

# THE GREEN PAGES

## Commercial cleaning service builds biz by going green



By **RUTH HEIL**  
Business Journal Columnist

Do your eyes begin to water when you enter the office restroom after it's been cleaned? Does your nose tickle when you notice heavy dust on the little-used surfaces around your desk or workstation?

Cleaning chemicals and dust are irritants that your body naturally and rightly rejects. Reactions include burning eyes, skin rash, sore throat, nausea, headache, dizziness and fatigue. These are all symptoms that make it difficult to actually get any work done. For many reasons, the methods and products used to clean a building have a direct effect on the business's bottom line.

Employers invest in the creation of healthy and safe work environments, but maintaining indoor air quality is a complex task. Ventilation, pesticide use, office equipment emissions and industry-related product use (such as those used by beauty salons, print shops and manufacturers) contribute to the unhealthy compounds that workers must inhale on a daily basis.

Fortunately, there is one thing you can do to improve the situation in your building: start cleaning green. Green Seal — an organization that certifies products, services and companies as environmentally sustainable based on stringent standards — defines green cleaning as “high performance cleaning without health or environmental damage.”

Through their third-party certification process, Green Seal employees identify and monitor green service providers and products so that purchasing agents and facilities managers know what they're buying. In Eastern Pennsylvania, a commercial and institutional cleaning service that is Green Seal-certified is based in Bethlehem.

The name of the company is Servicemaster Clean by Round the Clock Cleaning (Servicemaster).

Joanne Sigafos is Servicemaster's vice president. “Six years ago, as soon as we became aware that green chemicals and equipment were available to us, we decided to go green,” she explained. “At that time we didn't have any idea what impact green would have on our industry. Since then we have become the first and only GS-42 certified cleaning company in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. We strive to be on the cutting edge of any new technology available to us.”

Sigafos said, “Green cleaning does not cost more than traditional cleaning. Our customers like the idea that we are helping their employees stay healthier and their facility stay cleaner. Our employees like the idea that they are using safe, green products that are simple to use and effective.”

There is more to a clean building than a

tidy appearance and empty trash cans. It should be a pleasant and favorable place to work and entertain clients. Meanwhile, office pollution from air fresheners, deodorizers, disinfectants, and polishes as well as unaddressed dust, dampness and dirt affects more than just occupant health.

Harsh chemicals and inefficient cleaning practices harm the outside environment, and they can shorten the lifespan of things like carpets, floors and desktops.

The U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification awards those who use green cleaning.

Officials who are mandated to protect the health of school students and patients

will find green cleaning contributes favorably to their endeavors.

Green Seal certification means that each job meets the following demands:

- Procedures are documented so that all cleaning personnel and cleaning service clients understand what is expected. A plan must be developed for each building with specifics about how to properly maintain it including equipment needs or necessary precautions for sensitive populations such as in the case of a hospital. The plan must leave room for communication and feedback. Documents must include training requirements, spill

response tactics, product lists and special needs.

- Eco-friendly, eco-label-certified cleaning products must be used except where special chemicals are required. When chemicals are used, the way they are handled must be done with efficiency and within labeled guidelines.

- Procedural standards must be met such as isolating regular disinfectant and sanitization use to areas like kitchens and bathrooms.

- Efficient methods such as entryway carpeting must be employed wherever possible.

- Personnel are trained to be vigilant for items that can be recycled according to the building's plan.

In order to get certified, Servicemaster underwent an application process to ensure strict standards were met after which the company receives an annual review. They are also monitored to make sure that any green claims made in connection with the Green Seal label are accurate.

In addition to janitorial services, Servicemaster also offers annual maintenance options like carpet cleaning and computer cleaning.

Their “Capture and Removal” cleaning system collects dust and dirt instead of just moving it around, and their high-filtration vacuums capture tiny particles that many cleaners leave behind.

“We are happy that we can offer green cleaning to each customer that we do business with. Everyone should be doing what they can to help the environment. It is the responsible thing to do,” said Sigafos.

*Ruth Heil is a freelance writer based in Green Lane. She can be reached at [ruth@thewritebeat.com](mailto:ruth@thewritebeat.com).*

### THE GREEN SCENE

#### Business basics

##### SERVICEMASTER BY ROUND THE CLOCK CLEANING

- **Principal:** Randall Kissinger, owner
- **Address:** 2320 Brodhead Road, Bethlehem, PA 18020
- **Telephone:** 610-868-7900 or (800) 486-7900
- **Web site:** [www.smbyrctc.com](http://www.smbyrctc.com)
- **Number of employees:** 280
- **Years operating:** 32