



The Air We Breathe: Green Cleaning Reduces Risk for Allergy and Asthma Sufferers

Scientific field study concludes that Maid Brigade's Green Clean Certified™ system removed three times more particulate matter in the home than leading competitors.

Atlanta – January 15, 2008 - Air pollution is a primary concern for many of us. There are volumes of information available on what pollutes the air and how we can reduce the emissions contributing to that pollution. What many of us do not realize is that the air we are breathing inside our homes can actually be more polluted than the air outdoors. By taking a deep breath, are we harming our health?

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), indoor air can be two to five times more polluted than the air outside. In some cases, indoor air can be up to 50 times more polluted. The pollution can be caused by a number of sources – gas stoves, building materials and furniture, carpet, household cleaning products, personal care supplies, dust, air fresheners or pesticides. These sources release liquid, gas or minuscule solid particles into the air where they can remain for extended periods of time triggering asthma and other respiratory conditions because of the irritant effect these substances have on the lungs. Particulate matter (PM) is described by the EPA as a “mixture of mixtures” and varies in size and becomes a concern when it is small enough to become lodged in the lungs. PM that measures less than 2.5 microns are of most concern. By comparison, a human hair is 70 microns.

Some pollution sources also contribute to high levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the home, which can cause eye and respiratory tract irritation, headaches, dizziness, visual disorders and possible memory impairment. Studies conducted by the EPA have found that VOCs are common in the indoor environment and their levels can be ten to thousands of times higher inside than out. VOCs are chemicals that evaporate into the air at room temperature. The chemicals are used in many building materials, interior furnishings, textiles, office equipment, cleaners, personal care supplies and pesticides.

Health effects of indoor air pollution

Research indicates that on average, people spend about 90 percent of their time indoors. So, the air we breathe inside can actually affect our health more than the air outside, making it even more important for homeowners to understand what can be causing indoor air pollution and ways to effectively remove pollutants. The American Lung Association found that short-term increases (spanning from hours to days) in pollution caused by PM have been linked to an increased number of heart attacks, especially among the elderly and increased emergency room visits for patients suffering from acute respiratory ailments. The severity of asthma attacks in children and hospitalization among children also increased. Year-round exposure to the pollution was linked to more severe health complications, including slowed lung function growth in children and teenagers, significant damage to the small airways of the lungs, and increased risk of death from lung cancer and cardiovascular disease.

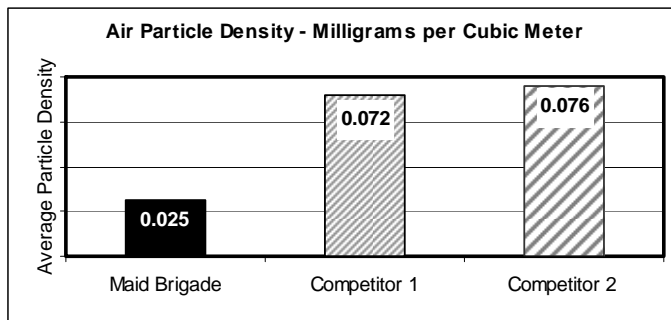
“It is ironic that cleaning products can actually make the air dirtier,” said Green Living expert Annie Bond. “In fact, new research points out that when many cleaning chemicals combine with ground level ozone, pollutants of even more serious health concern are produced than from the cleaning chemicals themselves, including ultrafine pollutant particles that harm the lungs.”

Cleaning your home on a regular basis can help improve the indoor air quality and lower the lever of PM, but only if done properly. Green cleaning is a great way to help rid the home of



potential toxins and pollutants. Green cleaning solutions and procedures eliminate the use of harsh, toxic chemicals that can cause pollution in the home.

Some companies, like Maid Brigade, offer green residential cleanings. Maid Brigade is the only cleaning company that is Green Clean Certified™ and uses green solutions that are certified by Green Seal, an independent non-profit organization devoted to environmental standard setting, for a safe and thorough cleaning. The company's equipment and processes follow many Green Seal standards for cleaning services. A scientific field study recently concluded that Maid Brigade's Green Clean Certified™ system removed three times more particulate matter in the home than leading competitors. Additionally, the vacuums used by Maid Brigade remove 99.9 percent of particles measuring 1 micron or larger, which cause the most concern for triggering asthma and allergic reactions.



Maid Brigade commissioned QUEST Environmental, an environmental consulting company specializing in indoor air quality and the assessment of environmental management systems, to conduct the field study to assess the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the company's Green Clean Certified™ system and conduct an emissions testing study to compare Maid Brigade's cleaning practices to three leading competitors.

“Our results concluded that Maid Brigade's Green Clean Certified™ SOPs are designed in accordance with internationally recognized management systems, and the company has sufficient documentation of intended training and implementation programs to substantiate its certification system,” said Robert Woellner, Senior Scientist, QUEST. “By standardizing cleaning procedures, Maid Brigade is more able to control the consistency and quality of its cleaning services.”

The results further concluded that the Green Clean Certified™ system minimized chemical and particulate emissions associated with cleaning practices, effectively removing particulate matter that can trigger asthma and other respiratory conditions.

“One of the best parts of Maid Brigade practices is that unhealthy toxic pollution isn't introduced into the home with the cleaners to begin with,” Bond said. “Another great practice of Maid Brigades is their use of smart and thoughtful cleaning routines that result in indoor air that is three times cleaner of particulate matter than the air in the homes of leading competitors.”

Indoor air pollution poses a serious health concern for families, but the good news is there are ways to reduce the levels of pollutants and remove the sources. By being mindful of the products that are being brought into the home – air quality can improve. Adopting green practices or using cleaning services such as Maid Brigade can also help ensure that the air we breathe is healthier – and that deserves a sigh of relief.



The EPA suggests three basic strategies to improve indoor air quality.

Source Control: Become aware of potential sources of pollution and learn ways to reduce their emissions. Some sources, like those that contain asbestos, can be sealed or enclosed; others, like gas stoves, can be adjusted to decrease the amount of emissions. Limit exposure to products and materials that contain VOCs. In many cases, source control is also a more cost-efficient approach to protecting indoor air quality than increasing ventilation because increasing ventilation can increase energy costs.

Ventilation Improvements: Increase the amount of outdoor air that comes inside to help lower the concentration of air pollutants. Most home heating and cooling systems do not bring fresh air into the home. Opening windows and doors, or using window fans and air conditioning units can increase the flow of fresh air inside. Bathroom or kitchen exhaust fans that exhaust outdoors can also increase the ventilation rate.

Air Cleaners: There are many types of air cleaners on the market, but they are not all effective and most do not remove gaseous pollutants. The effectiveness of an air cleaner depends on how well it collects pollutants and how much air it draws through the filtering element. A cleaner that is very efficient at collecting pollutants, but does not circulate air at a high rate will not be effective. Some people have found that air cleaners are only effective once the source of the pollution is removed.

About Maid Brigade

Headquartered in Atlanta, Maid Brigade is a global residential cleaning service with more than 400 franchised service areas operating in the United States, Canada and Ireland. Established in 1979, Maid Brigade remains at the forefront of the residential cleaning industry, commanding a healthy and growing market share every year since its inception. Customers depend on Maid Brigade to consistently exceed their expectations, providing a safe and thorough cleaning, along with superior, guaranteed service. For more information, visit www.maidbrigade.com or call 888-79-GREEN.