

Solutions for Today's Facility Maintenance Professional

# BUILDING SERVICES MANAGEMENT

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## HEPA Filters: When to Change Them

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Most cleaning professionals know vacuum cleaners with high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters can help protect indoor air quality, but when to change and clean them is not always as clear.

These filters capture the smallest of particles, down to 0.3 microns in size, 99.97 percent of the time. They can trap smoke, molds, bacteria, dust mites, pollen and other particles.

However, over time, HEPA filters need to be replaced. This is crucial for the vacuum cleaner to operate at optimal performance.

But because they can last a fairly long time, it is not uncommon for cleaning professionals to simply forget to change them.

There are no "cut and dry" rules as to how often a HEPA filter should be changed, said Daniel Frimml, a service technician for Tornado Industries, a manufacturer of professional cleaning equipment. "The only answer I can give is that it depends based on how often the machine is used, the type of conditions, the indoor environment, even the location."

However, he does offer the following suggestions that can be used as a guide for cleaning professionals:

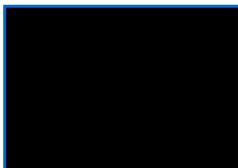
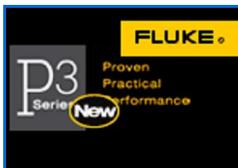
- In a residential setting, the HEPA filter may last two or three years before it needs to be changed.
- In a commercial setting and used on a daily basis, it should be checked every six months. If heavily soiled it should be replaced; otherwise, it should be changed once per year.
- If a musty odor is detected when the vacuum cleaner is used, the HEPA filter should be changed.
- Some vacuum cleaners have a pre-filter designed to capture large particulates; these should be checked/changed every three to four months.
- If the system has a carbon pre-filter, these should be changed every two to three years.
- If the filter or the housing holding the filter is ever damaged, the filter should be changed.

"When replacing the filter, users should contact the distributor where it was purchased or the manufacturer directly," says Frimml. "And always select the HEPA filter designed for that specific machine and model." □

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