http://raintechnologies.com)

**The Acadia™:** Hallowell International's combined heating and cooling system for commercial buildings helps save up to 70% on energy costs by maintaining 200% efficiency even when outdoor temperatures drop below 0°F. [gotohallowell.com](http://gotohallowell.com)

**Soy-Foam Seats:** Ford Motor Company and Lear Corporation have achieved an auto industry first: using "functionalized soybean oil" to manufacture flexible polyurethane foam for automotive seats.

**Greensulate™:** The natural equivalent of Styrofoam, this 100% green insulation is made mostly of mushroom roots, which are pressed into the desired form, dried and ready to install. [ecovatedesign.com](http://ecovatedesign.com)

**Z5™:** If independent laboratory tests prove that it works, the Z5 Global Group's power-efficiency booster, a little pie-shaped alloy cylinder, could be retrofitted on any gas or diesel engine . . . cutting fuel consumption by up to 40%, increasing horsepower by 10% or better and reducing air pollution in the bargain. [z55555.com](http://z55555.com)

**Bravia VE5Eco Series:** With a standby mode that uses zero watts, these TVs from Sony use nearly 50% less energy than comparable flat screens. They feature a motion sensor that turns the TV off when you forget to, and a light sensor that enables dynamic backlight control, giving the minimal amount of power needed to best illuminate any room. [sonystyle.com](http://sonystyle.com)

**Dial4Light:** Many communities in Germany turn off their street lighting systems from 11 pm until dawn to save energy and funds. A pedestrian who wanted to see his way home in the town of Lemgo invented this hand-held device, which signals street lights to illuminate, then to switch off after the user walks by. It's like a giant motion sensor. [dial4light.de](http://dial4light.de)

**Zenith Solar Z20 Energy Farm:** Using curved mirrors that can collect five times more than ordinary solar collectors, the Z20 produces both electric and thermal energy, making solar power cost competitive against fossil fuels for the first time. [zenithsolar.com](http://zenithsolar.com)

**Vegawatt:** James Peret serves fish and chips at his Dedham, MA, restaurant and heats the place with the used cooking oil. The Vegawatt combines an extensive filtration system that feeds a combustion heating unit. [vegawatt.com](http://vegawatt.com)

Inventions we could see on the shelf as early as 2015 include a tankless Scuba system that enables humans to breathe underwater; infrared cancer detection, and cancer surgeries done non-invasively using ultrasound; bio-engineered blood vessels that make bypass surgery obsolete; and a "safe" way to clean up and dispose of nuclear wastes called PGM (Plasma-Gasification-Melting), which transforms radioactive material into inert material and gases that can be used to fuel gas turbine electric power plants. The future looks very green indeed.

Westerman, Martin, "Designing the Future," Consumer News, E Magazine, January/February 2010, p. 54-55

## Conference centers get real about going green

Unfortunately, greenwashing (when something is called environmentally friendly, but can't be proven to have a net positive impact on the environment) has become part of some marketing programs in the meetings and hospitality communities. In order to ensure greenwashing does not occur in the conference center industry, the International Association of Conference Centers (IACC) has implemented a Code of Sustainability that encourages member properties to follow environmentally sound practices.

The industry has to get serious about the issue. Going green is no longer a fringe concern. A recent survey of corporate travel managers by the National Business Travel Association indicates that nearly 30% of the hospitality industry incorporates green issues into their travel policies and that nearly 25% prefer green meeting suppliers. The fourth annual "focus group" survey on the greening of business tourism coordinated by the Frankfurt-based IMEX exhibition revealed that buyers saying that they, or colleagues, "would deliberately avoid destinations or venues known to have a poor environmental record" increased to nearly three-quarters (73%) compared to a figure of 66% in 2006.

Business and organizations that are committed to sustainability find they are not just surviving—they are thriving. According to "Global Hospitality Insights," a December 2008 Ernst & Young report, "green programs can provide a competitive advantage as long as green activities are still optional in the market . . . over time, green practices will become a baseline requirement to doing business in the hospitality industry. Those companies with business models that revolve around green practices will have the strongest opportunity of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage."

