



# ROCKY MOUNTAIN FABRICARE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SERVING THE DRYCLEANERS OF COLORADO, UTAH, AND WYOMING

C L E A N ' 0 5 A S U C C E S S !

By: Richard Reese



The World Educational Congress for Laundering and Drycleaning held Clean '05 in Orlando, Florida on June 23 - 26, 2005. The Orange County Convention Center was the site for the 511 exhibiting companies to show off their latest innovations in 228,500 square feet of exhibit space. Although attendance was down from Clean '03 in Las Vegas, Nevada, exhibitors were very happy with the turnout and the success of the show. Rating it an 8 out of 10. Of the 13,951 registered participants almost 10,000 were attendees. 1,714 international attendees represented 79 countries.

Education, as always, was a big focus of the Clean Show. Four of the six sponsors offered educational sessions. Over 30 hours of educational sessions were offered in all, drawing standing room only crowds. The International Fabricare Institute unveiled their 2005 Award of Excellence program. This program enables cleaners, providing they meet a set of standards set by IFI, to use a public relations and branding campaign designed to separate quality cleaners from those

that offer poor quality or service. For more information on the 2005 Award of Excellence program, please consult your July/August issue of Fabricare magazine.

Although there wasn't a new solvent, revolutionary finishing equipment or POS system to make a big splash at this year's show, attendees seemed more interested than ever. "Exhibitors were almost unanimous in saying that the quality of attendees was outstanding and they were having a successful show," says John Riddle, president of Clean Show planners Riddle and Associates.

For those of you who were able to attend Clean '05 it was a great show. Despite the rainy weather it was a resounding success. Keep your calendars clear May 17-20, 2007 for Clean '07 in New Orleans. Hope to see you there.



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*Rocky Mountain Fabricare Association  
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# President's Message

By: Brad Ewing  
Nu-Way Cleaners

I have chosen to use the President's message in this issue to alert the membership to a pending dues increase. As we all know from running our own business it is vital to keep ahead of our costs. The cost of doing business is going up for all of us. The various expenses we incur are not likely to go down anytime soon whether it is the cost of fuel, utilities, labor or any other expenses. The same is true for IFI. During the June board meeting the IFI directors addressed this issue and have asked the Joint State Affiliates (RMFA, SEFA, etc.) to ratify a 5.9% inflationary dues increase. The percentage chosen is based on the increase in the CPI from April 2003 - April 2005. The resulting dues structure is listed below, and as you will see the increase is fairly small. Even at the highest dues category the increase amounts to less than 22 cents per day.

Proposed new dues schedule:

Dues category 1 based on FTE 0-5 will go from \$389 to \$412 an increase of \$23/year				
2	FTE 6-8	\$675	\$715	\$40/year
3	FTE 9-11	\$829	\$878	\$49/year
4	FTE 12-15	\$1,126	\$1,192	\$66/year
5	FTE 16 - up	\$1,342	\$1,421	\$79/year

The decision from the various joint states is not due until October 15th, so we will not know if the increase was ratified for a few months. However, based on the RMFA board schedule it was necessary for us to address this issue at the August board meeting. The motion carried unanimously and we have notified IFI of our decision.

I hope you all understand the need for IFI to increase their dues, and that this increase will be easily absorbed by your business. I personally would not want to see IFI have to cut services.

### RMFA MISSION STATEMENT:

The purpose of the ROCKY MOUNTAIN FABRICARE ASSOCIATION is to enhance the image and viability of the fabricare industry through education, and development of the skills, talents and professionalism of its membership.

### RMFA PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES:

To promote, develop and protect the interests of the garment and textile maintenance industry. To improve the quality of services rendered by industry by providing an opportunity for the exchange of experiences, ideas and opinions through meetings, discussion and educational programs. To develop and encourage the practice of high standards and professional conduct and safety within the workplace among the membership.



