



# GS-49

## GREEN SEAL® STANDARD FOR RESIDENTIAL CLEANING SERVICES

EDITION 1.1

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THE MARK OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Green Seal is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to use science-based programs to empower consumers, purchasers, and companies to create a more sustainable world. Green Seal sets leadership standards that aim to reduce, to the extent technologically and economically feasible, the environmental, health, and social impacts throughout the life-cycle of products, services, and companies. The standards may be used for conformity assessment, purchaser specifications, and public education.

Green Seal offers certification of products, services, and companies in conformance with its standards. For additional information on Green Seal or any of its programs, contact:

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**GREEN SEAL STANDARD FOR  
RESIDENTIAL CLEANING SERVICES, GS-49**

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## FOREWORD

**Edition.** Edition 1.1 was issued on July 12, 2013 and replaces the First Edition from January 29, 2010. Corrections and/or clarifications were last made to this standard on April 30, 2021. Information on changes made to this standard are available on Green Seal's website.<sup>1</sup>

**General.** The final issued standard was developed in an open and transparent process with stakeholder input that included producers, users, and general interests.

The requirements in the standard are based on an assessment of the environmental, health, or social impacts associated with the products, services, or organizations covered in the scope of the standard. These requirements are subject to revision, and generally cover aspects above and beyond regulatory compliance. This standard neither modifies nor supersedes laws and regulations. Any conformity assessment to this standard requires compliance with all applicable laws and regulations for the provision of and marketing of the cleaning service.

Provisions for safety have not been included in this standard, since they are supervised by regulatory agencies. Adequate safeguards should be employed for all for personnel and property, and for all tests that involve safety considerations.

Products, services, or organizations that are substantially similar to those covered by this standard in terms of function and life cycle considerations may be evaluated against the intent of the requirements of this standard, accounting for relevant differences between the intended scope of the Standard and the actual product, service, or organization to be evaluated.

This standard may not anticipate a feature of the service that may significantly, and undesirably, increase its impact on the environment, health, or society. In such a situation, Green Seal will ordinarily amend a standard to account for the unanticipated environmental, health, or societal impacts.

Normative references (e.g., other standards) in this standard intend to refer to the most recent edition of the normative reference. Test methods may be required for product evaluation. Unless explicitly stated that a specified method is the only acceptable one, the intent of the standard is that an equivalent test method may be accepted at Green Seal's sole discretion.

Certification to this standard shall be awarded only by Green Seal, or, with Green Seal's explicit written permission, by a third-party certification program conducting on-site audits.

**Disclaimer of Liability.** Green Seal, as the developer of this standard, shall not incur any obligations or liability for any loss or damages, including, without limitation, indirect, consequential, special, or incidental damages, arising out of or in connection with the interpretation or adoption of, reliance upon, or any other use of this Standard by any party. Green Seal makes no express or implied warranty of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose, nor any other express or implied warranty with respect to this Standard.

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<sup>1</sup> Library of Standards Documents, [www.greenseal.org/green-seal-standards/library#section19](http://www.greenseal.org/green-seal-standards/library#section19)

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

**dB**A. Decibels

**EPA**. United States Environmental Protection Agency

**ISO**. International Organization for Standardization

**SDS**. Safety Data Sheet

**OSHA**. Occupational Safety and Health Administration

## GREEN SEAL STANDARD FOR RESIDENTIAL CLEANING SERVICES, GS-49

### 1.0 SCOPE

This standard establishes criteria for professional cleaning services of residential facilities, areas, or spaces. Specialized cleaning services are not included in this standard, such as restorative/deep carpet cleaning, upholstery cleaning, or mold remediation services. Cleaning services for commercial or institutional buildings, those where the individual residents are not responsible for the cleaning of the residential area (or living space), are not included in this standard, but residential portions of these buildings may be included when the individual residents are responsible for the cleaning of the residential area (or living space). See Appendix 1 for an example list of services included in this standard.

Words and phrases described in the standard that appear in *italics* have a corresponding definition located in the definition section of the standard, Annex A.

