

SUPER CLEANING WITHOUT HARMING

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Michael Rochon makes cleaning products; twenty years ago, a woman in a retirement home drank one of the disinfectants made by his company and died. The tragic incident was an epiphany for Rochon, "I couldn't understand why we were selling poisons for cleaning," he says. Rochon went back to the lab to design a cleaning solution that would be effective, but harmless to humans and the environment. The result is ECOgent, a non-toxic and biodegradable cleaner manufactured from renewable and substances. Today, Michael Rochon is Director of Cogent Environmental Solutions, the Ontario-based company that makes ECOgent.

www.ecogent.ca

Cleaning Without Harming

Michael Rochon is the principal and the director of Cogent Environmental Solutions. He has formulated the chemical composition of ECOgent cleaning solution that is biodegradable and has ingredients that are renewable and regrowable. The cleaner is non-toxic and odourless and compatible for use even with people suffering from multiple chemical sensitivities.

Chemspec distributes ECOgent cleaning solution in Canada, USA and Europe. ECOgent cleaners are not only used commercially in hospitals, schools, hotels, etc. but also domestically.

The Incident

Twenty years ago, an old woman in a retirement home drank a cleaning disinfectant and died. The death of the old lady was not in vain. It kindled the consciousness of Michael Rochon who was at that time the owner of the company that produced this cleaner. "I couldn't understand why we were selling poisons for cleaning," he says. "You should be able to clean without harming."

The Product

Michael Rochon was so moved by this incident that he took upon himself to find the right chemical composition for a cleaning solution that would be completely harmless both to humans and the environment alike. The crusade that started 20 years ago ended successfully with the launch of ECOgent cleaning solution. This cleaner is non-toxic and biodegradable and is manufactured totally from renewable and

regrowable substances. Further, the cleaning power of ECOgent is comparable to the leading cleaning solutions available in the market.

The ECOgent cleaner is friendly to environment, children and to the pets. Animal testing was avoided both during development and testing.

ECOgent cleaner is a multipurpose cleaning concentrate that can be diluted to various degrees to be used for different needs like light duty & heavy duty cleaning, bathroom cleaning, glass cleaning, carpet pre-spray or carpet extraction. The cleaning solution is sold in concentrated forms to reduce both water usage and packaging material. This enhances the eco-friendliness of the solution.

Certification

ECOgent cleaner has been certified by three different Environmental agencies; Green Seal, Environmental Canada's Environmental Choice program and the Envirodesic Certification program, all third party certification programs. ECOgent is also certified under CCD146 criteria "Cleaning Product With Low Potential for Environmental Illness and Endocrine Disruption." This criterion is very stringent and surpasses all other certification criteria to date for cleaning products.

"Challenge any environmental benefit claim by requesting full disclosure of ingredients and evidence of the benefit, such as independent validation of the claims," Rochon says.

ECOgent cleaner has a complete disclosure of ingredients in its website www.ecogent.ca. Further, Mr. Rochon personally answers the queries from all commercial and individual ECOgent users.

Why use Environment friendly cleaning products?

The 'clean green' movement is steadily gaining momentum in North America. This is because of the spreading awareness about the benefits of maintaining a cleaner indoor air quality. Currently, indoor air is found to be many times more



polluted than the outdoor air. Further, the fact that we in North America spend more time indoors requires us to improve this environment.

Deodorants, perfumes, cleaners and air fresheners are among the main culprits contributing to indoor pollution. Even among these products, cleaners sometimes contribute more than others as they are used for several purposes within the home or office. People experiencing chemical sensitivity and suffering illnesses like asthma and other lung infections are particularly susceptible to these conditions. Health Canada reports that Asthma is one of the most prevalent chronic conditions affecting Canadians.ⁱ

All the big and established cleaning service providers are gradually adopting the clean green movement as they are exposed to the increasing awareness of the benefits of a clean indoor air quality. The ServiceMaster Clean Company, provider of cleaners to residential and commercial customers in the United States, serving approximately 10.5 million homes and businesses each year, has recently launched ECOgent under a private label. "ServiceMaster had great foresight in green cleaning - the company has gone far beyond Green Seal requirements by incorporating a 'healthy format' for its GreenClene products," said Michael Rochon. "No one else in the industry is doing this, but they should be - the GreenClene line has raised the bar in healthy-format cleaning products."

