



This Site Industry Sites

SEARCH

Floor Care | Carpet Care | Restroom Care | Green Cleaning | Hand Tools | Chemicals/Cleaners | Exterior Care | Technology | Business Improvement | Legal/Regulatory | More

MAGAZINES

Sanitary Maintenance
Contracting Profits
Housekeeping Solutions

DEPARTMENTS

News of Interest
People & Company Updates
Calendar

INFORMATION RESOURCES

CleanLink Minute
Management Minute
CleanTips
Buyer's Guide
Case Studies/ White Papers
Industry Statistics
Industry Links
Weathering The Storm
Webcasts

PRODUCT RESOURCES

Product Watch
Top Products
Storefronts

myCleanLink

Home
Blogs
Groups
Multimedia
Forums

BLOGS

Corinne Zudonyi
Dan Welton
Lisa Ridgely
Nick Bragg

ABOUT

About Us
Contact Us
Advertise
Subscribe
RSS
Site Map
Policies

SANITARY MAINTENANCE



April 2010 | [Request SM](#) | [Contact](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Reprints](#) | [Archives](#) | [Current issue](#) |

UP CLOSE: VACUUMS

Quiet Carpet Care

Day cleaning is increasing the demand for low-decibel vacuums

By Cynthia Kincaid
Email the SM editors

In an effort to save costs, many facilities are moving to daytime cleaning and giving low-decibel vacuuming a closer look. The ultra-quiet of these vacuums allow janitors to clean during the day in nearly any facility.

Day cleaning puts cleaning personnel in the building at the same time as tenants. While it can be tricky scheduling cleaning around the activities of building occupants, cleaning during the day can save facilities significant amounts of money by having lights and HVAC turned off at nighttime.

SPONSOR LINKS:

[Core Products Co., Inc.](#)
Green Logic ®-Formulating green cleaning products for our future.

[Cleaning for Health](#)
ProTeam manufactures 20 different vacuums for all types of cleaning

"The recession has changed the landscape in this industry, and a lot of places are short of money," says Barbara Casse-Bender, president of Hackensack, N.J.-based BCB Janitorial Supply Co. "Now people that work in libraries are vacuuming before they go home, so they want quiet vacuums. Sometimes doctors' offices don't want people coming in after hours, so when the office staff is getting all set up in the morning is when they

want to do the vacuuming."

If cleaning providers are converting their programs from night to day, distributors can help with the transition by outfitting staff members with low-decibel vacuums along with appropriate training. However, in traditional nighttime operations, these quiet machines may be a tougher sell because of higher price points.

A Variety Of Choices

Quiet, or low-decibel, vacuums are available in upright, canister and backpack models. All offer varying lightweight designs and emit far less noise than their traditional, louder counterparts.

"[Manufacturers have] put baffling around the motors, taken out the beater bars, and are using open tools," says Ken Abrams, general manager of [Janet Oriole Supply](#) in Phoenix. "Now you don't have that revving sound."

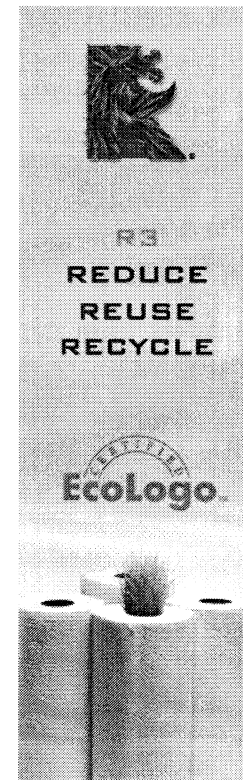
Upright vacuums are a popular choice among end users, but most jan/san suppliers have found low-decibel canister and backpack models to be better sellers.

READ MORE:

CleanLink Articles: [day cleaning](#), [vacuums](#), [carpet care](#)

Related Topics: [Vacuums](#), [Green Regulations](#), [LEED](#)

Industry Articles: [day cleaning](#), [vacuums](#), [carpet care](#)



myCleanLink

Connect with your peers through [MyCleanLink.com](#) for FREE.

