



# Vacuuming Carpet

by Jeff Bishop, Clean Care Seminars, Inc.

**I** spent 55 minutes vacuuming my carpet at home yesterday. 55 minutes!

"Bishop," you say, "I always knew you 'industry experts' were a little divorced from reality, but this takes the cake! No one spends 55 minutes vacuuming their carpet these days."

Hold on a minute, let me fill you in on the details. You see, that entire 55 minutes of vacuuming was spent on a 5x5-square-foot section of my carpet - that's right, 25 square feet or just under 3 yards - at my home's rear entry.

"Now I know you've lost it," you reply in amazement. "That's ridiculous!"

Hmmmm . . . exactly what I thought. But before you call the guys in the white coats to come pick me up, consider a few more details.

Having attended a number of indoor environmental quality (IEQ) courses in the past few years, and having taught that subject for several years myself, I'm what you'd call a little paranoid about household maintenance and cleaning. That's especially true since my grandchildren began dropping in frequently. Like most small children, they love to tumble and play on our eight-year-old, 50-ounce Saxony carpet.

That's fact number one.

Fact number two: Twice I've listened to lectures from John Roberts, MS, MEd, PE, a mechanical engineer with Engineering Plus, Inc. Mr. Roberts does research on high-volume surface sampling of household dust. He's an expert on assessing and managing exposures and risks from pollutants in house dust, including pesticides, lead, and other toxic substances in road and household dust. He coordinated the development of the Master Home Environmentalist Program for the State of Washington.

Fact three: Currently, there is a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funded study underway to assess the toxic effect of lead containing carpet dust (LCCD) on small children. Seems that these babies do a lot of crawling and playing on floorcoverings, including carpet. They pick up lead-containing household dust and ingest it when they lick their hands or suck their fingers.

I relate these three facts to reinforce my diminished credibility, so bear with me a little longer.

Here's what happened: Several months ago, my daughter, a physical therapist, and her husband, a pediatrician, needed a new vacuum for their home - that's the one with two of the world's most perfect



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grandchildren! Thankfully, they share my concern about their kids' environment. Based on Mr. Roberts talks at two IEQ conferences, I recommended that they check out the Hoover Deluxe with Patented Wind Tunnel Technology - whatever! Suffice it to say that it's the one with the red-light/green-light feature that tells you when you've gotten efficient soil removal.

Mind you, Hoover isn't paying me to advertise for them. I think they should, certainly could use the extra money, but the fact is they aren't. I digress.

This Hoover vacuum may not be any better in terms of construction and efficiency than a host of other vacuums on the market. Point is, it's the only one that has a built-in system for letting you know how clean the carpet is becoming due to your maintenance effort. Out of curiosity I called Hoover and asked them how the system works. In layman's terms, it seems that the vacuum incorporates a small sound sensing device, or microphone, that "hears" particles as they are sucked from the carpet and enter the vacuum inlet nozzle.

Don't ask me to elaborate on that. Anyway, the microphone that hears the soil particles striking the nozzle inlet activates a red light. When the microphone no longer hears those particles, the green light comes on.

Simple, huh? Even a worn-out old rug sucker, like myself, can handle that.

To its credit the Hoover vacuum also incorporates a double-lined, high-efficiency filter bag, along with a microfilter on the outlet side of the collection chamber.

So how'd I get caught up in vacuuming my carpet? My central vacuum, you know, the one that exhausts all the recovered particles that get through paper filter bags to the outside of my home, was on the fritz. My wife had asked my daughter to drop off her vacuum for our absolutely terrific housekeeper to use during her weekly cleaning effort. I was walking out the door when my daughter showed up with the vacuum unit I had recommended to her.

I couldn't resist.

OK, are you ready for this? Here's the result of my super-scientific, totally unique, one-of-a-kind, non-repeatable vacuum cleaner evaluation and study.

- With the filter bag 1/3 full, I adjusted the vacuum nozzle to the proper pile height setting and set the sensor on "maximum sensitivity."
- Checking the time on my German-made, scientifically calibrated Tag/Heuer wrist watch, I cranked her up.
- Naturally, I decided to work the worst area of the carpet, a 5x5 section just inside the rear entry. Wanted to see if this thing really worked, you know.
- I used the fore-and-aft stroking sequence that I'd perfected with 30-plus-years experience as a professional cleaner. Red light all the way.
- Having been forewarned by Mr. Roberts about the