## Why Do We Need Detergent in the Drycleaning Process

This is a very important question that needs to be addressed if we as drycleaners are to consider ourselves as professionals. Without the use of detergent in the drycleaning system, it is impossible to provide our customers with quality, consistent, and professional garment care. Lets begin by looking at what a properly formulated detergent does. A true detergent must perform a number of specific functions and provide benefits to not only the drycleaner, but the customer as well. These functions are as follows:

- Must have the ability to use moisture to remove water soluble soils
- Must be able to control that moisture to prevent damage to fibers and dyes
- Be able to control moisture to prevent wrinkling and shrinkage
- Must have the ability to suspend soils thus avoiding redeposition by carrying away soils with the solvent flow
- Must have the ability to minimize static and lint thus providing protection against clinging
- Must be able to lubricate zippers to prevent sticking

A detergent formulation must perform these functions in order to be considered a true detergent. Now lets look at how a detergent works. First we must define a few important chemistry terms used in drycleaning.

- Solubilization - the process of dispersing water in a solvent containing a surfactant, forming a clear, stable solution
- Emulsification - the process of dispersing water (with a surfactant) in solvent to form a cloudy, unstable mixture
- Surfactant - a chemical whose molecules have the ability to make otherwise incompatible surfaces compatible. This provides a surfactant solution with the ability to penetrate and wet soiled surfaces quickly, to facilitate loosening, solubilizing, emulsifying, dispersing, and suspending soils
- Detergent - a formulated mixture of several components, including surfactants

There are typically two different process types of detergents.

- Charge process - requires a specific concentration to be maintained in the solvent at all times. Contains primarily anionic types of surfactants.
- Load process - each load requires a separate detergent addition based on the number of pounds of garments to be cleaned. These detergents are primarily cationic in nature, however there are a few that are ionic blends.

How does a detergent work? First lets look at a surfactant molecule. Surfactant molecules have a hydrophilic (water loving) end, and a hydrophobic (water hating) end. Surfactant molecules attach themselves to soils and work to break the attractive forces binding the soil to the fabric. Once the attractive forces have been broken, the molecules then break the soils into smaller components, which then become dispersed in the solvent. Once dispersed, the molecules must then suspend the soils so that they may be carried away. This is how solvent soluble and solvent insoluble soils are removed, however; in order to remove water soluble soils, micelle formation in the solvent is critical. Micelles are formed when the hydrophilic ends of the surfactant molecules surround and solubilize a molecule of water. The importance of micelles is two fold, control water for safety, and the removal of water soluble soil. In order for this to happen, you must have an adequate concentration of detergent, correct formulation of surfactants, and the presence of water in the system.

To receive the professional results both you and your customers are looking for

- Select a detergent designed to perform all the functions of a true detergent, as discussed previously
- Use the correct detergent for the process you are currently using
- Add detergent in the proper concentration

If I can answer any questions or be of assistance in your ongoing quest for improved professional quality cleaning, do not hesitate to call.

Bob Stine  
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By: Sharon Dutcher  
Faye's Laundry & Dry Cleaners



## “ H A Z A R D O U S C H E M I C A L ”

While watching the evening news last week, a report of a “hazardous chemical” spill at a dry cleaning shop in a local strip mall flashed on the screen. I was amazed to see scenes of fireman in full haz-mat gear entering the building and to hear reports of people being taken to the hospital in respiratory distress. This cannot have been a good experience for the cleaner involved.

Like most of you, I have never experienced a perc spill large enough to be in the “reportable” category: 100 pounds or a little more than 7 gallons. I was curious about how and to whom you report a large spill and how the media gets notified. And, what should you do if the TV cameras arrive at your front door?

I asked Neil Taylor of the UDEQ what actions we should take in the event of a spill that was larger than our trained Emergency Coordinator (you all have one, right?) could handle. His answer was that our first responsibility is to the health of our employees. So evacuate the building of all unnecessary people. Secondly, do whatever you can to keep the perc out of the storm sewers and floor drains; use rags or dirt to make dams, put mats over floor drains, etc.