IACC sent its Code of Sustainability to members, asking them to determine their status with regard to 59 practices that include waste management, recycling, water conservation, energy management, air quality and food and beverage. Members who had at least 75% of the environmental practices in place are invited to sign the Code of Sustainability. Facilities earn a platinum, gold, or silver designation, recognizing 100%, 85%, or 75% adherence to the code, respectively. The code is voluntary and not required for IACC certification. Only one property—The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread, which operates the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, WI—has achieved platinum status; 16 have qualified for the gold designation, and 14 others have earned silver status.

CHARTER MEMBER Garrett Creek Ranch Conference Center in Paradise, TX, is in the midst of a unique undertaking that will transform 400 acres back to the original grasses that fed the region 100 years ago. "It's more than just an effort to be 'green,'" said Garrett Creek Ranch owner Jaynie Schultz. "We're really trying to think through and apply sustainability wherever possible." This is part of the overall environmental stewardship program developed by Garrett Creek Ranch leadership that includes a complete sustainability initiative for the conference center facilities and farming for the center's kitchens.

Doyle, Andrea, "Not Another Whitewash," *Successful Meetings*, October 2009, p. 28-30

## Airport Hotels Benefit

Because travelers with early flights want to avoid having to get up at an ungodly hour, drive to the airport in the dark, park the car, etc., airport hotels can benefit. Package deals that include an airport hotel for the night before the flight, 7 to 14 days of parking and a shuttle to and from your gate—all costing not much more than parking alone. ParkSleepFly.com is a one-stop shopping site where rates and amenities of hotels can be compared. Over 1,500 airport hotels in 129 cities in the US and Canada, and a few in Europe are offered. Similar sites are Stay123.com and ParkingAccess.com.

<http://bulletin.aarp.org>, March 2010

## Americans throw out

May / June 2010

## 3.5 billion wire hangers

every year. The jangly mass adds up to 100,000 tons of steel decomposing in dumps for more than a century, according to Vesta Green Marketing Solutions. So what should a conscientious clotheshorse do? Put recycling out of your mind. Most recycling centers can't handle them because they clog the machinery. Workers often have to stop production completely to untangle the machinery. Instead, return unbent hangers to your dry cleaner for another spin!



Spirit magazine, Southwest Airline, March 2010, p. 38

## Dangers of Triclosan

Given how widespread triclosan is, we all need to know the dangers of this antibacterial agent. This product is found in cleaning supplies, deodorants, liquid soaps, toothpaste, shaving cream and mouthwash. Research in rodents demonstrates that triclosan disrupts hormones and may cause developmental changes.

The Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit, has summarized information about triclosan toxicity at [ewg.org](http://ewg.org). There is evidence that triclosan from personal-care products gets into our bodies and contaminates streams and rivers. There is no definitive proof that triclosan harms humans.

Washing with soap and water is just as good as washing with antibacterial soap, according to researchers at the University of Michigan School of Public Health.

You should know that this antibacterial agent has been strongly linked to the following effects on human health:

- Abnormalities with the endocrine system, particularly with thyroid hormone signaling
- Weakening of the immune system
- Birth defects
- Uncontrolled cell growth
- Unhealthy weight loss

Although triclosan is best known for its presence in many brands of antibacterial soap, it is also found in a wide variety of personal care and household products.

By washing clothes and linens with products that do not contain hormone-disrupting chemicals, we protect our own health and the health of guests, and reduce the amount of pollution entering our waterways.

Learn more about Triclosan at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triclosan> and [healthiertalk.com/antibacterial-products-aren-t-just-useless-they-can-be-killers-0595](http://healthiertalk.com/antibacterial-products-aren-t-just-useless-they-can-be-killers-0595). Learn which products contain Triclosan at [drbenkim.com/articles/triclosan-products.htm](http://drbenkim.com/articles/triclosan-products.htm).

