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MARKETING CIGARETTE SMOKE DEODORIZATION SERVICES

WHAT IS ETS?

Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) is one of the most widespread and harmful indoor air pollutants according to the "Indoor Air Facts - Environmental Tobacco Smoke" brochure produced by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. ETS comes from second-hand smoke exhaled by smokers and sidestream smoke emitted from burning tobacco. ETS is a mixture of irritating gases and carcinogenic tar particles. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, ETS is a known cause of lung cancer and respiratory symptoms, and has been linked to heart disease. Recent reports by the E.P.A. have only strengthened the tie between second hand smoke and potential long term health effects on those that are exposed to it. Recent media reports indicate that the latest E.P.A. findings will serve as impetus to further restrict smoking in the workplace. Smoking is obviously an emotional issue because of these stated health threats to everyone exposed to ETS. What though, does it have to do with us as cleaning and deodorization technicians and managers of the indoor environment.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT A LITTLE SMOKE?

Smoking is obviously a controversial issue. Our purpose here is not to even attempt to "take sides" in this issue, but obviously, creating a "smoke-free" environment is going to become more and more important. We, as cleaners, contractors, and restorers can serve a useful role. We can help eliminate lingering smoke odor problems that may exist in various indoor atmospheres. In our role as odor control specialists, we are handling the treatment and removal of ETS. This process is obviously more than one of odor control — it's one of removing environmental pollutants. We can summarize what we do in treating an indoor environment for tobacco smoke in two simple benefits: 1) Odor control; 2) Pollutant Removal.

SMOKE CONTAMINATION TREATMENT PROCEDURES

Regardless of the indoor environment that you are dealing with, the procedures for treatment are very similar:

1. Consider the installation or use of a constant electronic deodorization and/or air treatment or filtering system.
2. Consider improvements in daily cleaning and/or janitorial procedures. Many lingering smoke odor problems are due to inefficient daily cleaning activities.
3. Periodic Hot Water Extraction Cleaning Of Carpet and Upholstery Fabrics: Add a water soluble smoke odor counteractant deodorizing solution directly to your cleaning solution.
4. Periodic Dry Cleaning Of All Draperies And Non-Colorfast Upholstery Fabrics: To each gallon of your dry cleaning chemical, add two ounces of lightly fragranced thermal fogging chemical.
5. Periodic Wall Washing Procedures: To each gallon of your cleaning solutions, add smoke odor counteracting/deodorizing solution.
6. Periodic Ceiling Cleaning Procedures Using A Hydrogen Peroxide Activated Ceiling Cleaning Solution: Porous or non-porous ceilings can be effectively cleaned with these solutions. Ceilings are the number one source of smoke and nicotine odor. The hydrogen peroxide "bleaches" the yellow nicotine stain and counteracts many bacterial sources of odor.
7. If odor problems persist, consider periodic treatment with ozone gas.

NOW THAT I'M SO SMART, HOW CAN I MAKE SOME MONEY?

Everyone has come in contact with the concept of no smoking areas. A newer concept is "smoke free" environments. There is a difference. "Smoke free" environments are basically guarantees of a smokeless building. Many cities now have smoke-free zone requirements. Short of making all the smokers go outside, how does one accomplish such a goal?

Obviously, many nonsmokers are caused discomfort by cigarette smoke odors, but who is this affecting financially? Where do these potential problems exist? If you and I can offer deodorization services that eliminate smoke odor problems and provide a smoke free environment, who will pay us to perform these services or who as property managers need to be immediately concerned about these matters?

1. **Hotels - Sleeping Rooms and Meeting Rooms**
Housekeeping staffs are usually not equipped to handle true smoke odors. If fabrics and ceilings possess the greatest amount of smoke odor, housekeeping services are usually not responsible for cleaning and for treating these areas.
2. **Automobiles - Resale and Rental**
We're not talking about '68 Chevy's here. We're talking about near new cars or valuable used ones that are more difficult, if not impossible, to rent or sell because they smell like a chimney.
3. **Office Environments**
Most janitorial staffs are not equipped to deal with major smoke odor problems. Interim maintenance carpet cleaning methods that do not physically extract soils from the carpet are usually not efficient at preventing a build-up in smoke odors.
4. **Residential Homes**
A friend of mine who is a very successful real estate broker tells me that a home that had or has smokers living in it takes 30% longer on average to resell because even though it may look clean, it doesn't smell clean. Situations change whereby a home that smells like smoke needs to be made not to smell like smoke. People who live with smokers that develop respiratory or allergic difficulties need to have the premises cleaned and treated on a regular basis.
5. **Apartments**
Apartments that had smokers living in them often times can't be rented to non-smokers until they have been thoroughly cleaned and treated.

The E.P.A. brochures on ETS states, "ETS can be totally removed from the indoor air only by removing the source (cigarette smoking)." We can then, not eliminate the problem without eliminating smokers. We can, however, reduce exposure as well as odors in any environment. The E.P.A. downplays the overall value of just ventilation and says that the value of air treatment needs to be studied further. Obviously, then the role of cleaning and treatment will remain important as long as there are smokers.

How do you sell these services? It's not that complex. It's like all the other services you are offering. You've got to let people know you can do it. Market yourself as a cigarette smoke treatment specialist. Use your ability to solve a problem; i.e., smoke odors, to get the opportunity to bid on regular fabric cleaning. If you can solve a problem that their present cleaners can't your services are worth more. Talk to your present customers, hotel managers, and housekeeping managers, apartment owner associations, car dealers, and rental agencies, real estate agents, and brokers. Talk to them about ETS and potential liability or negative publicity problems. You have the ability to solve a problem. What people are better prepared to handle it than you? You just have to let someone know you can do it. Personal contact will out perform all the cards, brochures, aids, mailers, etc. in creating awareness. So now is the time to do something about it.

If you are a property manager or responsible for a maintenance staff, you are going to have to consider specialized training procedures to equip your staffs with the technical knowledge on how to eliminate smoke odors. Specialized treatment deodorizing solutions may need to be added to your cleaning arsenal of chemical solutions.

The problem is not going to go away, and neither is smoking. Providing reasonable deodorizing and cleaning solutions will be an important part of present and future ETS management programs.

About the author:

R. Doyle Bloss is the Chief Executive Officer for Steam Way International, Inc. in Denver, Colorado. Doyle specializes in the investigation and treatment of odor control and indoor air quality. Steam Way manufactures a complete line of cleaning and deodorizing products. You can reach Steam Way at 1-800-447-8326.