Finally, call the fire department. As the First Responder in most cities they have self contained breathing apparatus (the scary looking haz-mat suits) and extensive training in hazardous materials clean-up. The fire department will then notify the UDEQ who will send a representative out to supervise. For additional information on reporting a spill, there is an excellent UDEQ website at [www.deq.ut.gov](http://www.deq.ut.gov). Click on the “Environmental Response and Remediation” tab.

That call to the fire department will probably also bring the news media. At that point, RMFA members have access to a great resource at IFI headquarters. According to Jon Meijer, Education Director of the IFI, the staff there fields numerous calls every day from members who need advice about talking to journalists.

The IFI staff has the education and experience to help you with the most difficult media interview. Jon was able to quickly fax me several documents about talking to the press. So, as soon as the crisis is under control, call the IFI. You will be glad you are a member.

### EQUIPMENT FOR SALE

- Vacuum Single Buck - Model CSBV
- Collar and Cuff - Model LSTH
- Sleever - Model ABS

Can view them working (Kaysville, UT). Palleting and shipping can be arranged if needed.

*For more information*  
**Faye's Laundry & Drycleaning**  
Cliff - (801) 544-0281

- Two Cissell Dryers - 50 Pound
- One Rema Dri-Vac
- 60 Gallon Compressor - New
- One Cissall Garment Topper
- Fulton Boilder - 1989

**Camelot Cleaners**  
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# UNDERSTANDING LEATHER: Seminars for Customer Service

**These seminars are designed for your sales people and will cover why should you accept leathers, leather garment construction, cleaning methods, and how to explain leather cleaning to your customer.**

Leather cleaning is a big ticket item for most cleaners, and highly profitable. When you work closely with your leather care professional, and take time to educate your sales people and customers you will have a satisfied customer who will return and recommend your store to others.

Customer expectations concerning awareness of garment cleaning, processing, finishing and stain removal success, prior to leaving an item at your plant, is one of the most important keys to satisfying your customers. This is just as important when accepting leather garments.

These seminars will be co-presented by Richard Reese of LeatherCare, Salt Lake City and Jim Orlin of Front Range LeatherCare, Denver.

**Richard Reese** - Richard has worked in the dry-cleaning and leather cleaning businesses for 19 years. He is a graduate of the resident general dry-cleaning course offered by the International Fabricare Institute. Richard has attended several leather cleaning seminars offered by Kirks Suede Life, Chicago, IL. He is certified by IFI as a CPD and a CED. Richard is the immediate past president of RMFA.

**Jim Orlin** - Jim is the third generation of his family to be part of Colorado's garment care industry. He worked in the leather cleaning, drycleaning, and laundry businesses with his father since he was in junior high school, and has been trained in all facets of garment and textile care and procedures. He was one of the first to develop a safe and successful wet cleaning process for leather garments.

In 1982, he started what would become Front Range LeatherCare, a company now servicing retail cleaners in Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas and Nebraska.

Jim serves on the board of directors and was one of the founders of RMFA in 1988. He is also a member of IFI,

Leather Industries of America, and the Leather Apparel Association.

These seminars will provide basic information in the simplest language possible. The seminar will **NOT** cover the actual cleaning procedures. The focus will be imparting information to your counter personnel which will enable them to understand what to expect and not expect from leather cleaning and processing.

Our first seminar will be in **Salt Lake City, Utah** on September 29, 2005 - Mendenhall Equipment Co.

Then we will have one on October 27, 2005 - Holiday Inn Denver Central in **Denver, Colorado**.

Both sessions will run from 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m

Please refer to the inserts in this newsletter for more information or to register. You can also go to the website: [www.rmfa.org](http://www.rmfa.org) and click on the events link.



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## HOME DRYCLEANING KITS: WHAT THEY CAN AND CANNOT DO

International Fabricare Institute, the premier trade association for garment care, utilized its research and testing expertise to gauge the effectiveness of home dry cleaning kits, and found that in general they do not



provide complete removal of all types of stains. They also cannot remove ground-in soil. These products can freshen garments by removing odors and imparting a pleasant fragrance.