### 2.0 OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

**2.1 Standard Operating Procedures.** *Residential cleaning service providers* shall have written guidelines that define the general standard operating procedures. These guidelines shall be made available to all cleaning personnel, and *clients* upon request, and shall include the following elements:

- Environmentally preferable *cleaning tools* (e.g., cloths, mops heads and other equipment)
- Inspection and maintenance program of all *cleaning tools*, supplies, and equipment
- Environmentally preferable *cleaning products*
- Cleaning procedures
- Identification and cleaning procedures for areas that require *disinfection* or *sanitizing*
- Identification and cleaning procedures for areas requiring special cleaning (e.g., entryways, nurseries, low ventilation areas)
- *Vulnerable population* management
- Accident management and safety procedures per/ in compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and state regulations
- Chemical storage, handling, use, and disposal
- Waste reduction, handling, and disposal
- Water conservation and use policy.
- Service quality standards/expectations (especially for cleaning efficacy) and quality control
- Training requirements of staff

- Communication policies for staff and *clients*
- Professionalism and code of conduct of staff

## 2.2 Cleaning Tools and Equipment.

**2.2.1 Maintenance.** All *cleaning tools* and equipment shall be cleaned and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

**2.2.2 Durable Tools.** *Microfiber* mop heads, cloths and dusters, or other durable and reusable *products*, shall be used for all feasible residential cleaning purposes. The service provider may use alternate tools for specialized cleaning functions (e.g., chandelier cleaning, oven cleaning), when evidence is provided for necessity of the alternate tool.

### 2.2.3 Cross Contamination.

**2.2.3.1 Coding.** An understandable coding system for cleaning cloths, mop heads, and tools shall be in place in order to prevent cross contamination (e.g., color coding).

#### 2.2.3.2 Cleaning Tools.

- Cleaning cloths, mop heads, and related tools that contact restroom and kitchen surfaces shall not be used to clean any other areas.
- Clean and *sanitize* cleaning cloths, mop heads, vacuum floor attachments, and related tools that had contact with restroom, kitchen, and high touch contact (including, but not limited to, doorknobs, light switch plates, telephone handsets) surfaces prior to use in another *residence*.

**2.2.4 Powered Equipment.** The cleaning service provider shall have all of its equipment meet the following at the time of certification:

- Powered floor maintenance equipment, including vacuum cleaners, shall be equipped with controls or other devices for capturing and collecting particulates and shall operate at a sound level less than 70 dBA.
- Vacuum cleaners shall be equipped with the appropriate filter or bag and these shall be changed or cleaned as per the manufacturers recommendations.
- Precautions shall be taken to limit worker and *vulnerable population* exposure to dust and particulate matter when cleaning and replacing bags and filters.
- Vacuum cleaners shall meet, at a minimum, the Carpet and Rug Institute Green Label Program requirements, or equivalent.



## 2.3 Cleaning Products and Supplies.

**2.3.1 Environmentally Preferable Products.** The *residential cleaning service provider* shall purchase and use only *environmentally preferable products* for at least the following:

- General-purpose cleaners
- Glass cleaners
- Restroom cleaners
- Bowl cleaners
- Degreasers
- Floor cleaners
- Floor finishes and floor strippers
- Carpet spot cleaners
- Sanitary paper *products*: toilet tissue, facial tissue, paper towels, and napkins, when provided by the cleaning service

**2.3.2 Trash Can Liners.** The *residential cleaning service provider* shall purchase and use only plastic trash can liners, when provided by the cleaning service, that contain a minimum of 10% post-consumer recycled content.

## 2.4 Specific Cleaning Procedure Requirements.

**2.4.1 Order.** Perform floor cleaning toward the doorway; perform dry cleaning tasks prior to wet cleaning tasks for a surface; and in sloping areas, perform floor cleaning from high to low, towards the doorway.

**2.4.2 Disinfection.** Use disinfectants only where required in this standard and where identified according to standard operating procedures. Perform *disinfection* in areas or on surfaces where pathogens can collect and breed such as, but not limited to, restrooms. Perform *disinfection* using only U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered disinfectants or EPA-registered disinfection devices. When using chemical disinfectants or cleaner/disinfectants, follow *product* label directions for preparation of *disinfecting* solutions (e.g., dilution rate), and the appropriate *disinfecting* and cleaning method for the area to be cleaned (e.g., dwell time and whether pre-cleaning is required).

**2.4.3 Moisture Control.** Control and remove standing moisture from floor and restroom surfaces in a timely manner.

### 2.4.4 Restrooms:

- *Disinfect* surfaces touched by hands (e.g., door knobs, light switches, handles, etc.) and trash receptacles.

