

Implementing a Cleaning and Maintenance Standard

by Daniel S. Wagner

Note: In June, the University of Michigan Ann Arbor Campus Plant Building and Grounds Services Department became the first organization to be certified to the new ISSA Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS).

For years, the University of Michigan's Plant Building and Grounds Services (PBGS) Department struggled with proving that, as a department, they not only live up to the university's well-known motto—The Leaders and Best—but embrace its philosophy and values. The management and 440 employees of PBGS believed their department was operating in an efficient and quality manner, until Area Manager Darryl Betts learned about the new Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS).

"We saw CIMS certification as one way our department could exemplify that philosophy and gain the respect our staff deserves," says Betts, a 20-year veteran with the department. "Too often in this industry, you know you're at the top of your field, but you have no way to independently prove that belief. Now we do, and that has tremendous value."

CIMS Certification

CIMS is a management framework designed to assist in-house cleaning departments and service contractors develop and maintain quality, customer-focused organizations. Administered by ISSA, the worldwide cleaning industry association, and developed through a consensus-based

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process that brought together the cleaning, facility management, and purchasing communities (including representatives from APPA), CIMS is based on universally-accepted principles that have proven to be the hallmarks of successful, customer-focused organizations. Compliance with the standard indicates that an organization is structured to deliver quality services that focus on meeting customer expectations.

The University of Michigan PBGS is one of 23 organizations participating in the CIMS certification program, which is a comprehensive assessment by an independent assessor. Once the organization demonstrates compliance with the standard, they are recommended for certification.

The Process of Complying

Other service departments within the University of Michigan won industry awards, including plant operations, which received the prestigious APPA award for excellence in 2006. Betts identified CIMS as the first certification program that looked at an entire department and required the department to meet a set of management expectations that range from training employees to interacting with customers. Thus, Betts encouraged PBGS to seek certification and lead the PBGS team through the process of documenting compliance with the core sections of CIMS: quality systems; service delivery; human resources; health, safety and environmental stewardship; and management commitment. This was to prepare the department for its assessment of management and operational follow-through.

Janet Allen, PBGS technical training coordinator, participated in the process. She spent two months gathering and documenting policies and other requirements of CIMS to demonstrate compliance. Allen immediately recognized that the task would not be an easy one, but came with great benefits and promised to be quite enlightening.

"You may start out feeling like there is so much to compile and that you do not know where to begin," says Allen. "But I found it was manageable if you are organized and take a systematic approach when working through the checklist of compliance items. We discovered that we had tremendous resources within our department and elsewhere in the university that had never been pulled together into a single document for easy access."

PBGS Business Manager Lukeland Gentles was also involved in the process and liked how CIMS promotes information sharing across an entire organization and provides ready access to management information.

“Oftentimes you have different individuals responsible for different aspects of an organization, and, they may not have a good understanding of one another’s areas and their impact on overall operations,” he says. “CIMS compelled us to go to everyone from OSHA representatives to human resources and gather knowledge.”

Gentles further stressed that such gathering of information helps deal with situations where someone may be absent or may have left the university by making sure that there is no information gap.

Allen agrees. “For instance, some of us were not as familiar with the university’s procurement processes, so it was a good learning experience to better understand that aspect of our operations,” she says.

With the CIMS compliance, PBGS now has what the team refers to as “management in a box”—a set of seven comprehensive binders that can be referenced by anyone in the organization. Further, PBGS plans to place all the management and operations material on a CD for easy access, updating, mobility, and sharing within the department, the university and amongst peers in the industry.

The Value of CIMS Certification

PBGS found the certification process useful in identifying areas where they were successful and where they could improve. This reinforced the need to standardize and simplify processes. The team’s efforts found that some things as simple as personnel disciplinary form letters differed from area to area, and the department is now working with the Human Resources department to make employee communications more consistent.

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The group also engaged in past discussions regarding the need to standardize and simplify equipment procurement, and their CIMS preparation efforts reaffirmed the need to move forward.

“The ISSA certification process was certainly an informative and positive experience,” says John Lawter, PBGS associate director. “It reinforced our beliefs in what we feel we are doing

right, as well as identified areas for improvement. It was a nice opening act to our next round of strategic planning.”

One possible area PBGS expects to focus on involves the use of workloading software. According to the team, going through the CIMS certification process helped them see the value of workloading tools being used by more decision makers in the organization. PBGS, therefore, expects to expand the use of such software to include, not only upper management, but supervisors as well.

PBGS also sees CIMS certification and the fact that it applies equally to in-house operations and contract cleaners as valuable in creating a level playing field.