### What do you get in a home dry cleaning kit?

Garments are freshened when they are placed inside the dryer with the cloth, which is activated by the heat of the dryer. Up to four garments can be placed in a bag (along with the dry-activated cloth) when using one of these products. The stain removal solution (which is dispensed from a plastic bottle) is applied directly on the stain, while the user holds an absorbent pad underneath the stained fabric.

Consumers are instructed to apply the solution until the stain is no longer visible or until it is evident that the stain cannot be removed. For kits that employ only a dryer-activated cloth, consumers are advised to use the cloth to remove stains. All kits recommended removing stains before garments are placed in the dryer.

### What can you expect?

In general, most of the products work well on freshening or removing odors such as smoke. Therefore, these products can be successfully used to freshen garments; for example, removing odors from sweaters after winter storage.

In terms of stain removal, IFI found that most of the products work well on water-based stains such as cola. Stains that are oil-based (ketchup, lipstick) presented more of a challenge to the home dry cleaning kits. In some cases, these products caused the stain to spread, which created a bigger stain. None of the products removed ground-in soils, which consumers typically see as "ring around the collar" or dirty cuffs.

### Can home dry cleaning kits cause damage?

When using a home dry cleaning kit, consumers should

continued on page 8...

# RMFA ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND SPRING SHOW 2006

Friday, May 5 and Saturday, May 6, 2006  
The Sheraton Hotel, Colorado Springs, CO

By: Joe Blaha, Education Committee



It's official - the Sheraton Hotel has agreed to provide the setting once again for our "Spring Thing" the first weekend in May 2006. It may seem early to be shouting from the rooftops about our upcoming conference. However, for those of us that enjoy a little structure upon which to build a vision...we now, not only, have a roof to sleep under, to visualize in, but we have a roof to shout from!

We are happy - I am happy the Sheraton is a great place for us and many of you even know the way. Because we had a great time in Grand Junction combining business and

pleasure, we promise more of the same balance, plus wine and golf for the great grins. At this point we only shout from our rooftop for everyone to save that first weekend in May for this event. As the committee and friends firm up our schedule, we'll be back shouting soon!

Our next EC (education committee) meeting is planned for Thursday, September 15, 2005 at 4:00 p.m. at our favorite venue, Seasons Gourmet Market in Arvada and I again encourage anyone interested to give any of us a call and we'll make sure you can find us and feel welcome. By the way, thank you to Jim Orlin for being the July wine ombudsman and does anyone know who our September volunteer is?

The leather guys (Jim Orlin and Richard Reese) are scheduled for their fall program on this side of the continental divide: Salt Lake City - September 29, 2005 and the other side, Denver - October 27, 2005, so check it out and take advantage of this income builder. (check out page 5 for more information on the presenters or go to [www.rmfa.org](http://www.rmfa.org) to register.) As other events are scheduled we'll be in touch and the shouting shall follow. Time to get back to work, its that time of year...again.



## EQUIPMENT FOR SALE

[American Pneumatic Heat seal machines](#) - \$900 up  
[Bishop-Freeman Shirt Folding Table](#) - \$1,100  
[Boiler Blow Down tank](#) - \$150  
[Cissell Pant Topper](#) - \$500  
[Cissell Puff Irons](#) - \$125 up  
[Cissell Pre-Spot Tank](#) - \$150  
[Chandler Button Sewing Machine](#) - \$1200  
[Chansew Electric Button Sewing Machine](#) - \$1,100  
[Cool Air Evaporative Cooler](#) - \$500  
[Electrozone Generator](#) - \$150  
[Exxis Lap Time Surveillance System](#) - \$995.00  
[Forenta Heated Collar Cone](#) - \$175  
[Forenta Bantam 3 piece Shirt Unit](#) - \$4,700  
[Frebon Pillow Cleaning Machine](#) - \$1100  
[Juki Electric Button Sewing Machine](#) - \$1,600  
[Perfect Pleat blower and coil](#) - \$175