Graedon, Joe and Teresa, "Blood-pressure medicine caused a terrible cough," *People's Pharmacy*, Houston Chronicle, April 5, 2010

## WELCOME

## Sustainable Sanitation Services!

ALLY MEMBER Sustainable Sanitation Services' mission is a never-ending quest to change the way the world thinks about cleaning. Every year millions of gallons of cleaning solutions end up in the drinking water supply, millions of plastic containers once meant for cleaning now congest landfills, and every year millions of gallons of fuel is burned to deliver, pick-up and ship cleaning supplies.



Our innovative full lines of "green" cleaning products are readily biodegradable, human and eco safe, and ultra-concentrated to save money and the natural environment. All of our products meet or exceed major industry and government requirements for "compliance and approval" with current and pending regulatory laws and mandates.

Employers can now create a healthier work environment for their employees while promoting a happier and more productive office atmosphere. Simultaneously, companies can now save money on more effective cleaning products AND leave less of a carbon footprint on the Earth by rejecting traditional cleaning products that contain poisons and bleaches which are detrimental to humans and the natural ecosystem.

All Sustainable Sanitation products help preserve the natural environment and personal health and wellness of every human being. Learn more TODAY by calling **504/552-2100** or browsing **[sustainablesanitation.com](http://sustainablesanitation.com)**!

### Old toilets are backing up Austin-area landfills

The City Council plan approved last month to help apartment complexes install new water-efficient toilets has resulted in older models packing rapidly filling landfills. Critics say up to 280 tons of toilets could be dumped in county landfills, contradicting the city's long-held commitment to recycling.

"It's a clear example of the City of Austin's left hand not knowing what its right hand is doing," Rick Cofer, co-chairman of the city's Solid Waste Advisory Commission, said.

The city offers free and discounted water-saving toilets to homeowners and apartment complex owners to conserve limited water supplies. Toilet recycling can be complicated, and water utility officials acknowledge they only recently began exploring the idea. Other cities have tried, with mixed results. Fort Collins, CO, makes money on its toilet replacement program, but San Antonio canceled its after having difficulty selling recycled porcelain. In Fort Collins, old toilets are shattered, the porcelain and metal separated, and the porcelain is mixed with recycled concrete or asphalt, which Fort Collins also recycles. The mix is sold for use in road building. Some California cities have similar programs. "My big joke is that our streets are paved with toilets," said Rosemarie Russo, Fort Collins' sustainability coordinator. Austin does not recycle asphalt, which means the city couldn't use the porcelain for road materials and would have to find other ways to sell or reuse it.

Associated Press, "Inefficient toilets lay waste to Austin landfills," *Houston Chronicle*, March 28, 2010

## BAD YEAR FOR BUTTERFLIES

What would spring be without Monarch butterflies? To some degree, we're finding out. Scientists estimate that this year, the population of the migrating orange-and-black butterflies is down as much as 50 or 60%. One study counted the fewest butterflies leaving Mexico's wintering spots since the colonies were discovered there in 1975. Part of the problem is bad weather. An especially cold, wet Mexican winter wiped out many Monarchs. This worries us only a little. In the grand scheme of things, butterflies have survived rough winters for eons.

What worries us more are longer-term changes to the butterflies' world. All Eastern Monarchs—the ones that migrate through central US—spend their winters crammed into only 12 acres in the Transvolcanic Mountains, an area plagued by illegal logging. Loss of tree cover there exposes the butterflies, which are vulnerable to the cold rain.



But Monarchs don't leave their problems behind when they fly north. Monarch Watch, a University of Kansas-based group, notes that here in the US, their habitat is also threatened: Malls and houses have displaced farmland and forest edges, and milkweed—Monarch caterpillars' baby food—is becoming ever scarcer.

What can you do? For once, the answers are easy. Start with your landscaping, and avoid any herbicide that contains glyphosate, which is particularly hard on milkweed.

And better still, plant a butterfly garden with Monarch-friendly milkweed, flowers and bushes—preferably ones native to your area. Your new garden won't be ready in time to help the exhausted, hungry Monarch survivors now straggling through your area. But this fall, you can fatten their hungry descendants.

Editorial, *Houston Chronicle*, March 28, 2010

## GROWING MILKWEEDS

Introduction: Milkweeds can be propagated from seeds, cuttings, and, in some cases, from root divisions. This account will deal with storage, treatment and planting of milkweed seeds.

