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Industry must engage the public on cleaning and health

By Robert Preuss, news editor

LATHAM, NY — Health matters: That sums up the message the cleaning industry needs to promote as cleaning frequencies are reduced and janitorial cutbacks continue to be made across the nation.

"To me it signals a failure of our industry to really demonstrate *value*," green and healthy cleaning advocate Steve Ashkin, principal, the Ashkin Group, Bloomington, IN, told *CM e-News Daily/CMM Online* Wednesday.

"It calls for us to cite studies translating the value of cleaning into real dollars and cents. When they (school budget committee members) have to sit and divvy up the pile, they look at cleaning as a non-essential service."

Ashkin has, for years, decried the cleaning industry's lack of involvement in healthy schools initiatives (EPA Tools for Schools, etc.), apart from his own attendance at summits, conferences, etc.

And while Tools for Schools and [Healthy Schools Network](#) offer some help for the cleaning industry in building its case, more work is needed.

There are some stumbling blocks: Attorneys note, for example, that it can be very difficult to establish proof for a connection in environmental conditions and individual health.

Another is that clean must be defined.

Establishing links between absenteeism due to allergy and school cleaning expenditure, per pupil, may be one approach, but other environmental (home, outdoor, etc.) and non-environmental factors must be considered.

More cutbacks are likely following the rejection of school budget referendums Tuesday in various locations.

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e-News Daily

- School custodial services across Alabama are likely to be cut and a school shutdown may occur as voters on Tuesday rejected the governor's proposed \$1.2 billion tax package, the [Cullman Times](#) reported today.

The *Times* reported that state schools Superintendent Ed Richardson said Tuesday night that a four-day school week was a possibility and that cuts could mean charging fees for every activity not required for graduation.

- In Maine, the [Kennebec Journal](#) reported today that School Administrative District 48 (Newport) voters rejected a \$17 million overall budget for 2003-04 Tuesday; though the budget targeted expenses by calling for the elimination of 16 teaching positions, the gifted-and-talented program, some sports and many other expenditures.

The district superintendent said closing school buildings at 4 p.m., thus reducing janitorial costs, would cut off the schools from public use, further distancing the district from the public.

Other recent cuts:

- 67 jobs, mostly in facility maintenance University of Maryland ([Diamondback](#))
- 15 custodians, Sedgwick County, KS ([Wichita Eagle](#))

Related article: "Cleaning plays an important role in the battle against illness," by Allen Rathey, executive director, [International Custodial Advisors Network](#), in *CM/Cleaning & Maintenance Management* magazine ([click here](#)).

"The future of educational facility management: Surviving in an era of budget cuts and outsourcing," will be presented at [CM Expo® 2003](#).

It is one of a series of seminars designed to gear up in-house cleaning supervisors and managers for the challenges ahead and to enhance productivity by introducing new task management techniques and new technologies.

Educational facilities managers, janitorial supervisors and school business officials can learn how to tap the productivity offered by these technologies in training seminars and see them on the exhibit floor.

The series for educational facility cleaning also includes the seminars:

- The ABCs of VCT: Increase your staff's productivity while improving the quality of your hard floor care.
- Benchmarking your education facility operation: Compare your operation's productivity against industry standards.

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