[Permac 35# Perc DC Machine](#) - Make Offer  
[Pfaff Commercial Sewing Machine](#) - \$150  
[Pillow-Vac Pillow Cleaning Machine](#) - \$1,100  
[Puritan Vanguard 14 Filter](#) - \$600  
[Shirt Cone](#) - \$225  
[Singer Patch Machine](#) - \$500  
[Singer Industrial Sewing Machine](#) - \$375  
[VeriFone Credit Card Reader](#) - \$100 up  
[VeriFone Credit Card Receipt Printers](#) - \$100 up

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[www.thecleaners.net/equipment.htm](http://www.thecleaners.net/equipment.htm)

# FROM THE DESKTOP OF THE WEBMASTER...

Leslie Kettenhofen



A quick glance at the July web stats shows us that overall we had 457 visitors; making 664 visits, viewing 1,370 pages. In the chart below are the overall figures for the year to date.

There were 221 key phrases used in search engines that caused our site to pull up. Among the most popular key phrases searched for: rmfa, stain removal, Richard Reese, method cleaners, hydrocarbon solvents, camelot cleaners, katzson brothers, drapery pleaters. It looks like we have quite a variety of phrases being used.

By the time you read this, we will have updated our member list. Be sure to check it out for additions and deletions. Also, please contact us if your e-mail address or website address is omitted.

If you have ideas for the site or something you'd like to see added, please feel free to contact me.

Month	Unique Visitors	Number of visits	Pages Viewed
Jan 2005	327	424	1047
Feb 2005	378	521	1439
Mar 2005	408	618	1304
Apr 2005	340	534	973
May 2005	461	646	1697
Jun 2005	469	582	1276
Jul 2005	457	664	1370

**Leslie Kettenhofen**  
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 (541) 999-1493

## Home dry cleaning kits continued from page 6...

beware of the following types of damage they could induce when using the stain removal solutions: rings, chafing, broken fibers on a loose weave, local shrinkage on crepe or water-sensitive fabrics.

IFI's testing found that home dry cleaning kits failed to completely remove stains such as ketchup, lipstick, and cuff soil, resulting in a less-than-satisfactory appearance.

Home dry cleaning kits versus Professional dry cleaning		
Performance Factors	Home DC Kit	Professional dry cleaning
Removes odors	✓	✓
Removes wrinkles	✓	✓
Removes water-based stains (cola, wine, milk)	✓	✓
Removes oli-based stains (vegetable oil, shoe polish, butter)		✓
Removes difficult stains (ball-point ink*, lipstick, makeup)		✓
Cleans (removes dirt, body oils)		✓
Restores creases and pleats		✓
Imparts crisp, tailored appearance		✓

\*Ball-point ink stains may be set when initially treated with water-based stain removal solutions

## HOME STAIN REMOVERS PUT TO THE TEST

Ever wonder how your true competitors - the housewife and the home washer - are doing these days with their laundry? The *Wall Street Journal* recently put home stain removal products to the test. As reported July 5, *WSJ's* "Cranky Consumer" stained white cotton T-shirts with mustard, tomato juice, and ballpoint ink, attempting to remove the stains with five consumer stain-removal products and producing some interesting results.

The bottom line: *Not one of the products tested could take out all three of the most common stains dry cleaners see everyday.* Whink Instant Spot Remover was the only one that worked on ink, but it was pretty poor on everything else. While Tide to Go was great with tomato juice, it spread the ink stain and left a yellow tinge with the mustard. Through Shout Wipes Plus reduced the tomato stain to "near invisibility," it was lousy on the ink.

Of the two pretreat stain removers, Spray 'n Wash Dual Power got the mustard stain out(!), but it took two applications and two washings, and ink stains remained. OxiClean Laundry Stain Remover worked well on the tomato but left the mustard stain, and no info was given on the ink stain.

