

Green Housekeeping For Aquinas College

The green housekeeping policy of Aquinas College is a comprehensive program designed to reduce the exposure of building occupants to potentially hazardous chemical contaminants that adversely impact air quality, occupant well-being, and the environment. Green cleaning is defined as products and services that reduce adverse health and environmental impacts compared to similar products and services used for the same purpose. It is a holistic approach that includes all chemicals, equipment, work procedures, training, and communications. Aquinas College is committed to working towards sustainable operations, and a green housekeeping program. This housekeeping program applies to the campus of Aquinas College and impacts all buildings and grounds.

The purpose of green housekeeping:

Provide a safe and healthy environment throughout campus.

Reduce exposures of potentially hazardous chemical contaminants to building occupants.

Reduce exposures of potentially hazardous chemical contaminants to the environment.

Promote an increased awareness of occupational, environmental, and facilities safety throughout campus.

Implementation:

The Director of Physical Services and the supervisors of the department are responsible for the implementation and continual monitoring for compliance with the requirements of this program.

Housekeeping staff will be retrained, and shall use cleaning chemicals and processes that are environmentally and socially sensitive.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of all building occupants to comply with all aspects of the green housekeeping program.

Chemicals

Included in this policy is a list of cleaning chemicals and products determined by the college to be safe, and therefore, are currently being utilized on campus. There are certain characteristics to look for in green cleaning products. Green housekeeping for Aquinas College will include products that meet Green Seal (GS-37) guidelines.

Products purchased will be biodegradable, non toxic, concentrated, and work efficiently in cold water. A proportioning system for accurate product dilution assures accurate mixing of the cleaning concentrate in water. They will not contain bleach or high concentrations of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's). Products will not contain petroleum based solvents, glycol ethers, phenolic compounds and surfactants. Purchasing will favor neutral PH products and consider smarter containers and packaging.

MICHIGAN RIGHT TO KNOW LAW

The Michigan Right to Know Law is designed to provide information to employers and employees exposed to hazardous chemicals in the workplace. This law is intended to reduce the incidence of chemically related occupational illness and injuries. There are five components to the law: (1) the evaluation of hazardous chemicals. (2) The labeling of these chemicals. (3) Maintaining Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for all chemicals. (4) Training of employees. (5) A written hazard communication program.

Aquinas College has a Written Hazard Communication Program available to all employees. It provides workers the right to know the hazards and identities of the chemicals they are exposed to in the workplace. Aquinas College will rely on Material Safety Data Sheets from product suppliers to meet hazard determination requirements.

Equipment

Included in this policy is a list of green cleaning equipment and supplies the college is using. In deciding what equipment to purchase and use on campus, there are certain characteristics to consider for Green Housekeeping.

Vacuum cleaners and carpet extraction equipment that carry a certification from the Carpet & Rug Institute (CRI) Green Label Program will be used. High efficiency operational equipment with variable rate speed and dispensing equipment will be purchased. Also, powered floor maintenance equipment shall operate at a 70dBA or lower level. Aquinas will purchase ergonomically designed equipment to reduce vibration and employee fatigue. Quarterly maintenance shall take place to ensure proper operation of the equipment, and a log shall be kept of all purchases and repairs of the equipment.

Supplies

Entryway matting helps trap and remove dirt before it enters the building. Since most pollutants enter a building on people's feet, a quality matting system inside and outside all entrances will be utilized.

Micro-fiber dusting cloths and flat mops mechanically capture dirt and remove it rather than moving it around. Using this technology can eliminate the need for chemicals. Micro-fiber dusting cloths and flat mopping systems will be utilized.

Environmentally sensitive paper products will be purchased. Green Seal's Standards for Tissue (GS-1) and Towels (GS-9) include 100% recycled fiber as well as bleaching and de-inking process free of chlorine and its derivatives.

Work Procedures

A green housekeeping program includes an examination of how cleaning is performed, and how a housekeeper impacts their surroundings. The housekeeping staff will be trained to reemphasize procedures that positively and productively impact the environment.

An effective indoor air quality program is directly linked to how well housekeepers perform their duties. Mechanically capturing dust and dirt, using coarse spray chemicals, and applying cleaner to the cloth rather than spraying the surface to be cleaned will be an emphasis in training. Micro fiber dusting cloths and flat mops will reduce and eliminate the use of chemicals.

Housekeepers will focus on entryways inside and out, where pollutants can be trapped and removed before they enter the building. There will be a focus on preventative measures, and quick clean up of accidents and spills will require fewer and milder chemicals to be used. A focus on touch points, like door handles and fixtures, will be emphasized in cleaning. Product knowledge is also important. Housekeepers will allow chemicals to have proper dwell time so that soil is thoroughly removed using less chemical or product.

Training

Training for the Aquinas College Housekeeping Staff will be provided by the manufacturer's or supplier's representative. All housekeeping personnel will have a minimum of four hours of initial green cleaning training that will include all policies and procedures associated with the program. There will be a minimum of one two hour refresher course on the green cleaning program each year.

The training will include which products to purchase, how to use them, things to look for to ensure compliance, methods of green cleaning, and proper use of equipment and supplies. Training will also include initiatives for minimizing energy consumption, recycling, waste reduction, ergonomics, and other practices contributing to the sustainability of the Aquinas campus.

Documentation of the training will be recorded.

Communication

Communication is a key component of a green housekeeping program. Effective communication can create value for the facilities department and enhance the

department's reputation as good stewards of the facilities and the environment. Communication is critical for building occupants to understand that they are part of the process. Proper spill notification, reporting unsafe conditions promptly, and complying with recycling programs are employee responsibilities that need to be communicated.

The Physical Plant Department along with the Center for Sustainability will communicate the elements of a Green Cleaning program throughout campus.

Benefits of a green housekeeping program:

Aquinas College is committed to reducing harm to the environment. Implementing a green housekeeping program will help decrease air pollution, water pollution, ozone depletion, and global climate change.

Green housekeeping also reduces health problems associated with allergens, chemical sensitivities, and contaminants such as mold and bacteria. Because green cleaning products contain low levels of VOC's (Volatile Organic Compounds), fewer potentially harmful chemicals are emitted into the air that employees and students breathe.

Green cleaning helps reduce costs to building management, tenants and housekeeping staff, and expenses, including costs associated with sick leave, health care, and productivity loss. In addition, green cleaning uses energy efficient equipment and focuses on preventative maintenance to reduce expenses. As energy costs climb, and climate and ecosystems suffer, reducing energy consumption has become a major focus of Aquinas College.

Other benefits associated with a green housekeeping program include increasing worker satisfaction, improving morale, reducing absenteeism, and increasing productivity, efficiencies, and retention among facility occupants.