Milkweed seeds can be planted in prepared beds outdoors or started indoors in flats. We recommend the latter approach since germination rates are generally higher indoors and it is easier to establish your milkweeds with transplanted seedlings that are well-rooted and therefore more resistant to weather extremes and pests.

Germinating, Growing and Transplanting: Milkweed seedlings can be started indoors in a greenhouse or under artificial lighting and then transplanted outdoors after the average date of last frost. If seeds are started indoors, allow 4-8 weeks growing time before transplanting. Plastic flats can be used to start the seeds. Fill the flats with a soil mix suitable for seedlings (most potting mixes are), thoroughly soak the soil, and let the excess water drain. Sow the seeds by scattering them on the soil surface 1/4-1/2 inch apart, and then cover with about 1/4 inch of additional soil mix. Gently mist the soil surface with water to dampen the additional soil mix that has been added. In an effort to improve germination rates, many gardeners

place the seeds in packets made from paper towels and soak them in warm water for 24 hours prior to planting. This method seems to work especially well for seeds of species that require vernalization (cold treatment).

After the seeds are sown in the flats, cover each flat with a clear plastic cover or a plastic bag to keep the seeds from drying out while germinating. Then, place the flat under grow lights, in a warm sunny window, or in a greenhouse. Most seeds will germinate in 7-10 days if the flats are maintained at 75°F. After the seeds have germinated, remove the plastic covering from the flats. Once the seedlings have emerged, the soil should be kept moist by watering the flat from the bottom. You can water from the bottom by placing the flat in a sink or a larger flat filled with 2 inches of water until moisture appears on the soil surface. The soil should be kept moist but some care is needed to keep the seedlings from



getting too wet—such conditions contribute to fungal growth that can kill the young seedlings (“damping off”). Thinning can reduce damping off.

The plants are ready to be transplanted when they are about 3-6” in height. Before transplanting, acclimate the plants to outdoor conditions for a few days by placing them in a sheltered location during the day and then bringing them indoors at night. The seedlings should be planted 6-24” apart depending on the species (check the back of your seed packets for information). Newly transplanted plants should be watered frequently. Add mulch around the seedlings soon after planting. The mulch holds in the moisture and minimizes the growth of competing weeds. The seedlings should be fertilized 2-3 times during the growing season if using water-soluble fertilizer or once a season if you utilize a granulated time-release formulation.

Free milkweed seeds may be obtained by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope (with a suggested donation of \$3 or more) to Live Monarch – Seeds, 3003-C8 Yamato Road #1015, Boca Raton, FL 33434. Make your check payable to “Live Monarch.” Many other groups offer milkweed seeds for a donation or for purchase.

Consider reading further information on milkweed including thinning, when to plant, preparation of the seedbed, growing milkweeds from cuttings, soil types, where to plant, harvest and storage of milkweed seeds, vernalization and scarification at the following web address.

<http://monarchwatch.org/milkweed/prop.htm>

### Habitat for Humanity Restores

Habitat ReStores are outlets that accept donated goods for resale. While every ReStore is a little different, most focus on home improvement goods—furniture, home accessories, building materials and appliances. These donated goods are sold to the general public at a fraction of the retail price to help local affiliates fund the construction of Habitat homes within their communities.



Materials sold by Habitat ReStores are usually donated by local retailers, contractors and individuals in the community. ReStores provide an environmentally and socially responsible way to keep good, reusable materials out of the waste stream and simultaneously provide

funding for all of Habitat’s community improvement work.

Find a ReStore or Donate: If you want to shop or if you or your property or business have materials to donate, contact your local ReStore. Locations of Restores can be found at [habitat.org/env/restores.aspx](http://habitat.org/env/restores.aspx).

### LUTRON CONTROLS LIGHTING!

Since 1961 Lutron has been enhancing the visual environment and saving energy in hotels by dimming lights in lobbies, restaurants, ballrooms and by automating the controls to turn off lights when rooms are unoccupied.