A month prior, *WSJ* profiled the "instant" stain remover trend, writing that sales of many stain removers have slowed because people resist additional steps in the laundry room.

*WSJ's* "Cranky Consumer" wrote that according to "the pros," stains could be divided into two categories: greasy stains and water-based stains, and a product that works wqell on one doesn't work well on the other. *Ya think?*

## CLA OFFERS INSIDER TIPS AND TRICKS AT CLEAN SHOW EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS

Clean '05 kicked off on Thursday, June 23, 2005 with the Coin Laundry Association (CLA) seminar, "Top 10 Most Profitable Commercial Accounts." During this presentation, a panel of experts provided attendees with ideas for starting and growing their wash, dry, fold business.



Jeff Gardner, Ron Lane and Andy Uhr offer suggestions for increasing commercial account activity during the CLA panel discussion, "Top 10 Most Profitable Commercial Accounts" as moderated by Michael Sokolowski at Clean '05.

The second day of education included "Pricing Your Dryers for Profit" and "What's Your Laundry Worth?" In addition to giving attendees a valuable dryer cost calculator formula, Brian Wallace, president and CEO of the Coin Laundry Association, offered startling statistics on the gas cost allocation.

Clay Pederson, president of Business Consultants International, led attendees through the proper evaluation techniques when buying or selling a laundry. Hot topics included lease value, buyer verses seller asking price and estimated selling price.

The seminar series concluded with "Evaluating an Investment in Coin Laundry" on Sunday. Individuals new to the industry were treated to a two-hour presentation that detailed the necessary business acumen, the state of the industry, and its challenges and

rewards.

DVDs of select CLA Clean Show seminars are available for purchase (<https://www.coinlaundry.org>). Every year, the Coin Laundry Association offers seminars and workshops that inform, entertain, and enlighten industry members across the country. CLA is proud to offer videotapes of these fine presentations - - to give all coin laundry industry members, or prospective members, the chance to learn from the industry experts! Order Today - CLA members price \$21.99 each; Non-member price \$35.99 each (add \$3.00 per order for shipping and handling)(Illinois Residents add 7.25% sales tax).

The Coin Laundry Association, headquartered in Dowers Grove, Illinois, is a not-for-profit trade organization with more than 2,500 members. Established in 1960, the Coin Laundry Association's mission is to ensure a profitable and growing retail, self-service laundry operation by providing superior education, products and services to laundry owners.



Clay Pederson of Business Consultants International gives advice during the question and answer segment of his CLA presentation at Clean '05, "What's Your Laundry Worth?"

## PERC Remediation Techniques that Work!

By: Robin Fryberger, P.E.

Does it get confusing that there seems to be so many different environmental remediation techniques that can be used to clean up dry cleaner contamination? Well, let me tell you a little secret - they all work! That is, they all work under certain conditions. And they all work poorly if relied upon under the wrong conditions. The challenge is to match the different cleanup alternatives with the site-specific conditions, to get the biggest cleanup bang for the cleanup buck.

Site conditions that affect the cleanup method that is chosen might include:

- Soil Type - Is it sandy soil that will easily yield vapors if a vacuum blower is put on a well, or is the site underlain by clayey soils that will take a long time to yield their volatiles, even with a high-vacuum pump?
- Depth of Impacts - Is the contamination locked up in shallow clay that can be excavated fairly easily and disposed at a landfill, or has the perc migrated downward through 20 or more feet of shallow soil, to build up on a claystone bedrock and release slowly into the groundwater as it flows by?
- Land Use - Does the plume go under the building or under the

continued on page 10...

road, making it impractical to excavate or maybe even to drill test holes? Does the plume flow under an open field, where deep-rooted, fast-growing trees could be planted to wick the contaminated water out of the ground and evaporate it?

