

## EVS Green Careers Project Snapshot

### Green Cleaning with New Green Chemicals

**Hospital:** Northwest Hospital & Medical Center/UW Medicine is a 281 bed hospital with more than 1900 employees. 61 EVS workers are participating in the project.

**Union:** SEIU Healthcare 1199NW represents over 22,000 workers in Washington State

**Training and Implementation Partner:** SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Multi-employer Training and Education Fund

**Project Goal:** Implement Green Cleaning Chemicals

#### Project Description

In the summer of 2010, the recently formed EVS Labor-Management committee, coordinated by the SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Multi-employer Education and Training fund, created a SMART Goals project plan to evaluate green alternatives for the 6 chemicals most commonly used by Housekeepers. The Labor and Management team planned a collaborative approach to identify, evaluate, and implement the new chemicals through its inclusion of EVS management, workers and the nursing staff in the pilot process. The team recognized that any conversion to cleaning chemicals would have to meet criteria for infection control, healthcare cleaning efficacy, and patient and employee safety.

In November, 2010 after evaluating a number of options and obtaining approval from the hospital's Infection Control Committee, a pilot was launched that substituted three green chemicals for the six conventional chemicals currently in use to clean patient rooms. Prior to the pilot, perceptions were that green cleaning agents would cost more, would not be as effective as the current chemicals and more chemical would be required.

After the pilot period EVS workers were surveyed on the functionality of the dispensers; the chemical's odor; cleaning efficacy; and the number of chemicals from each manufacturer that would be required to clean the hospital. Input was also sought from nurses.

While this project was being developed and implemented, the EVS Labor-Management committee participated in the 12-hour core EVS Green Careers Green Training curriculum. This program places the green chemicals project within a context of hospital sustainability and includes options for additional custom modules to support facility-specific needs.



**Project Results: Implementing green chemicals will enable the EVS department to replace six chemicals with three, save money, and ease the work of EVS workers- all with comparable or higher chemical efficacy rates**

EVS workers' survey responses yielded a clear preference for the green chemicals, with 67% of the workers surveyed rating the green products better at cleaning. Workers also reported a strong preference for using only three chemicals and a majority felt the green chemical dispensers were easier to use.

An important decision the team had to make was about the disinfectant, paramount to patient safety. Through this effort the EVS department, clinical staff and infection control were able to come to agreement on a disinfectant, which has a comparable efficacy rating, and lower ammoniums parts per million.

Last, but not least, EVS has determined they will realize a potential \$4K annual cost savings by using the new, green chemicals.

EVS workers throughout the facility will now participate in the Green Training curriculum, which will place the green chemicals implementation project in the context of broader hospital and environmental sustainability efforts and lay the foundation for additional greening projects.

*“This is a win-win situation for the hospital, our members, and the community. Our members have a lot of pride and confidence in their work, and this project is an opportunity to learn new techniques and advance careers, while also helping our hospital to become greener and provide better care. When we work together, we can improve healthcare.”* Efrain Velasco, SEIU 1199NW Organizer & Member of Green Team/Labor Management Committee at Northwest Hospital and Medical Center/UW Medicine.

*“The Environmental Services department at Northwest Hospital and Medical Center/UW Medicine is excited to participate in the H-CAP Green Training Program; the employees are eager to put their new knowledge of green practices into action.”* Erik Walerius, Director of Clinical Support Services, Northwest Hospital and Medical Center/UW Medicine

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