

## 5.2 Janitorial Products

Janitorial products include cleaners, disposable papers and tissues that are used on a daily basis in most workplace settings. Environmental procurement can have a large impact here because of the larger volumes of product in this material category.

Products range from general purpose cleaning agents to commercial and industrial strength cleaners to disposable papers and tissues. All of these products are commonplace and are also packaged for use in residential settings.

### 5.2.1 General Purpose Cleaning Agents

#### An Overview

The primary function of general purpose cleaners is to remove soils from hard surfaces. Statistics indicate over 54,000 tonnes of general purpose cleaners are consumed annually in Canada.

The major ingredients in general purpose cleaning products are surfactants, builder, solvents, and scouring abrasives. Surfactants lower the surface tension of the water, allowing the cleaning solution to penetrate and suspend soils.

Cleaning products on the market have been labelled "environmentally friendly" because they are phosphate free or are considered biodegradable. However, this determination has been difficult to assess in the past due to the lack of definitive standards for biodegradability and other environmental factors. The Environmental Choice Program is now developing guidelines.

#### Potential Environmental Impacts

- May be a burden on the environment in terms of wastewater loading and treatment, emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) (see 5.1) and resource consumption.
- If surfactants are not easily biodegraded, they may persist and harm ecosystems.

#### Things to Consider If You Write Your Own Specifications

This is an opportunity to add clauses in general purpose cleaners to address:

- Preference for natural products or materials like reusable towelling
- Preference for highest recycled content (for example in paper products)
- Preference for products with "seals of approval"
- Preference for products that are biodegradable, not toxic or chlorinated, and standardized as much as possible to reduce the number of chemicals in use
- Preference for products that minimize volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions
- Preference for products with minimal packaging in refillable or recyclable containers.

#### Specifications from Other Agencies and Seals of Approval

Environmental Choice program guideline ECP-33  
(details at [www.environmentalchoice.com/guidelines/pdfs/ecp-33.pdf](http://www.environmentalchoice.com/guidelines/pdfs/ecp-33.pdf))  
Green Seal GS-08  
(details at [www.greenseal.org/standard/h-cleanr.htm](http://www.greenseal.org/standard/h-cleanr.htm))

## 5.2.2 Industrial and Commercial Cleaners

### An Overview

Industrial and commercial cleaners are used primarily for facility and machinery cleaning. The selection of a cleaner is influenced primarily by the nature of the surface to be cleaned, the nature of the soiling, and the degree of cleanliness required.

The key active ingredients in industrial and commercial cleaners are: surfactants (to lower water tension and allow cleaning solution to work), builders (to control water hardness and improve surfactant performance), alkalis and organic solvents.

### Potential Environmental Impacts

- If the surfactants are not easily biodegraded they may persist and harm ecosystems.
- Similarly, the products of degradation may also pose an elevated risk to the environment.
- Builders may have adverse impacts on aquatic systems and water quality if present at excessive concentrations.

### Things to Consider If You Write Your Own Specifications

This is an opportunity to add clauses in industrial and commercial cleaner specifications to address:

- Requirements for meeting existing government specifications (Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) in order to validate manufacturer claims that products work just as well or better than other products
- Preference for products which are non-hazardous and low in phosphate
- Preference for water based cleaners over those of organic solvents with VOCs
- Where biodegradability is requested, the product's ability to degrade at the disposal site must be evaluated based on specific criteria such as: time required to degrade, recognized test method used, degradation by-products, and overall toxicity of substances generated during the degradation process
- Products of degradation and the product in question must not contain ingredients that are known to be damaging to the environment and/or the sewage collection or treatment facility
- Preference for products that require only a small amount to clean well, over others that require a larger amount, provided that all performance criteria are met (e.g. concentrates)
- Cleaning products should be purchased in containers which are reusable (refillable), returnable or recyclable (where recycling programs accept the containers)
- Contracts for janitorial and cleaning services should specify the use of EcoLogo approved products where applicable.

### Specifications from Other Agencies and Seals of Approval

Environmental Choice program guideline ECP-57  
(details at [www.environmentalchoice.com/guidelines/pdfs/ecp-57.pdf](http://www.environmentalchoice.com/guidelines/pdfs/ecp-57.pdf))

**5.2.3 Disposable Papers and Tissues****An Overview**

Statistics indicate that more than 500,000 tonnes of paper, including disposable paper, toilet tissue, kitchen towels, facial tissues, table napkins and hand towels, are manufactured in Canada each year.

Alternatives in the choice of pulp finish, pulp and paper technology and emission control are available to manufacturers. The Environmental Choice Program has developed five separate guidelines that address: toilet tissue, paper towels, facial tissue, table napkins and hand towels.

**Potential Environmental Impacts**

- Manufacture of product may release substances that contaminate the environment and enter the solid waste stream.

**Things to Consider If You Write Your Own Specifications**

A requirement for minimum recycled content is not specified in the guidelines. That parameter has been incorporated into manufacturer resource consumption and solid waste production measurements (performance in these areas increases as amount of recycled material increases).

If considering the purchase of a product outside of the ECP guidelines and EcoLogo, you may wish to consider specification of a desired level of recycled content, bleach free products, and environmentally friendly packaging, all of which are addressed in the guidelines themselves.

**Specifications from Other Agencies and Seals of Approval**

Environmental Choice program guideline ECP-59 through 63

(details at [www.environmentalchoice.com/guidelines/pdfs/ecp-59.pdf](http://www.environmentalchoice.com/guidelines/pdfs/ecp-59.pdf))

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(details at [www.environmentalchoice.com/guidelines/pdfs/ecp-63.pdf](http://www.environmentalchoice.com/guidelines/pdfs/ecp-63.pdf))

Green Seal GS-09

(details at [www.greenseal.org/standard/tn-paper.htm](http://www.greenseal.org/standard/tn-paper.htm))

Green Seal GS-01

(details at [www.greenseal.org/standard/t-paper.htm](http://www.greenseal.org/standard/t-paper.htm))