



## A GUIDE TO EXPLAINING THE CARPET AND RUG INSTITUTE'S CARPET CLEANING TESTING AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

### Program Questions:

#### *What's the Carpet and Rug Institute?*

Headquartered in Dalton, Georgia, the Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) is the national trade association representing carpet and rug manufacturers and suppliers of raw materials and services to the industry. CRI members account for more than 90 percent of all carpet produced in the United States. CRI is the leading source for science-based information and insight on how carpet and rugs create a better environment indoors. CRI's mission is to serve the carpet industry, its customers and the public by providing facts that help people make informed flooring choices. CRI offers consumers and commercial and institutional users information about carpet selection, installation, and care and cleaning at [carpet-rug.org](http://carpet-rug.org)

#### *What's the Seal of Approval Program?*

The CRI Seal of Approval program tests the effectiveness of carpet cleaning products and certifies that they remove soil and stains effectively without damage to carpet fibers. In addition, vacuum cleaners must meet strict indoor air quality standards. Seal of Approval cleaning solutions that are environmentally friendly also can obtain green chemical recognition, and cleaning professionals who utilize CRI-approved products are recognized as Seal of Approval service providers. Not all products are good enough to earn the Seal of Approval; the blue and green seal helps customers identify quality carpet cleaning products.

#### *What kinds of products are tested?*

Under the Seal of Approval program, tests are conducted on cleaning solutions, deep cleaning extractors and vacuums. Each product is tested at an independent laboratory against control samples to assess product performance using scientifically accredited cleaning standards.

- **Spot removers and pre-spray/in-tank cleaning solutions** are tested for overall cleaning effectiveness, rate of resoiling, pH, optical brighteners and colorfastness.
- **Deep cleaning extractors** are tested for soil removal efficacy, the amount of residual moisture and carpet fiber protection.
- **Deep cleaning systems (processes that incorporate a specific machine used with a specific cleaning agent, following a specific procedure)** must meet the above tests for solutions and deep cleaning extractors.
- **Vacuums (household and commercial)** are tested for soil removal efficacy, dust containment within the machine and carpet fiber protection.

Additionally carpet cleaning professionals who use both Seal of Approval solutions and equipment are eligible to become Seal of Approval service providers.

Future plans call for evaluating interim and light appearance cleaning equipment (rental or do-it-yourself).



## ***Why is the Seal of Approval program necessary?***

Not all cleaning equipment and solutions clean equally well. Independent testing has shown that various cleaning detergents and spots removers clean no better than water. More seriously, they can leave a sticky residue that attracts soil at a faster rate. Also, the equipment used to clean carpet varies widely in its ability to remove soil, recover water and maintain a carpet's appearance. The blue and green Seal of Approval logo identifies superior and safe carpet cleaning products and equipment.

## ***What should a customer know about the Seal of Approval?***

Effective carpet cleaning helps maintain the life and beauty of the carpet. This means customers get more enjoyment out of their carpet and more value for their investment. Customers should know that some large carpet companies have specified the use of Seal of Approval products in their warranties. Also, helping carpet maintain its full life cycle cuts down on its premature removal to landfills. And that benefits everyone.

## ***What are the Gold, Silver and Bronze ratings?***

The Seal of Approval program utilizes x-ray fluorescence (XRF) technology to measure precisely how much soil a deep cleaning extractor or vacuum removes from a carpet sample. Extractors or vacuums that meet the strict minimum requirements for the Seal of Approval qualify for the bronze rating. Those achieving higher soil removal receive a silver rating. And machines achieving the highest level of measurable soil removal are awarded a gold-level Seal of Approval.

## ***What is Space Foundation certification?***

An important feature of the Seal of Approval program is the use of XRF technology to measure the amount of soil removed from the carpet by a deep cleaning extractor or commercial or household vacuum. Because the Space Foundation recognizes the XRF component of the Seal of Approval program as a Certified Space Technology™, companies with CRI approved extractors or vacuums are eligible to display the Space Foundation Seal along with the Seal of Approval. This is an excellent way to showcase the fact that consumers can benefit from space technology.



