

Why Did Green Seal Adopt Such A Restrictive Standard?

In September 2008, Green Seal released the final version of GS-37, after more than a year and a half of rigorous discussion. Green Seal's president and CEO Arthur Weissman, Ph.D., states: "The primary goal of the GS-37 revision – the fourth revision since GS-37's original release in 2000 – is to ensure that it continues to represent an environmental leadership standard in the marketplace, and vitally, to incorporate criteria that fully protects human health, including that of children and custodial workers".¹

It is important to understand that "Green Seal certified products are increasingly used in schools and more and more cleaning chemicals are demonstrated to contribute to health and environmental problems. Updating the Green Seal standard for the cleaners used in schools and other institutional settings (GS-37) involved careful consideration of vulnerable populations needs." "...documents in the revision process also set out the rationale for special consideration of children, in particular, because of their sensitivity to chemical exposures and the many ways in which they may be affected during their developmental stages."²

Critics of the revised GS-37 standards note that GS-37 "arbitrarily bans chemicals according to a list, without regard for proper risk assessment – a practice which runs contrary to accepted scientific practices."³ However, "[t]he GS-37 revision process provided a clear rationale for each criterion in all the support documents. It was recognized that **a conventional risk assessment approach is not sufficient for an environmental leadership standard - which attempts to promote the safest alternatives, not to set so-called safe limits for questionable chemicals - it also inappropriate for protecting vulnerable populations that are not considered in standard risk assessment methodologies.**"²

"While Green Seal strived to reach consensus and took reasonable efforts to achieve consensus, it has long recognized that it is difficult to do so for environmental leadership standards that, by definition, exclude the majority of products in a market and potentially a number of manufacturers that cannot meet the standard. It is therefore no coincidence that seven trade associations object to the standard, as they are constituted to uphold the interests of all their members and members' products. 'With the extensive and intensive process involved in revising GS-37,' Dr. Arthur B. Weissman, President and CEO, of Green Seal, Inc, believes 'one could fairly say that Green Seal went above and beyond this requirement and in fact made extraordinary efforts to achieve consensus.'"²

"In the final analysis, the success of the revision of GS-37 will be measured by the extent to which it changes the market of cleaning products to make them more protective of human health, including vulnerable populations such as children, and the environment. "We regret that some are unable to support the revised GS-37," says Dr. Weissman, "[But] **we trust that government agencies that are charged with protecting the health of their citizens will choose to support a standard that protects the rights of children over the rights of chemicals, and anticipate that many progressive manufacturers will see the benefit of conforming with a leadership standard that promotes more sustainable cleaning products that will ensure a healthier, cleaner environment for all.**"²

References

1. [Green Seal, "Final Version of GS-37 Released." 04 Sep 2008.](#)
2. [Maintenance Supplies Magazine, "Green Seal Inc. Stands Behind Revised GS-37." Jan-Feb 2009.](#)
3. [Building Services Management Magazine, "Green Seal Defends GS-37 Revision."](#)

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