

Dry cleaning solutions

Liz Wessel and Barb Kneer

Professional clothes cleaning is all about providing a service – how to clean and care for clothes without damaging them. What's new is that you now have a choice of the type of cleaning service to use and these choices are cleaner for the environment too!

Despite the name, there is nothing dry about dry cleaning. About 80% of dry cleaners in the country soak clothes in a liquid chemical called perchloroethylene, or perc for short. Perc (also known as tetrachloroethylene) is considered a hazardous, potentially carcinogenic substance by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The good news is the fabricare industry is busy developing new techniques that reduce the use of toxic solvents.

Green Earth cleaning, a silicone-based cleaning process, and professional wetcleaning, a water-based cleaning process, are two successful, environmentally friendly techniques to clean clothes. We are pleased to highlight two pioneers in the cleaning industry who use these new techniques in their businesses in Madison and Brookfield.

Best Cleaners – Madison, Wisconsin

John Whitley, owner of Best Cleaners, has been

in the fabric care industry since 1974. He opened his current store in Madison six years ago. On July 1, 2002, John made a significant change to his business and, at that time, became the only dry cleaner in the state to use the Green Earth Cleaning System. Instead of using perc to clean clothes, the Green Earth system uses liquid silicone. Liquid silicone, which is similar to the base used in deodorants, shaving lotions and cosmetics, is non-toxic and safe for human health and for the environment.

In addition to the health and environmental benefits, John says his customers love the outcome of the Green Earth system. The clothes come out much softer than perc-based dry cleaning and, best of all, the clean clothes have no chemical odor.

Natural Cleaners – Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Marilyn Fleming founded Natural Cleaners in 1996, in Brookfield, Wisconsin. With 18 years prior experience in the dry cleaning industry she changed her vision and became a pioneer in promoting an environmentally friendly garment care service called professional wet cleaning. Wet cleaning involves high-tech computer controlled washing and drying equipment that can accommodate "hand wash" garments, "cold wash"

garments and most dry cleanable garments.

Natural Cleaners brings together the hottest new technologies with age-old, and trusted, fabricare wisdom. Marilyn thinks that this fall her Brookfield shop's service will be about 70% in wet cleaning and 30% in Green Earth cleaning. Marilyn feels "great about getting rid of the risks of perchloroethylene."

Hats off to John Whitley and Marilyn Fleming for pioneering environmentally friendly cleaning methods in Wisconsin!

Best Cleaners

5704 Raymond Road
Madison WI 53711
Phone: 608.271.6769

Natural Cleaners has three Milwaukee-area locations

- Bayside
- Hales Corners
- Wauwatosa

Business phone: 262.783.5575
www.naturalcleaners.com

Web sites for more information:

- www.greenearthcleaning.com
- www.atsdr.cdc.gov

Mercury Reduction

Natural Resources Board ready to cave into big polluters?

Citizens demand strict mercury reductions, decision makers haven't delivered

Marc Looze

The Natural Resources Board, the governing body of the Department of Natural Resources, met in Northwest Wisconsin on September 25. One of the items on their agenda was an informational presentation on mercury. This briefing consisted of an update on the product of many months worth of meetings between environmental, tribal, sportfishing and consumer groups, along with electric companies and industry groups. The product is a report highlighting the wide gulf between what citizens and big polluters want for mercury reductions in Wisconsin.

More than two years ago, 27 parties submitted a legal petition to the DNR urgently requesting that it exercise 30-year-old authority to regulate mercury pollution to the air and water. In this

petition, sportfishing and environmental groups joined state legislators from both political parties, a resort owner, a pediatrician, a fishing guide and others in a unified appeal: clean up mercury pollution from all major sources by 2010. These sources included coal-burning power plants, medical and municipal waste incinerators, a chlorine plant in central Wisconsin, and any other facility that emitted over 10 pounds of mercury in a year. (10 pounds may not sound like a lot, but one teaspoon of mercury can contaminate an entire lake.)

What did we end up with? The DNR wrote a mercury rule including these provisions:

- A 90% mercury cut in 15 years is to be made from large power plants polluting more than 100 pounds of mercury per year.
- Sources between 10 and 100 pounds just have to cap their emissions but not reduce them.
- A pollution trading loophole allows large sources to purchase pollution allowances and get as much as 50% of their reductions from other sources, big and small.

Over one year ago, the DNR held five public hearings and had an open comment period on the proposed mercury regulation that generated more

than 2000 comments. The vast majority of those comments were in favor of strengthening the proposed regulation to include 90% mercury cuts by 2010.

In a statewide poll done by Chamberlain Research Consultants, three out of four people supported strict mercury regulations for utilities and other large sources, even if it costs more. It is clear what the people of Wisconsin want: strict mercury reductions and quickly!

Yet, it seems the Natural Resources Board is ready to cave in to big polluters; they are sending strong signals that a 50% mercury cut is the maximum we'll get. And, they may ask for another round of public hearings and stakeholder involvement, meaning more delays. The position of concerned organizations and citizens is well known and we can't allow that position to be compromised by the regulators and decision makers of this state.

Please contact the Natural Resources Board by calling 608.267.7420 and leaving a message with the Board Secretary urging them to approve a 90% reduction in mercury pollution.

Environmental Decade is stepping up its campaign to reduce mercury pollution into our waters and make fish safe to eat for everyone. To get more involved in the mercury issue, please contact Marc Looze at 608.251.7020 or mlooze@environmentaldecade.org.