#### 2.4.5 Floors and Carpet:

- Vacuum floors and carpet to remove particulates.
- Ensure entryways are cleaned to prevent migration of contaminants into the *residence*.

#### 2.4.6 Kitchens:

- Clean and *sanitize* surfaces in food preparation and consumption areas.
- Clean and *sanitize* surfaces touched by hands (e.g., faucet handles, knobs, etc.) and waste containers that are used for food waste.
- Clean all exposed appliances in the kitchen.

**2.5 Vulnerable Populations.** The cleaning service provider, in consultation with the *client*, shall identify whether a member of *vulnerable populations* reside in the residential dwelling being cleaned. In situations where cleaning operations have the potential to adversely affect an identified member of a *vulnerable population*, the cleaning service provider shall document identification of *vulnerable population* needs and the approaches taken to address such needs, such as, but not limited to:

- Adopt alternative cleaning practices that minimize or make unnecessary the use of cleaning chemicals.
- Use cleaning chemicals in areas only where sufficient ventilation is present to allow chemicals to dissipate before the area becomes repopulated. If available, provide additional ventilation to enhance the rate of chemical dissipation.
- Clean in a manner that prevents the transfer of impacts to other areas of the residential dwelling that may contain *vulnerable populations*.

**2.6 Accident Management.** The service provider shall comply with OSHA requirements. Documentation shall be provided to demonstrate that, the cleaning service provider has an appropriate policy governing the procedures to be followed in case of an accident. Accident report forms shall be kept with the cleaning crew and shall be readily accessible to all staff. A basic first aid kit shall be provided for each cleaning crew.

#### 2.7 Chemical Storage, Handling, Use and Disposal and Waste Requirements.

**2.7.1 Safety Data Sheets.** Ensure a current Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) are available for each *product* in use. Provide *product* SDSs in a timely manner upon request by *client*.

**2.7.2 Storage.** Store chemicals according to their classification, in areas with proper ventilation, adequate security, and proper management of the area.

**2.7.3 Reduction.** Reduce, minimize, or eliminate the need for using cleaning chemicals wherever possible. Use the appropriate technology (coarse spray bottles, automatic chemical dispensers on powered equipment, etc.) for applying

the chemical *product* in a manner that does not result in overuse, over application, and waste of the *product*. Ensure proper use dilution of *products*.

**2.7.4 Concentrates.** Purchase and use cleaning *products* and other supplies in concentrated quantities, with appropriate equipment, to minimize the amount of packaging waste generated, to the maximum extent feasible. When using concentrated cleaning *products*, dispense them using measuring and dilution control systems to ensure safe and proper dilution.

**2.7.5 Tracking.** Track the quantities of cleaning *products* and other materials consumed on at least a quarterly basis.

**2.7.6 Used Containers.** Provide instructions on cleaning, dispensing, rinsing, and re-use or recycling of used empty chemical containers and applicators.

**2.7.7 Recycling.** Recycle applicable waste (e.g., plastic containers) and properly dispose other materials either off-site of *client's* property or at the *client's* property.

**2.7.8 Minimize Evaporation.** Whenever feasible, use a practical method to minimize evaporation of cleaning *product* from all cleaning towels, cloths, and materials (e.g., rinse, place in sealed container until laundering). Reusable cleaning cloths or *microfiber* must be cleaned or laundered prior to reuse.

**2.8 Water Use.** A policy governing efficient use of water in cleaning operations shall be in place.

### 3.0 QUALITY CONTROL REQUIREMENTS

All services shall conduct quality control assessments at least quarterly to evaluate the effectiveness of the cleaning service, which includes feedback and continuous improvement of standard operating procedures/training. The assessments shall be conducted at a frequency and method appropriate for the type of cleaning conducted (e.g., unannounced staff inspections during cleaning, customer surveys).

The cleaning service provider shall provide appropriate documentation on assessments of cleaning efficacy.

### 4.0 TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

**4.1 Initial Training.** Upon hiring, all cleaning personnel are required to undergo initial training before personnel is assigned to clean independently on at least the following:

- Standard operating procedures, including the proper cleaning procedures and proper handling of chemicals.
- Safety, including the use of personal protective equipment, special considerations for any hazardous chemicals used, spill containment, handling of potentially hazardous materials (e.g., such as the maintenance of floors containing asbestos, compliance with OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standards), an overview of SDS information, and reducing and preventing ergonomic injuries.