Guestroom toggle switches with only “on” and “off” options require guests to turn each lamp off. To encourage guests to turn off lights when leaving, add an “All Off” function at the entry, or use occupancy-based controls. This easy method also enhances the experience by creating an instant “wow moment” when the “All On” button welcomes guests.



The advantage to the property is saving energy. For example, during the low-occupied daytime hours, a 150-room hotel wastes about 720W per day, per room. This expense can rise to nearly \$40,000 annually! Lutron’s full line of guestroom lighting controls includes 10-year battery-powered occupancy/vacancy sensors, wireless master controls, wall-mounted switches and dimmers and plug-in modules to save energy on table, floor and desk lamps, as well as televisions and coffee pots. Perfect for both retrofits and new construction, a guestroom lighting control system can save energy and money, and provide that memorable, personal touch for guests.

For more information, please contact Adam Weinberg at **484/560-0170**, or [hospitality@lutron.com](mailto:hospitality@lutron.com).

### RECYCLED FOR REBUILDING

The rubble from Haiti’s shattered capital is rising in heaps at the port, dumped for sorting and recycling by a fleet of heavy, exhaust-belching trucks.

A tangle of twisted metal and broken blocks, it’s an eyesore for now. But officials planning the reconstruction see only value in the debris: material to build roads, expand the waterfront and try to make Port-au-Prince better than before the January 12 quake.

About 90% of the construction debris can be recycled. Already, the rubble has been used to expand a jetty at the port and build ramps for heavy equipment involved in the cleanup.

Debris ends up having a number of lives. It’s not just to be gotten rid of, says a USAID rep. “The recycling of the rubble, and the potential uses of it, could become economic agents for recovery.

A large-scale cleanup is just beginning to tackle piles of rubble from the magnitude-7 quake, which generated 25 million cubic yards—enough to fill the Louisiana Superdome five times. Trucks brimming with smashed concrete are now inching their way through the hilly, congested streets of Port-au-Prince.

Truck drivers say they can only make 3 trips a day, or 2 if traffic is really bad. At the sorting facility, which receives roughly

80 trucks a day, workers separate rubble, rebar and wood by hand.

Melia, Mike, "Recycled for rebuilding," Houston Chronicle, April 4, 2010

## Is ice weighing down fish prices?

The US Food and Drug Administration said that it is reviewing the results of a multi-state investigation that found that shoppers have been paying for large amounts of ice that are not supposed to be included in the price of frozen seafood. The investigation, conducted by weights and measures inspectors in 17 states, found that a coating of ice applied to frozen seafood to preserve quality during storage and distribution was often wrongly included as part of the labeled weight of seafood. In some instances, ice accounted for up to 40% of the product's weight.

Chicago Tribune, "Is ice weighing down fish prices?," The Houston Chronicle, March 31, 2010

## FINDING A PEST PRO

By Jerry Hatch, Technical Specialist, PestWest Environmental, ALLY MEMBER, 941/358-1983, [pestwest.com](http://pestwest.com)

The flowers are blooming, the birds singing and allergies are everywhere. Yes, it's spring time. This is the time of year when projects begin or are continued and guests will arrive at hotels for their vacations. You'll start seeing other guests this time of year, ones that aren't so welcome—pests. We are talking rodents, flies, wasps, ants and roaches. Not to mention bedbugs and termites.

Many clients ask the question of us: "**How do we choose a green pest control company?**" There are two parts to the answer. First, you have to find a good pest control company. Be sure yours fits the recommendations from the National Pest Management Association as follows:

- Always deal with a qualified and licensed pest management company. Consider asking to see the license or other credentials of the pest control professional that comes to solve your pest problem.
- Evaluate pest control companies that are members of national, state or local pest management associations.
- Consider an NPMA QualityPro company.
- Ask friends and neighbors to recommend pest control companies they have used successfully, and ask how satisfied they were with the service.
- If a sizable amount of money is involved, get bids from several pest management companies.
- Don't rush a decision. Since you are paying for professional knowledge as well as skillful application of pesticides, look for someone whose judgment you can trust.
- Before signing a contract, be sure to fully understand the nature of the building pests to be exterminated, the extent of the infestation and the work necessary to solve the problem.
- Find out if the pest control company has liability insurance to cover any damages to your house or furnishings during treatment.
- If a guarantee is given, know what it covers, how long it lasts, what you must do to keep it in force, and what kind of continuing control, prevention and management are necessary.
- Buy value, not price. Beware of exterminators that offer bargains that sound too good to be true.
- Homeowners can call state pest control regulatory agencies for information regarding the status of pest management companies. In most states, the regulatory agency is the State Department of Agriculture.