- **Receptors** - The concept of receptors is so important when prioritizing where to clean up, how much to clean up, or even if to clean up. A potential receptor might be exposed to a chemical of concern by inhaling vapors, by ingesting impacted soil or groundwater, or by absorbing the chemicals through the skin. Could residents be exposed to a carcinogen by using a drinking water well on their land? Could vapors accumulate in a crawl space or basement, potentially exposing residents through the "inhalation" exposure pathway while they watch TV?

- **Budget/Schedule Constraints** - Everyone wants the "cheapest" clean up. However, sometimes investing in an aggressive, rapid cleanup such as by excavation or adding chemical oxidants can reduce total project costs. This is because years of groundwater monitoring or remediation system operations can be shaved off of the tail end of the project. Other times, a rapid clean up is required because of the terms of a lease, or if a property transaction is pending, or if there is an imminent threat to a receptor like a city supply well that is becoming impacted.

Natural attenuation is the most commonly used remediation technique - it is used at 100% of dry cleaner sites! However, natural attenuation is rarely used alone because it usually takes an unacceptably long time for source area soil contamination to completely degrade by itself. In big words, the "natural attenuation" process is described as a variety of physical, chemical, or biological processes that, under favorable conditions, act without human intervention to reduce the mass, toxicity, mobility, volume or concentration of contaminants in soil or groundwater. Some of these processes that are easiest to understand include:

- **Biodegradation** - A few specific bacteria break apart the high-energy bonds in the PCE molecule, and often get energy for cell processes by doing so;

- **Dispersion and dilution** - More or less, this is the mixing and spreading of a plume, resulting in a lower PCE concentration even if the contamination doesn't actually break down;

- **Sorption** - the PCE can adsorb into, or absorb onto, a soil particle, particularly if the soil has high organic content or its particles have a lot of jagged surfaces;

- **Volatilization** - PCE is a volatile compound and will evaporate readily when exposed to air, such as if the groundwater surfaces at a seep; and

- **Transformation** - Sometimes the PCE molecule will break down just by coming in contact with other compounds, particularly metals.

One can see that the mixing and spreading and volatilization of a plume in groundwater could happen at any site. It is an undesirable situation when the plume "spreads" toward a drinking water well, or "volatilizes" into the soil pore spaces and wafts into a basement. In certain cases, site conditions can be perfect for natural attenuation at a high rate. For example, high-iron soils like in northern Michigan

can serve as a catalyst and actually break down the PCE molecule as the groundwater flows through the soil. Another ideal setting which is more likely in Colorado includes when a perc plume flows through a site with gasoline contamination. The gasoline impacts remove all oxygen from the soil, making the natural conditions more conducive to natural biodegradation. In the sands and gravels of the soils near a river, the groundwater flow rate can be so high that the plume has already mixed and spread so much that it is no longer detectable. Another fortunate setting includes when a perc plume flows through a peat bog or soils from an old lake bottom, which have high organic content. The perc "sorbs" onto the organic matter, and does not migrate any further with the groundwater. Then, microbes could potentially degrade the contamination while it is trapped by the organic matter.

For most sites, natural attenuation works slowly and steadily, and is accepted as a reasonable component of an overall remediation strategy when any high-concentration source is addressed more quickly. By finding and eliminating the original source of contamination, the site's natural attenuation characteristics can plod along successfully, when not being constantly recharged by a fresh supply of PCE molecules from the source. Then, the gradual progress of natural attenuation seems more significant because the potential receptors like a drinking water well or indoor air are less likely to see PCE concentrations that are above typical clean up levels.

Now you can see how important it is to understand the site conditions! One must know where the high-concentration source is which will require the more expensive, focused treatment. Then, it helps to know what the natural attenuation characteristics of the site are so that the expensive methods can be used over as limited an area as possible. Let's get the biggest cleanup bang for the cleanup buck! A subsequent article will discuss the focused use of more expensive cleanup technologies, such as excavation, hydrogen peroxide, potassium permanganate, iron filings walls, and enhanced biological degradation, and under which site conditions they are most effective.

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