Difference between ECOgent cleaners and other cleaners:

- *Indoor Air Quality*

Most cleaners contain ingredients that are volatile and consequently increase the percentage of the VOC's (Volatile Organic Compounds) in the air. They also contain added perfumes to obscure the smell of the harsh petroleum based chemicals, like glycol ethers and surfactants, common ingredients of most cleaners.

ECOgent cleaners are made from products that are renewable and regrowable. It is also odourless and consequently does not contribute to the VOC's in the indoor air. They are ideal for use in buildings enforcing scent-free policies.

- *Health and Safety*

Many people suffer from various occupational ailments like asthma, multiple chemical sensitivities, skin irritation and other illnesses. These are caused due to continuous exposure to petroleum-based products and/or other chemicals added to perfumes used by humans.

ECOgent, due to its mild natural formula and low volatility, reduces the risk of health to both the cleaning personnel and the occupants of the buildings where it is applied.

- *Environmental Safety*

General purpose cleaners contain substances like nonylphenol ethoxylates, alkylphenol ethoxylates and octylphenol ethoxylates; these chemicals interact with the endocrine systems of many species adversely affecting growth, development and reproduction. Sustained contact with these chemicals can eventually impact human growth.

Many cleaners are not readily biodegradable in anaerobic (in absence of oxygen) conditions, like sludge at the bottom of the river.

ECOgent has been tested for its environmental friendliness. If any ECOgent cleaner remains even after passing through the municipality treatment systems, its food-based formula facilitates it to degrade rapidly in both aerobic and anaerobic condition under the natural conditions.

- *Surface Compatibility*

Many cleaners are known to be incompatible with modern bathtub acrylics and equipments like computers. ECOgent with its natural formula is compatible with modern acrylic surfaces.

Manufacture and Distribution

Chemspec, a Baltimore, Maryland based manufacturing company is the licensee of ECOgent. Chemspec USA manufactures ECOgent products for supply in United States, Canada and Europe. Since its inception in 1968, Chemspec has seen and undergone various changes affecting the carpet and upholstery cleaning industry. With the current trend of producing eco-friendly or green products, Chemspec has shifted towards manufacturing environmental friendly cleaners.

Future Prospects

ECOgent is spreading its wings with its licensee Chemspec by its side.

The ECOgent product is having a gradual but continuous market growth. This is due to the active work of Michael Rochon, the founder of Cogent Environmental Solutions and Chemspec's foresight towards a sustainable future. Chemspec has now picked up the challenge in Canada. Chemspec Europe is in the final phases of their launch in Europe, which includes the additional certification by the European Environmental labelling program called "The Flower". Michael is currently working with all the dedicated Chemspec groups and is continuously taking part in various conferences and environmental programs to spread awareness about the hazards of cleaning solutions and about the sustainable aspects of ECOgent cleaning products.

Many hospitals, schools, universities and professional cleaners in both United States and Canada have already adopted this solution for their cleaning needs. Colin Butterfield and the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada, deserve special mention here for their contribution to sustainable cleaning products. The dedication and support of Wesclean, Canada's largest Janitorial distribution supplier serving the needs of Western Canada, has aided in the introduction of ECOgent in many schools, universities and other professional organizations.

Conclusion

Michael Rochon, by developing a truly sustainable cleaning product, has also demonstrated that the cleaning industry has a new standard by which to measure all existing products. It can no longer be argued that it is technically impossible or economically disadvantageous to produce fully sustainable products. The rest of the industry has no choice but to admit that sustainability is an attainable goal, and follow suit.

ⁱ <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspsp/publicat/pma-pca00/index.html#intro>