## ***How do vacuums receive a Seal of Approval/Green Label?***

CRI began certifying carpet cleaning products with its Green Label vacuum program. A key feature of this program is indoor air quality – ensuring that the dust and dirt collected by the vacuum stays within the bag and canister.

CRI moved Green Label vacuums into the Seal of Approval program to emphasize soil removal efficacy as well as indoor air quality. Vacuums must meet a higher standard of soil removal as measured by XRF technology. Bronze certification requires a 10 percent improvement of cleaning performance over Green Label standards. In addition to even tougher standards for silver and gold performance ratings, a gold-level machine also must meet higher ambient air quality standards.

Manufacturers in the Green Label vacuum program will retain certification for their machines until 2010, at which time the program will be phased out.

## ***What else should people know about carpet cleaning?***

Today's carpets are more stain resistant and durable than ever, making them relatively easy to clean and maintain. However, maintaining the life and beauty of carpet depends on several factors: the quality



of products and equipment used to clean carpets, the frequency carpets are cleaned, and the skill and knowledge of people doing the cleaning. CRI recommends periodic professional carpet cleaning, particularly from a Seal of Approval service provider.

### ***What is Green Chemical certification?***

To certify that Seal of Approval cleaning products do not damage the environment, CRI is partnering with nationally recognized green certifiers such as Green Seal and the U.S Environmental Protection Agency's Design for the Environment program. In order to become a Seal of Approval green product, the manufacturer must provide CRI with documentation from one of the green partner organizations attesting that its product meets the certifier's criteria for environmental friendliness.

### ***What is a Seal of Approval service provider?***

Cleaning professionals who use Seal of Approval solutions and equipment as part of their cleaning process can be recognized as Seal of Approval service providers. Using Seal of Approval products is a way to assure customers that their carpet is being cleaned with quality products that will help maintain the carpet's life and beauty.

## **Customer Questions:**

### ***Why should I buy Seal of Approval products?***

The Seal of Approval is an assurance that you are buying a carpet cleaning product that works. Using effective cleaning products helps preserve the life and beauty of your carpet; this means you get more out of your investment.

### ***Which products have earned the Seal of Approval?***

A full list of manufacturers that have earned the Seal of Approval can be found at [carpet-rug.org](http://carpet-rug.org). While you're online, check out the handy carpet care and cleaning information. Plus, there's a wealth of information on how carpet makes for a better living, learning, working and healing environment.

### ***Aren't all cleaning solutions the same?***

**No.** In fact, independent testing has shown that various cleaning detergents and spot removers clean no better than water. More seriously, they can leave a sticky residue that attracts soil at a faster rate. This leads to customer dissatisfaction and the mistaken belief that carpet won't stay clean. That's why you should buy only cleaners with the Seal of Approval. It's your assurance that a carpet cleaner is up to the job.

### ***Aren't all extractors the same?***

**No.** In fact, there are vast differences in the soil removal capability among extractors, some of which are designed for deep cleaning, others for interim cleaning, and still others for light appearance touch ups. Extractors that people rent or purchase are designed for removing surface soil. While the carpet's appearance may improve after using one of these machines, embedded soil still remains. Over time, this buildup may greatly affect a carpet's appearance. Proper carpet care requires periodic deep cleaning, preferably every 12 to 18 months, by professionals to remove embedded soil. The Seal of Approval identifies those deep cleaning extractors and deep cleaning systems that provide high performance cleaning.



### ***What should I know about vacuums?***

Proper vacuuming is the easiest and most effective way to keep carpet clean and to help improve your indoor air quality, but not all vacuums clean carpet equally well. Some do not remove sufficient soil, and this leads to soil becoming trapped in the carpet pile. Others do not sufficiently contain within the machine the dirt and dust that is suctioned up. In addition, some machines can damage carpet fibers, which affect a carpet's appearance. The Seal of Approval/Green Label vacuum program identifies commercial and household vacuums that meet high standards for soil removal, indoor air quality and carpet fiber protection.

### ***What are the benefits of effective cleaning?***

Carpet serves as a trap for allergens and other particles that fall onto the floor. Removing them with vacuums that keep dirt and dust within the canister improves air quality. Likewise, using extractors that effectively recover water and cleaning detergents from the carpet minimizes the possibility of mold growth, which can occur when dirt and moisture remain in the carpet.