- Share advice and business solutions
- Inquire about job openings
- Make friends in the industry
- Much more!

It's online social networking for cleaning professionals... and it's easy!

**Get started
TODAY**

"The good thing is, if the cleaning staff uses the backpack model properly, they don't get repetitive motion injuries that you can get from a standard upright," says Laurie Sewell, president of [Servicon Systems Inc.](#) in Culver City, Calif. "But they have to wear it properly. If they don't have it fitted, and it's not sitting on their backs properly, it's not comfortable to wear or use."

Backpacks allow cleaning staff to maneuver around the many obstacles in hospital, school and office settings, as well as work in tight spaces such as cubicles.

"The backpack that we sell is phenomenally quieter than any upright I've seen at this point," says Adam Uselman, vice president and chief operating officer for Billings, Mont.-based [Bruco Inc.](#) "It's just a whisper."

The noise level in a typical commercial office building is between 64 to 68 decibels. In order for day-cleaning programs to be successful, vacuums will need to be at similar levels. Most of the current low decibel upright vacuums emit around 70 decibels, and the tank and backpack vacuums can emit between 50 and 66 decibels.

Selling Challenges

While quieter technology is certainly a draw, low-decibel vacuums are priced at a premium, some as high as 20 percent higher than more traditional vacuums. This can be a significant selling challenge, particularly in an economy that is still recovering.

"These days almost everything is [based on] price," says Abrams. "Even if it makes a little more noise, they'll buy it if it costs less money — unless the environment is noise sensitive."

However, distributors can point out that some of the additional cost should get offset over time with fewer maintenance and replacement costs. Because of the lack of moving parts and beater bars, these vacuums should break down less often than traditional models.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges of quiet vacuums is the perception that the more noise a vacuum makes, the more powerful the suction and cleaning capability.

"When they hear these vacuums, the skeptics don't think they will pick up anything, but we've tested them," says Uselman. "We've put down paper clips, rice, even sand, and they pick up very well. But customers don't think the vacuums will work on their dirt. It's not greatly received until you take it out and show them."

Distributors should conduct live demonstrations with the vacuums at their customers' facilities. First, clean the carpet with the end user's current, traditional vacuum. Then, clean the same area with the low-decibel model. That way, end users can see that both machines work equally well.

"You need to explain to customers that the suction and power is there, it's just the decibels that are lower," says Casse-Bender.

Perception truly is everything — even for building owners. The low-decibel vacuums are quieter because they have had the beater bar and other moving parts removed. While this has resulted in the benefit of noise reduction, it has also removed the ability of some of these vacuums to leave vacuuming marks on the carpet, which some facility managers and building owners want to see as evidence of a newly vacuumed carpet.

"It's perception. In the more plush carpet, customers are used to seeing triangles that are vacuumed into the carpet with traditional beater bars, and the standard backpacks don't show that," says Sewell. "So, some manufacturers put a simulated beater bar under one of the attachments so that it gives that triangle look."

In a cost-sensitive economy, quiet vacuums may be a luxury many customers aren't willing to splurge on. But as day cleaning grows in popularity thanks to its cost saving capabilities, the demand for low-decibel machines should only increase.

Cynthia Kincaid is a freelance writer based in Portland, Ore.

A GREEN DEMAND

The need for quieter vacuums isn't limited to only daytime cleaning programs. From a

safety standpoint, the [Occupational Safety & Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#) states that employees exposed to intense and constant noise — above 80 decibels — must wear ear protection.

"Low-decibel vacuums are safer and less hazardous to the worker in terms of hearing loss," says Laurie Sewell, president of Servicon Systems Inc., Culver City, Calif.

Facilities wanting to earn the [U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Existing Buildings: Operation and Maintenance \(LEED-EB: O&M\)](#) certification will also need low-decibel vacuums. Green cleaning is a requirement of LEED facilities and according to Indoor Environmental Quality Credit 3.4: Green Cleaning D Sustainable Cleaning Equipment, vacuums must be certified by the [Carpet and Rug Institute \(CRI\)](#) and operate at sound levels less than 70 decibels.