I would also suggest finding a company with a Certified Entomologist on staff.

The next question is, "**How you find a green pest control**

**company?** Although this designation is important from a marketing standpoint, what you are looking for is a company which practices sustainability in their approach to management of pests. Most service organizations look to licensing or certifications to provide proof of their sustainable practices, and, at this point, it's definitely better to find a company who has taken those steps to get certified. Look for a certification that requires documentation, an audit, training and continual improvement from their designees.

Certifications aside, the proof is in the way the service is performed. The person inspecting should be trained in all facets of Integrated Pest Management, and able to demonstrate their abilities by providing a thorough inspection, complete with monitor devices in discreet locations as proof of pest presence. Discussing options, which should include identifications of conditions conducive to pest presence and the remediation of those conditions, should play an integral role. Removal of the pests and prevention from recurring should also be documented, and all of this before discussing application of material. I believe taking into account all the cultural aspects of a structure leads to a more informed, and responsible approach to choosing the right approach. This doesn't mean not applying a material, but issues involving formulation, chemistry, and sanitation should play a role in the decision of if, what, when and how to treat.

This may be a lot of information, but that is the basis for good effective pest management, and is required in LEED-certified buildings.

So choose wisely, ask questions, meet the technicians and managers. Be a conspicuous consumer. Pests spread disease. Your guests, clients and the environment expect to be protected.

## EPA tightens rules on pesticide linked to deaths

Federal officials have moved quickly to clamp down on the use of potent rodent-killing pesticides after one was linked to the deaths of two Utah girls earlier this year. The US Environmental Protection Agency said aluminum and magnesium fumigants can no longer be used near homes. The agency added other regulations about where they can be used outside and what kinds of warnings must be posted when the fumigants are applied.

Four-year-old Rebecca Toone and her 15-month-old sister, Rachel, died in February after an exterminator treated their yard in Layton with poison-laced pellets used to kill rodents. Investigators said they believe toxic phosphine gas from the pellets seeped into the home and sickened the girls. Aluminum and magnesium phosphide fumigants are primarily used to battle bugs in grain silos and other agricultural operations. Less frequently, they're used to kill underground rodents.

The new rules, which went into effect Wednesday, ban the use of phosphine fumigants near residences, nursing homes, school buildings, hospitals or day care centers. They can only be used to kill rodents in agricultural areas, orchards, golf courses, cemeteries and other outdoor areas where people don't live. Those treatments now must have signs indicating that a dangerous chemical is being used.

Stark, Mike, "EPA tightens rules on pesticide linked to deaths," The Associated Press, [google.com](http://google.com), April 9, 2010

## Rule on Lead Dust Sets Off Scramble

Industry Groups Say Too Few Remodelers Will Be Certified in Time for April 22 Regulation Aimed at Protecting Children

Professional home remodelers across the US are scrambling to comply with a new federal regulation that supporters say will shield children from lead poisoning but which industry groups say will drive up costs, unfairly expose them to fines and litigation and potentially undercut Washington's efforts to promote energy efficiency.

The regulation, which takes effect in April and could affect millions of US homes, seeks to reduce the amount of lead dust created during home renovations and repairs. Contractors who work in older homes will be required to become certified by a government-approved trainer and follow certain precautions, such as covering floors with plastic sheeting and dressing workers in protective clothing.

Industry groups, led by the National Association of Home Builders and major retailers such as Home Depot and Lowe's, are lobbying Congress and the White House to delay the rule's implementation, saying the government hasn't certified enough firms in government-approved techniques for handling lead-contaminated materials. Environmental and health groups say the industry has had years to prepare and that delaying the rule's implementation would put more children at risk of suffering brain damage, hearing problems and other maladies linked to lead exposure.

