

# GREEN II

"Think Globally - Act Locally!" "April 22<sup>nd</sup> is Earth Day!" It can seem that the only reason to become environmentally friendly is to somehow help out the world with little effect at our office. A kind of *Noblesse Oblige* from our place of work to an unknown and gigantic Earth. Not so! There are many reasons to consider taking our facility "green", and they all have local focus. Last month we covered the ways that we can easily make differences in our work environment and now we can look at a slightly more proactive approach to greening up our buildings and how to benefit from the "soft costs" with doing so.

The purpose of going green at your facility are three-fold and all can be applied locally:

- Efficiently using water, power, and other resources.
- Improving occupant health while significantly increasing productivity.
- Making the local environment better by reducing pollution and waste.

There are hard costs, such as new equipment and products associated with a cleaner building, but they are often balanced out by the savings from using the new equipment and products. There could be rebates that offer tax savings in the near future. By using water and energy resources frugally, there is a long term savings. Keeping dirt out of the building can significantly impact the cost of cleaning your facility. Think of the savings if you did not have to pay someone to dust everyday. Think of the savings in carpet replacement if a carpet is well vacuumed - it can almost double the life of the carpet! There is a lot of time and expense removing dirt from a building that should not have been brought in the first place. More savings and productivity can be yours by replacing air filters with the new MERV filters or controlling current HVAC systems more effectively.

What about the second consideration of improving health and increasing productivity? What HR manager would not be interested in getting 10 - 15% more productivity out of current staff? Can that be possible? Well, according to a CEC-PIERS study of the central valley those are reasonable expectations of returns on changes made to the employee's work areas. If the work area is well ventilated one could expect a 4% rise in productivity. A view other than a cubicle wall can increase productivity by 10 - 25%. An increase in daylight makes us 13% more productive. Ergonomic desks ( comfort ) leads to a 2 - 5% up-tick in work! Environmental issues can lead to decreases too the study found. Glare from un-filmed or ill-placed windows can slow productivity by 15 - 21%. If it is too hot or too dark it can lead to a 8% and 6% decrease respectively.

With so much energy going into changing entire industries over to a more environmentally friendly approach we should not be surprised if some of the claims made about products and services did not live up to the presentation. This is called "Greenwashing" and it is not so much of a lie as a lack of full disclosure. A really green product will try to address all environmental impacts from make-up to shipping. To be a green product it also needs third party testing and certification. An open dialogue with your chemical, paper, and service provider should let you know if you are on the right

track.

There is a lot to consider about when thinking of taking your facility green. There are chemicals to consider, processes to choose between. Productivity impacts. Decisions and scheduling of events can impact how effectively the program is implanted. As "Earth Day" is over three decades old maybe it is time to start thinking and benefiting ourselves-locally. Next month we will address the recycling programs and the necessity of getting a 100% buy-in at your facility.