“When you’re always under the microscope and the common perception is that someone else can do your job more efficiently, it is invaluable to be able to hold the same certification

Pick the Low Hanging Fruit

- Typical Cleaning Cost: Over \$2.00 per Square Foot
- Typical Setup Cost: \$0.005 - \$0.02 per Square Foot
- Typical Productivity Gains: 4% - 14%
- Five Year ROI: 1,900% - 27,000%
- Typical Conclusions: No Brainer to NO BRAINER

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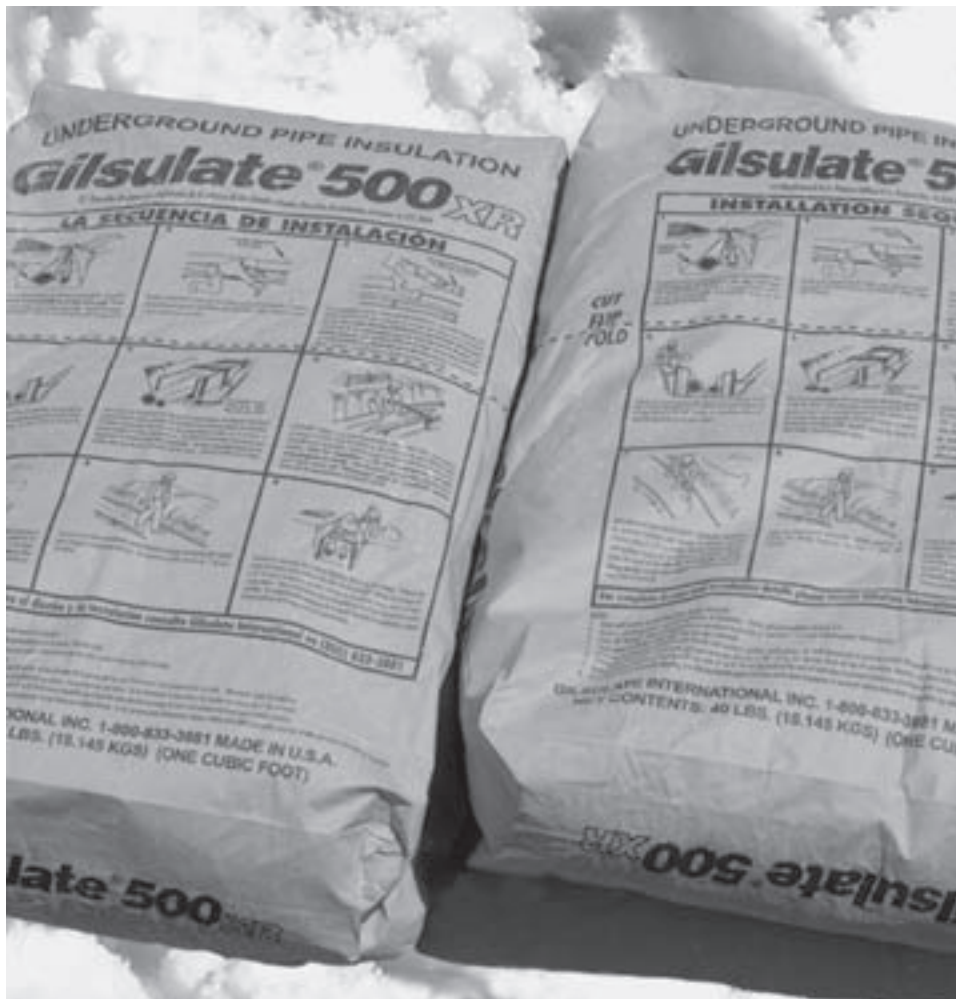
that is available to contract cleaners,” says Betts.

Gentles notes that the international credibility ISSA brings to the table can also have a significant impact when communicating with internal clients, upper management, and peer institutions. Achieving certification from the worldwide cleaning industry association lends terrific support come budget time, he adds.

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“If a global organization says your department is operating as efficiently as possible in these cornerstone areas of management and customer focus, then you’ll be taken a more seriously the next time someone considers cutting your budget,” Gentles advises.

The University of Michigan is understandably proud to be the first organization to achieve CIMS certification. Betts notes that CIMS certification may very well become commonplace as more organizations understand its benefits, but the university prefers to “be on the cutting edge rather than on the back of the bus.” By achieving CIMS certification, the University of Michigan Plant Building and Grounds Services Department has proven to be the Leaders and Best indeed. †



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