### ***What's the environmental impact of effective cleaning?***

The CRI testing program is raising the bar for all cleaning products. Better cleaning products mean longer life for carpets. And that means less carpet will end up in landfill before its time. That is why the Seal of Approval program has won the endorsement of the Florida Green Lodging program, sponsored by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. CRI is spearheading other green initiatives, such as the Green Label and Green Label Plus programs, which identify carpet, carpet cushion, adhesives that help contribute to better indoor air quality.

**Please learn more at [carpet-rug.org](http://carpet-rug.org)**



## Only the Best Pass the Test

The best way to maintain the life and beauty of carpet is to clean it with the Carpet and Rug Institute's Seal of Approval products. Not all cleaning agents and equipment clean carpet equally well, and some products even damage carpet fibers. The CRI Seal of Approval program tests products for cleaning effectiveness and identifies those that are environmentally friendly. Customers can identify these products by looking for the blue and green Seal of Approval on products or by visiting [carpet-rug.org](http://carpet-rug.org).

A carpet cleaning product must pass a series of tests, conducted by an independent testing laboratory, in order to receive the CRI Seal of Approval.

**Cleaning solutions** (spot removers, pre-spray treatments and in-tank solutions) must meet the following standards:

- **Soil removal**—The product removes soil and spots better than plain water.
- **Rate of resoiling**—The cleaned carpet sample must not attract dirt to the cleaned areas faster than the rest of the carpet.
- **pH**—A more neutral pH ensures that carpet dyes and fibers are not adversely affected.
- **Fiber protection**—The product must leave the carpet pile minimally changed after repeated cleanings.
- **Optical brighteners**—None is allowed; optical brighteners can leave some patches of carpet lighter than the rest and can add a yellow cast to lighter colored carpets over time.
- **Colorfastness**—The product must not cause a color change in the carpet.

Additionally, carpet cleaning solutions that are environmentally friendly can become a **Seal of Approval green product** by providing documentation from one of the nationally recognized green certifiers such as Green Seal and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

**Deep cleaning extractors** must meet these standards:

- **Soil removal**—NASA-enhanced x-ray fluorescence technology is used to measure the precise amount of soil removed from the carpet. Extractors receive a bronze, silver or gold rating depending on the level of soil removed.
- **Water removal**—The extractor must remove most of the moisture resulting from a wet cleaning process. Dirty water that remains in the carpet could be a source of fungal growth and could prolong the drying process.
- **Fiber protection**—The extractor must not harm the carpet pile.

**Deep cleaning systems** (deep cleaning extractors used in combination with cleaning solutions) must meet the criteria for both the cleaning solutions and the extractor.



**Seal of Approval/Green Vacuum cleaners** must meet the following standards:

- **Soil removal**—NASA-enhanced x-ray fluorescence technology is used to measure the precise amount of soil removed from the carpet. Vacuums receive a bronze, silver or gold rating depending on the level of soil removed. The entry level of bronze requires a 10 percent improvement of cleaning ability over the Green Label program, and the standards are higher for the silver and gold ratings.
- **Dust containment**—At the bronze and silver levels, a vacuum must not release more than 100 micrograms of dust particles per cubic meter back into the air where they can be inhaled. Additionally, gold-level vacuums must not release more than 35 micrograms of dust particles per cubic meter of air.
- **Fiber protection**—After 200 passes on a residential carpet sample, the household vacuum must not affect the texture appearance more than a one-step change, based on one year of normal use. For vacuums used on commercial cut pile, 900 passes, with the sample rotated every 50 passes, should not affect the texture appearance more than a one-step change. A machine must comply with this standard before being considered for a bronze, silver or gold rating.

### **Seal of Approval Service Providers**

Cleaning professionals who use Seal of Approval solutions and equipment as part of their cleaning process can be recognized as Seal of Approval service providers. Using Seal of Approval products is a way to assure customers that their carpet is being cleaned with quality products that will help maintain the carpet's life and beauty.

**Please learn more at [carpet-rug.org](http://carpet-rug.org)**