**4.2 Ongoing Training.** All owners, managers, and employees shall receive 8 hours of continuing training and/or education on an annual basis to maintain knowledge of the standard operating procedures, such as, but not limited to, the correct procedures for safety, tools, techniques, and procedures.

**4.3 Records of Training.** Records of training shall be maintained on each employee for all training specified within this standard. The documentation shall include topics of what was included in the training, a general outline of information covered, the name and qualification of the trainer, and the date(s) and duration of the training or courses. For current employees, the last two years of records shall be retained as well as records of their new hire training. These records shall be retained for one year after termination or resignation for former employees.

## 5.0 COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS

**5.1 Company Commitment.** The cleaning service provider's company strategic plan shall formally adopt a written commitment to the environmentally and socially responsible practices included in this standard. The cleaning service provider shall have an environmental and social responsibility plan that includes goals and an action plan related to the criteria of this standard, with continual improvement, that is updated annually. This plan shall be available to all employees.

**5.2 Employee Feedback.** The cleaning service providers shall ensure that a system is in place for cleaning service employees to provide comments and suggestions about workplace issues and suggestions for improvements in the provision of services.

**5.3 Client Communication.** The cleaning service providers shall:

- Communicate to the *client* the presence of pests and any maintenance issues discovered while performing cleaning operations.
- Provide materials to *clients* that define opportunities to reduce the need for more intensive cleaning processes or treatments (e.g., making attempts to reduce clutter in personal spaces, performing interim cleaning between visits from the cleaning service provider).
- Provide the *client* with a contact person available to provide information about *products* used and to receive comments about services rendered.

## 6.0 TRADEMARK USE REQUIREMENTS

**6.1 Trademark Use.** Any use of the Green Seal® Certification Mark or Green Seal name, e.g., on the certified property or promotional materials, must be in accordance with Green Seal's Trademark Use Guidelines.<sup>2</sup>

**6.2 Misleading Claims.** Green Seal trademarks shall not be used in conjunction with any modifying terms, phrases, or graphic images that might mislead consumers as to the extent or nature of the certification.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.greenseal.org/trademark-use-guidelines](http://www.greenseal.org/trademark-use-guidelines)

## ANNEX A – DEFINITIONS (Normative)

Note that the defined terms are italicized throughout the standard.

**Cleaning Tool.** All powered and non-powered cleaning equipment and supplies used for cleaning common surfaces in residential facilities.

**Client.** The residential household or entity contracting for the professional services of a *residential cleaning service provider*.

**Disinfect.** A process for hard inanimate surfaces undertaken to destroy or irreversibly inactivate infectious fungi and bacteria, but not necessarily their spores. Disinfection is performed using only EPA-registered disinfectants or EPA-registered disinfection devices.

**Environmentally Preferable Product.** Environmentally preferable is defined in Section 201 of US Executive Order 13101 to mean *products* or services that "have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing *products* or services that serve the same purpose. This comparison may consider raw materials acquisition, production, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, reuse, operation, maintenance or disposal of the *product* or service. "*Products* shall be certified as environmentally preferable by *third-party certification programs*, when such certifications exist for a *product* category. The following hierarchy applies (see Appendix 2 for examples of programs that may fit under each tier):

**Tier 1.** Leadership-level, multi-attribute, life-cycle-based (International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 14024) standards certified by third party certification programs with on-site audits and periodic monitoring. If, and only if, such programs do not exist for the *product* category under consideration, move to Tier 2 below.

**Tier 2.** Multi-attribute, life-cycle-based standards where compliance is self-declared. If, and only if, Tier 1 and 2 programs do not exist for the *product* category under consideration, move to Tier 3 below.

**Tier 3.** Single-attribute or non-life-cycle-based standards certified by a third party, including on-site audits and periodic monitoring. If, and only if, Tier 1, 2 and 3 programs do not exist for the *product* category under consideration, move to Tier 4 below.

**Tier 4.** Single-attribute or non-life-cycle-based standards where compliance is self-declared.

**Microfiber.** A *product* specifically designed for cleaning made from synthetic fibers that measure less than one denier. The most common type of microfiber for cleaning is a splittable bicomponent filament made from a combination of polyester and polyamide (nylon).

