

## New study: Green school cleaning supplies are safer for kids

*Testing shows 21 school cleaners released more than 450 air pollutants.*

Ordinary school cleaning supplies can expose children to multiple chemicals linked to asthma, cancer, and other documented health problems, in addition to hundreds of air pollutants that have never been tested for safety, a study by the Environmental Working Group shows. Laboratory tests found that a typical assortment of products released 457 distinct chemicals into the air.

EWG's findings come at a time when childhood asthma and many childhood cancers are on the rise. Work-related asthma is also high for teachers and janitors. Lax labeling means schools often don't know what they're purchasing or whether it's safe.

In response to these concerns, many schools have turned to safer cleaning supplies that have been independently certified to meet protective health and safety standards. Eight states have passed legislation requiring or encouraging use of these green cleaners in schools. Many forward-thinking school districts in California have adopted green cleaning policies, replacing toxic products with safer, effective alternatives.

### Green cleaning supplies = cleaner air

A model classroom cleaned with three ordinary products contained more than six times more air pollution than a classroom cleaned with three certified green products. Individual product tests show that on average, certified green general-purpose cleaners emit one-fifth as many air pollutants as ordinary products and contain just one-quarter as many chemicals tied to serious health concerns.

### Green cleaning costs the same

Green cleaning need not cost more – in fact, some schools have saved money by making the switch. In California, officials at the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District estimate that green cleaning saved them up to 20 percent. Schools save by simplifying inventory, using concentrated products and automatic dilution to reduce waste and obtaining long-term supply contracts.

New York and Illinois, the first states to mandate green cleaning in schools, have seen no cost increases. In fact, only four of Illinois' nearly 900 districts found green cleaning to be problematic.

### What about H1N1?

The H1N1 virus requires special precautions. It is recommended that schools follow the guidance of the federal Centers for Disease Control and local health authorities. Certified green cleaning supplies like those tested by EWG are meant to replace conventional cleaning supplies, not disinfectants. Disinfectants should always be selected and used with great care to reduce children's exposures to toxic chemicals.

### For more information:

[www.ewg.org/schoolcleaningsupplies](http://www.ewg.org/schoolcleaningsupplies)

Read the study and get tips on how to get schools to use green cleaning, as well as tips for safer cleaning at home.

- Rebecca Sutton, Ph.D.  
Senior Scientist, Environmental Working Group

**General purpose cleaners:** Green products release one-fifth the air pollutants

Average number of air contaminants

