

# CoastLINES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST COAST APARTMENT ASSOCIATION

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May / June 2017

## It's SUMMER time



Pages 14-17



Page 8



Page 30-33

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## A Clean Environment Has Positive Psychological & Health Effect On Customer And Employees

By Jean Hill, CEO Jean's Clean Team

Property Management is a competitive, complex business. Whether it's maintenance, repairs, on-site management, landscaping, compliance with state regulations, rent collection or accounting, there are a myriad of tasks to attend to. But one of the easiest and most cost-effective tasks that can give you a competitive advantage is a clean environment.

The environment you work in – and where your clients may live – greatly influences perceptions, health, and performance. In fact, just as we all know about how quickly first impressions are made in mere seconds when we meet people, the same instant impressions are made about a physical environment. Are we confident and pleased in what we see, or are we unsure and concerned about a business' attention to detail because of how it looks?

Given that over a third of U.S. households rent and one in four live in multi-unit buildings, everything that your clients or potential clients see and smell influences how they view the future relationship with your company and whether that translates into a signed lease.

### First Impressions to Health First

Have you really thought about the first impression your business makes? We get accustomed to our work place quickly and things that stood out initially fade into the background. Have you taken a tour recently around your own grounds wearing a customer 'hat'? What does it look like from entrance, office to model suites? In each area of the property, there is an opportunity to impress a potential resident – and keep an existing resident happy and healthy?

Create check-lists that are specific to your office and properties for reminders of what needs to be cleaned. For example, is the glass entrance door smudged? Is the reception area cluttered? Are the carpets worn or frayed? Any stains on guest chairs? Those instant impressions might predispose a customer to judge your rental unit in the same way. Your image is at stake!

All businesses face this clean and tidy dilemma and smart businesses master it. Doctors' offices, legal firms and hotels come to mind as businesses that place a significant emphasis on cleanliness as a code for professionalism and customer satisfaction.

When was the last time you thought about your cleaning strategy in your offices and properties you manage? How frequently do you review what's cleaned under your contract and if those cleaning efforts are meeting your standards?

### Quick tips to a clean, healthy environment

One simple way to reduce dirt through properties and offices is to have walk off mats to reduce dust and contaminants from shoes. Do you have mats outside your properties or outside office entrances?

Dust is an allergen and have you thought about whether you vacuum with a special HEPA (High Efficiency Particle Air) filter to get rid of dust in your offices and rental units? What Makes a Healthy Home, A Guide for Tenants and Landlords, notes that when possible, don't have carpeting or rugs. Hard floors (vinyl, wood, or tile) are much easier to clean and therefore, keep dust-free.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has a Healthy Homes Initiative that looks at environmental hazards, especially those that may impact childhood health. But those impacts are also equally important to adults – and cover basics that should be familiar to all of us – such as mold, allergens, pests, and pesticides, etc. "The key over-arching healthy homes principles are to keep homes dry, clean, well ventilated, pest-free, free from contaminants, safe, and well-maintained," it says.

So not only are there health reasons to keep your properties clean but also perception and reputation.

### Productive and Happy Employees

Your staff can benefit from a clean, uncluttered workplace too. Did you know that the average number of bacteria that harbors on a keyboard is 7500!? Shockingly, it has more bacteria than the average toilet seat!

With that in mind, pick a time of the week that is usually less busy and ask your staff to have a bi-weekly or monthly cleanup and decluttering session for their desk and front-office area. Not only will it improve the optics of your business but it's good for productivity too. A study in 2011 from Princeton University found that clutter can make it harder to focus on tasks. And clutter impacts perceptions: the national hiring agency Adecco conducted a survey in which it found that 57% of people have judged a co-worker based on the state of his or her workspace. It could certainly apply to other people's perceptions too.

It's been suggested that the cleaning industry could be included under the umbrella of the healthcare industry "since cleaning plays such a vital role in keeping people healthy and productive."

Set a goal for this coming quarter to think about clean and what it really means to your business' bottom line; the health and happiness of your staff and customers. A few changes in your operations could result in big changes to your bottom line in terms of customer satisfaction and productivity.

"Neatness and cleanliness is not a function of how rich or poor you are but that of mentality and principle."

Ikechukwu Izuakor, Great Reflections on Success