

INFORMATION

BULLETIN

SUBJECT: Carpet Cleaning - Indoor Air Quality

SECTION: III

NUMBER: 3

DATE: 6/1/03

With Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) being an area of increased government and building occupant concern, it is apparent that the focus on cleaning will be equally important for health reasons as well as appearance levels. When properly maintained, carpeted surfaces act as a filter and actually hold soil, debris and minute contaminants preventing them from becoming airborne. Routine carpet maintenance not only improves carpet appearance and prolongs fabric life, it can also benefit a facilities indoor air quality.

Routine carpet maintenance includes controlling soil with entry mats, vacuuming with proper filtration and micro filter bags and immediate spotting. One of the most important features of routine maintenance that helps to keep indoor air cleaner and extend the life of a carpet is regular vacuuming. Vacuums have been improved significantly with the addition of better suction and filters capable of trapping particles as small as 0.3 microns (a micron is defined as 1 millionth of a meter). It is equally important to regularly clean and/or replace vacuum filters to assure they are working efficiently.

In addition to the routine maintenance noted above, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recognizes the importance of regular carpet cleaning as a means of contributing to healthier indoor air. This cleaning includes regularly scheduled wet cleaning for total soil removal. Extraction cleaning provides the most effective means of achieving total soil removal. The following chart provides recommendations from the EPA regarding carpet-cleaning frequency based on various environmental conditions.

RECOMMENDED CLEANING FREQUENCY GUIDELINE FROM THE EPA*										
Environment	Day Care Center	Nursing Homes	Residence				Office Building		Food Service Establishments	Commercial retail shops, banks
			2 persons, non-smoking	2 persons, with smoking	young children	young children w/pets	ground floor	higher floors		
Normal	2 wks	1 mo	6-12 mos	4 mos	6 mos	3-6 mos	3-6 mos	6-12 mos	1 mo	3-6 mos
Contaminated Outside Dusty	1 wk	1 mo	2 mos	2 mos	1 mo	1 mo	1-4 mos	2-6 mos	1 wk	1 mo
Extreme Cold Weather Climates	2 wks	1 mo	4-6 mos	3 mos	3 mos	2 mos	2-6 mos	3-9 mos	2 wks	2 mos
High Humidity Biogenic	1 wk	1 wk	4-6 mos	4 mos	3 mos	2 mos	2-6 mos	3-9 mos	2 wks	2 mos

* From: U.S. EPA Letter, January 1989

Cleaning frequency is best planned by first reviewing a facilities floor plan and scheduling regular cleaning according to traffic patterns. One of the most effective cleaning methods which is used more than any other is extraction cleaning. Extraction cleaning removes soils right down to the carpet backing. This method also has one of the shortest down times, due to minimum carpet wetting.

With regular maintenance procedures in place, the carpet surface is not only improved, but the quality of the overall indoor environment can be improved.