For consumers, the new rule is expected to result in higher costs, though the amounts are in dispute. The EPA says the costs of complying with the new requirements will range from \$8 to \$167 per job, but acknowledges they could be higher for outdoor projects. Industry officials say the costs will be much higher—at least \$70 in the case of simple jobs like window replacements, and thousands of dollars for more complex projects.

A soft, bluish metallic element, lead was often used as an ingredient by paint manufacturers decades ago. The EPA says lead-based paint was used in more than 38 million homes until the government banned it from housing in 1978. Although the average concentration of lead in the blood of young children has fallen sharply since then, EPA officials say too many are still being poisoned by lead-based paint in their homes. The agency says that from 1999 through 2004, roughly 285,000 children between the ages of 1 and 5 years were estimated to have elevated lead levels in their blood each year.

The EPA proposed its regulation two years ago, nearly 16 years after Congress passed legislation directing it to do so.

But, with time short, industry groups say the EPA has accredited only 135 businesses and fewer than 14,000 individuals, well below the 212,000 firms and 236,000 contractors that the EPA estimated would need to be certified when the agency proposed the regulation in March 2008.

The EPA says it has trained 50,000 individuals, with an additional 50,000 anticipated to be trained by April 22. The agency has accredited 184 training providers and anticipates accrediting roughly 100 more by April 22.

"The rule provides simple, low-cost, common-sense steps contractors can take during their work to protect children and families," an agency spokesman said. "Contractors who are lead-safe certified will be able to market themselves as such, and will be in a position to provide customers assurances that

the job will be done in a manner that protects their families."

The rule's supporters say that instead of delaying the rule, Congress should give the EPA more money to promote awareness and to subsidize training for contractors. They also have suggested the EPA refrain from penalizing contractors who comply with the rule's core requirements and demonstrate progress toward full compliance.

Power, Stephen, "Rule on Lead Dust Sets Off Scramble," The Wall Street Journal, March 17-28, 2010

## HELLO OLD FASHIONED MILK PAINT CO.!

Long before "green" became a buzzword, ALLY MEMBER The Old Fashioned Milk Paint Company began producing a natural, green paint, in twenty deep, rich colors. Milk paint, a homemade, long-lasting paint made with local ingredients, was the finish of choice for many early colonists wanting a splash of color in their homes.

People were looking for a safe alternative to the many toxins found in today's wall paint. Their R&D developed a new line of milk paint that had the same great adhesion and luminescent quality for which the original formula is known (on bare wood and other porous surfaces), but for previously-painted walls and new drywall. After much experimentation, SafePaint was born.



Many people who suffer from allergies or multiple chemical sensitivity are able to tolerate milk paints when they cannot tolerate conventional paints, even with zero VOCs. Milk paints have zero VOCs and just a faint milky or earthy odor when wet, and no odor when dry. One may paint a room in the afternoon and sleep in it that night without fear of breathing harmful fumes, making it a perfect choice for hotel rooms.

The company is happy to send out free samples of their new SafePaint upon request. Call **866/350-6455** or visit [milkpaint.com](http://milkpaint.com) and learn more TODAY!

## POWER PLANT IN A BOX

Bloom Energy, one of Silicon Valley's most secretive startups, recently unveiled its long-awaited "power plant in a box," a collection of fuel cells that the company says can provide clean electricity to homes, office buildings—even whole villages in the developing world. The Bloom Energy Server, a smooth metal box the size of a pickup truck, can generate electricity from multiple fuels while producing relatively few greenhouse gas emissions. With government subsidies factored in, power from the server costs less than power from the grid. Unlike other fuel cells, Bloom's is made mostly of sand, with no platinum or other precious metals thrown in as catalysts. And unlike solar panels and wind turbines, each server can produce the same amount of energy day and night for years on end, according to the company. The process is twice as efficient as burning natural gas.