**Product.** A broad term covering both goods, which are physical objects, and services.

**Residence.** Any property that is a single-family home, apartment, dwelling, co-operative, townhouse, and any other place where people live. May also be referred to as residential facility, space, or area. For the purposes of this standard, residences include those in which the residents are responsible for the cleaning to be done. Commercial or institutional buildings where the residents are not responsible for the cleaning to be done for the residential area are not included.

**Residential Cleaning Service Provider.** A professional cleaning business organization that is legally recognized by a governmental body and employs individuals and provides cleaning services to residential facilities, spaces, or areas, such as, but not limited to, *residences* like homes.

**Sanitize.** A process intended to reduce, but not necessarily eliminate, microorganisms from the inanimate environment to levels considered safe as determined by public health codes or regulations.

**Vulnerable Population.** People and companion animals who are more susceptible than the general population to chemicals and *products* that might pose a risk to their health. These populations include but are not limited to children, pregnant women, the elderly and infirm, people sensitive to chemical exposures (e.g., fragrances), companion animals (e.g. pets, assistance animals, therapy animals), and others that may have a higher susceptibility to cleaning operations.

**APPENDIX 1 – SCOPE (Informative)**

Examples of services included in or excluded from the scope of GS-49:

**Services included in GS-49**

- Services that clean residential properties or areas.

**Services excluded from GS-49**

- Specialty cleaning services such as deep/restorative carpet cleaning, window washing, upholstery cleaning, or mold remediation services.
- Cleaning services for commercial or institutional buildings (included in GS-42).
- Hotels, assisted living, hospitals, and similar properties where the residential areas and common/public space are typically cleaned by in-house or contract service providers (i.e., the individual residents are not responsible for the cleaning of the residential areas) (included in GS-42)
- Dormitory, apartment, and similar properties' common/public areas (e.g., hallways, lounges) (included in GS-42).



## APPENDIX 2 – THIRD-PARTY CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS (Informative)

### Non-Exclusive List of Third-Party Certification Programs.

This list is not exhaustive and is intended only to provide examples of the types of programs that may qualify. Note: URLs may be out of date and do not reflect on any requirements of the Standard.

<i>Product Type or Issue</i>	Program Name	Website
<b>Tier 1 Certifications.</b> Leadership-level, multi-attribute, life-cycle-based standards certified by third party certification program using site audits and periodic monitoring.		
Consumer and institutional <i>products</i> (US), various categories	Green Seal	<a href="http://www.greenseal.org">www.greenseal.org</a>
Consumer and institutional <i>products</i> (outside the US), various categories	Members of Global Ecolabelling Network	<a href="http://www.globalecolabelling.net">www.globalecolabelling.net</a>
<b>Tier 2 Certifications.</b> Multi-attribute, life-cycle-based standards where compliance is self-declared.		
Electronic <i>Products</i>	Green Electronic council's EPEAT Program (Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool)	<a href="http://www.epeat.net">www.epeat.net</a>
<b>Tier 3 Certifications.</b> Single-attribute or non-life-cycle-based standards certified by third party certification program, including site audits and periodic monitoring. In some cases, a <i>product</i> may be certified based on materials the <i>product</i> contains (e.g., furniture that is made entirely or in part from certified wood).		
Organic	USDA Certified Organic	<a href="http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/NOP/standards.html">www.ams.usda.gov/nop/NOP/standards.html</a>
Sustainable Forest <i>Products</i>	Forest Stewardship Council	<a href="http://www.fsc.org/">www.fsc.org/</a>
	Sustainable Forestry Initiative	<a href="http://www.sfiprogram.org/">www.sfiprogram.org/</a>
Indoor Air Quality	GREENGUARD	<a href="http://www.greenguard.org">www.greenguard.org</a>
Textiles	Global Organic Textile Standard	<a href="http://www.global-standard.org/">www.global-standard.org/</a>
Water Conservation	Water Sense	<a href="http://www.epa.gov/WaterSense/">www.epa.gov/WaterSense/</a>
<b>Tier 4 Certifications.</b> Single-attribute or non-life-cycle-based standards where compliance is self-declared.		
Energy Efficiency	Energy Star	<a href="http://www.energystar.gov">www.energystar.gov</a>
Chemical formulations and <i>products</i>	Design for the Environment (DfE; not a certification, but rather a partnership program leading to recognition).	<a href="http://www.epa.gov/dfe/index.htm">www.epa.gov/dfe/index.htm</a>