

DEEP IMPACT

Innovations in floor pad technology help reduce facilities' ecological footprint

by John Miller



Floor pads are a staple in any maintenance professional's arsenal and just like other cleaning products, they've evolved with the green movement. Since the mid-2000s, building service contractors have been able to purchase pads manufactured using 100 per cent recycled polyethylene terephthalate (PET) fibre (primarily from soda and water bottles) and water-based latex resins. This green manufacturing practice diverts millions of plastic bottles from landfills every year without sacrificing functionality of the product — the fibre itself yields a strong tensile strength and produces a durable and consistent web formation.

But what happens after these floor pads are used and discarded?

Unfortunately, they end up in landfills where it can take hundreds (possibly thousands) of years for them to degrade into their basic organic components. Given the complexity and chemical composition of the components used in manufacturing floor pads, neither recycling nor composting are considered feasible options for these types of products.

CLOSING THE CIRCLE

In recent years, with advancements in technology and in response to demand for even more eco-friendly products, full cycle floor pads have been introduced to the marketplace. These pads have the same overall appearance, durability and performance as conventional pads. And similar to their conventional counterparts,

they can be used for various floor cleaning applications, including stripping, scrubbing, polishing and burnishing. Of course, there are many variables that impact which material works best. Building service contractors should always consider the chemical type, machine, floor substrate, current maintenance and/or cleaning regimen, and condition of the floor before determining which floor pad type is appropriate for the application.

Full cycle floor pads are made from recycled PET plastic and then specially formulated to biodegrade at a far faster rate than conventional pads, once discarded

into an active landfill. While actual conditions vary from landfill to landfill, which will affect the rate of biodegradation, this significantly shorter time frame allows participating landfills that have methane-to-energy collection systems in place to capture landfill emissions (as opposed to allowing the methane to emit to the atmosphere) and makes way for it to be converted to fuel for vehicles, power plants, homes and manufacturing facilities. By turning today's waste into tomorrow's energy, manufacturers are taking the next step in conserving the environment and reducing mankind's impact on it. /

WHAT'S THE POINT?

Facility managers are increasingly demanding eco-friendly products to satisfy their internal sustainability initiatives and earn credits toward Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for building owners. Even though there are no certifications or even a category for floor pads, building service contractors that adhere to Canada Green Building Council (CaGBC) guidelines when purchasing or using floor care products can help earn LEED certification points for their clients.

John Miller is executive vice-president of sales and marketing for Americo Manufacturing Co. Inc., a global producer of floor pads, cleaning accessories and floor matting. The company is the manufacturer behind Full Cycle, a trademarked floor pad line that is a testament to Americo's commitment to recycling and enhanced biodegradation. John can be reached at info@americomfg.com.