



Information Item

Date: February 8, 2012

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Dean Kubani, Director – Office of Sustainability and the Environment
Subject: Garment Cleaning Update

Introduction

This information item provides an update on the garment cleaning policy options available to the City of Santa Monica.

Background

On March 24, 2009 Council directed staff to explore dry cleaning alternatives and consider preparation of an ordinance with requirements for dry cleaners, including the possibility of requiring non-toxic and non-smog forming garment care technology for local "dry" cleaners, and preparation of a resolution supporting the Federal Trade Commission's certification of a professional "wet" cleaning label. This policy options update was delayed due to a pending decision by the California Department of Health Services regarding the toxicity of a commonly used garment cleaning chemical called Green Earth that claims to be non-toxic. Due to budget cuts within DHS the decision is not forthcoming and staff proceeded without it.

Discussion

In response, the Office of Sustainability and the Environment held a meeting on April 21, 2009 at the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce to discuss a proposed garment cleaning ordinance. More than 20 attendees from garment cleaning businesses attended. Feedback from local garment cleaners and additional research by staff suggested that the California Air Resource Board (ARB) and South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) were looking into this same issue and any effort by the

City to regulate garment cleaning would be duplicative of their efforts to phase out perchloroethylene (perc) cleaning systems and reduce smog forming emissions associated with garment cleaning.

Installation of new perc cleaning systems has been banned within the SCAQMD, which includes Santa Monica, since January 2003. Garment cleaners are allowed to operate existing perc systems until the end of their useful life (10-15 years) or until 2020. The ARB and SCAQMD are working on programs and policies to incentivize the transition to less intensive garment cleaning technologies.

The technologies currently available to garment cleaners include wet cleaning, hydrocarbon, CO₂, Green Earth and perc. CO₂ and wet cleaning are the only garment care technologies considered to be both non-toxic and non-smog forming. In July 2010, a list of garment cleaning facilities was obtained from the City's Business License group and a survey was conducted to determine the type of garment cleaning technologies used by these facilities. Thirty eight garment cleaners were contacted during the survey period. Thirteen of the 38 cleaners utilized wet cleaning as their primary garment cleaning technology. All 38 cleaners employed other solvents, including hydrocarbon, CO₂, Green Earth and perc, for specific fabrics or hard-to-remove stains. Garment cleaners have the option to treat specific fabrics or hard-to-remove stains at their location or off-site.

Following is a break-down:

Cleaning System	# of Cleaners (on-site)	# of Cleaners (off-site)
Carbon dioxide	1	0
Perchloroethylene	17	5
Green Earth	4	2
Hydrocarbon	16	5

There are 4 facilities in Santa Monica that utilize a Green Earth solvent that is touted as non-toxic by the manufacturer. Staff and other California agencies and municipalities, such as the California Department of Health Services and City/County of San Francisco, have reviewed the best available scientific evidence on this product and does not find it to be non-toxic. Feedback from local garment cleaners at the Chamber of Commerce meeting as well as the results of the survey indicate that no garment cleaners in Santa Monica are exclusively using wet cleaning. Therefore, a garment cleaning ordinance that requires only non-toxic and non-smog forming garment care technology for local cleaners would leave one garment cleaner (CO2 technology) in the city. This could be inconvenient for residents and place a financial strain on garment cleaners. Staff is not planning on proposing any changes in law at this time.

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