"This is not when the sun shines, this is not when the wind blows—this is base load, nonstop," said K. R. Sridhar, Bloom's co-founder and chief executive officer. The server, he said, could change the energy industry in much the same way that cell phones changed communications, decentralizing the generation of power. Sridhar introduced the device, for years a subject of intense speculation within the green-tech industry,

before a large and rapturous crowd of politicians, press and Silicon Valley luminaries, eager to see the first product from a company that has landed roughly \$400 million in venture capital investments.

Some of the business executives in attendance had already bought the servers, which cost \$700,000 to \$800,000 apiece. Bloom, based in Sunnyvale, counts among its customers Coca-Cola, Cox Enterprises, FedEx and Google, all of whom sent executives to speak at the debut. eBay liked the product enough that it hosted the event at its San Jose campus, where five servers have been running since July. "Like everyone says, it sounded too good to be true," said Cox Chairman Jim Kennedy. "So we sent some people to check it out, and they said, 'It could be true.'" The communications company installed four of the servers, each generating 100 kilowatts of electricity, at its KTVU television station in Oakland.

Whether it works long-term will be the key question, energy experts say. The Bloom Energy Server uses solid oxide fuel cells, generating power through an electrochemical reaction between oxygen and such fuels as natural gas, ethanol and landfill gas. Solid oxide fuel cells are more efficient and operate at higher temperatures than proton exchange membrane fuel cells, which have been commercially available for years. But making a solid oxide fuel cell that lasts has proved tricky. Researchers have been trying for decades.

Baker, David R., "Clean power, from a box," San Francisco Chronicle, reprinted in the Houston Chronicle, February 25, 2010

## LED Traffic lights don't melt snow, ice

Cities around the country that have installed energy-efficient LED traffic lights are discovering a hazardous downside: The bulbs don't burn hot enough to melt snow and can become crusted over in a storm—a problem blamed for dozens of accidents and at least one death.

Many communities have switched to LED bulbs in their traffic lights because they use 90% less energy than the old incandescent variety, last far longer and save money. Their great advantage is also their drawback: They do not waste energy by producing heat.

Wisconsin, which has put LED bulbs at hundreds of intersections, saves about \$750,000 per year in energy costs. LEDs installed seven years ago are still burning, while most incan-

descent bulbs have to be replaced every 12 to 18 months. With LEDs energy savings are in excess of 80%, and crews don't have to replace them as often.

Not every storm causes snow to stick to the lights, but when the wind is right and the snow is wet, drivers should beware. One reason there have been so few deaths is that drivers know they should treat a traffic signal with obstructed lights as a 4-way stop.

Ramde, Dinesh, "Energy-efficient lights catch heat for being too cool," Associated Press reprinted in the Houston Chronicle, December 16, 2009  
Vigil, Tammy, "Snow-covered traffic signals a challenge for Denver drivers," [kdvr.com/news/kdvr-snow-traffic-032410,0,1300177.story](http://kdvr.com/news/kdvr-snow-traffic-032410,0,1300177.story), March 24, 2010

## SPECIAL PARKING PRIVILEGES

Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites Northwest/Sea-world, San Antonio, TX, posts this sign offering special parking privileges to those guests who drive fuel efficient vehicles.



## HOUSTON DEMANDS NO MORE PLASTIC

Beginning in April, Houston residents are required to put lawn trimmings out for curbside in starch-based bags that decompose within 6 weeks into nontoxic organic residue. Anyone who dumps plastic bags with lawn trimmings into the city's automated containers for pickup will be subject to a fine after a grace period and initial warning.

Also subject to penalties will be yard maintenance companies that deposit the result of their work curbside to avoid paying disposal fees at landfills.

The city's waste director stresses that the new regulations will save the city \$2 million in waste disposal fees, reducing the department's annual budget in that category by 10%, while creating additional municipal revenue through the sale of the material as mulch by a private contractor.

Editorial, "Plastic being phased out," Houston Chronicle, January 2, 2010

## FINAL WORDS . . .

"Sooner or later, wittingly or unwittingly, we must pay for every intrusion on the natural environment."

Barry Commoner (1917-), American biologist and eco-socialist

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