

News

University goes green in cleaning efforts, supplies

New Mexico State University's colors are still crimson and white, but the Las Cruces campus has gone green.

As of Jan. 13, the NMSU campus has fully adopted a "green cleaning" program. The green cleaning objective calls for a switch to environmentally friendly cleaning products and equipment meant to improve campus health and appearance. According to Art Lucero, who manages NMSU's custodial, solid waste and recycling programs, the Office of Facilities and Services had established green cleaning as a departmental, campus-wide goal.

"Green cleaning is cleaning to protect health without harming the environment," Lucero said. "It goes beyond chemical and equipment choices and includes policies, procedures, training and shared responsibility efforts that minimize the impact of cleaning materials on the health of building occupants and protects the environment as a whole."

Lucero was quick to point out that previous products, processes and procedures used in keeping campus facilities clean weren't necessarily bad; but newer technologies and processes make it possible to clean effectively, efficiently and with less impact on health and the environment.

"Green Cleaning is more than switching a few products," he explained. "It's about effective cleaning to create healthier buildings and at the same time reduce environmental impacts. These products are safer for our employees to handle as well."

As part of the move to green cleaning, NMSU now uses Green Seal-certified paper products and cleaning chemicals. Green Seal is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to safeguarding the environment and transforming the marketplace by promoting the manufacture, purchase and use of environmentally responsible products. The organization certifies hundreds of products using credible, science-based, transparent standards.

"OFS has made a commitment to being a responsible member of the university community," Lucero said. "We are dedicated to providing a safe and healthful environment to support our mission of providing an environment for learning and discovery at NMSU."

"A clean environment promotes learning," he continued. "We're improving indoor air quality by using vacuums with HEPA [high-efficiency particulate absorbing] air filtration. We are also moving towards microfiber technologies – using reusable cleaning cloths, wet mops and dust mops to minimize waste, reduce chemical use and increase the effectiveness of our cleaning procedures. We're improving our entryway systems to reduce the amount of dirt, dust, pollen and other particles entering the building when the doors are opened."

As most faculty, staff and students have no doubt noticed, campus restrooms all have new paper towel and toilet paper holders, as well as soap dispensers. These upgrades were part of the greening process



and designed to not only be more environmentally friendly, but also to bring long-term cost savings to the university. All paper products are post-consumer based, and moving from 700-foot to 1,000-foot rolls enables staff to spend less time changing out rolls, leaving more time to clean. The dispensers themselves are much more resistant and durable as well, meaning long-term replacement costs should decrease.

While these efforts may sound like feel-good initiatives with no real benefit, Lucero insists that the green products are effective. Every Green Seal-certified product undergoes rigorous testing in order to earn the seal of approval.

"We decided to be proactive. Many states are beginning to mandate green cleaning programs for state facilities. New Mexico hasn't, but we're getting ahead of the curve," Lucero said. "We are providing an example for everyone else, and we're really proud of the fact that we have the support, initiative and desire to move forward. People feel better knowing we're taking an active part in being stewards of our own facilities."

Written by Mark Cramer.