

CRI Seal of Approval: Your ticket to selecting better carpet cleaning equipment

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For many cleaning professionals, the Carpet and Rug Institute’s (CRI’s) Seal of Approval has become a go-to certification to look for when buying commercial vacuums and deep-cleaning extractors. And for good reason—CRI’s scientific testing criteria support the cleaning industry’s goal of making reliable, fact-based information available for evaluating cleaning equipment and products. As a result, cleaning professionals and facility managers can look to equipment with the CRI Seal of Approval to help improve cleaning results and efficiency, encourage healthy indoor environments, extend the life of carpets, and support environmentally sustainable cleaning practices.

While the benefits of quality carpet cleaning equipment are fairly obvious, what does it mean, exactly, if a machine or system has been awarded the Seal of Approval? First, it’s important to understand the different levels of certification. Three increasingly stringent levels of certification exist for vacuums (bronze, silver and gold), with a fourth (platinum) added for deep-cleaning extractors and systems. Then, taking a closer look at the specific testing requirements established for each of the equipment categories helps connect the dots between the certification criteria and the benefits the program is designed to support.



VACUUMS

The vacuums certification program incorporates requirements from CRI’s Green Label program related to indoor air quality (IAQ) to form the combined Seal of Approval/Green Label program. Performance of commercial vacuums is tested in three areas:

- 1. Soil removal** as the percentage removed per square yard. Soil in carpet is not only unsightly and unhealthy, it abrades and damages carpet fibers.
- 2. Dust containment** as measured by the micrograms of dust particulates exhausted per cubic meter of air, which helps protect health by promoting improved indoor air quality (IAQ).
- 3. Carpet appearance change** in texture and appearance retention. A quality vacuum should help extend—not shorten—the life of carpets.

TESTING CRITERIA FOR VACUUMS

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Soil removal	40 – 49%	50 – 54%	≥ 55%
Dust containment	≤ 100 µg/m ³ of dust particles	≤ 100 µg/m ³ of dust particles	≤ 35 µg/m ³ of dust particles
Carpet appearance change	No more than a one-step texture change based on one year of normal vacuum use		

Meeting the above criteria signifies a vacuum that can have a significant impact on improved air quality (IAQ), cleanliness and the life of carpets.





DEEP-CLEANING EXTRACTORS

Even in the absence of obvious stains or soil accumulation, periodic deep extraction cleaning is an important part of ongoing carpet maintenance. The Seal of Approval program for carpet extraction is divided into two categories: extractors and systems. CRI differentiates the two as follows: “The extractor is the machine, while the deep cleaning system is the combination of that machine and a particular cleaning solution, following a set procedure.”

With respect to extractors as machines only, performance testing criteria consist of:

- **Soil removal** as the percentage removed after water-only cleaning operation. The primary purpose of deep extraction cleaning is to remove soil missed by regular vacuuming.
- **Water removal** as the ounces of residual moisture remaining following a hot-water extraction cleaning. Dirty water that remains in a wet carpet can be a source of fungal growth.
- **Texture retention**, which is visually rated after multiple cleaning passes. Like vacuums, extractors should not adversely affect the carpet texture.

TESTING CRITERIA FOR DEEP-CLEANING EXTRACTORS

	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Platinum
Soil removal	55 – 69%	70 – 79%	80 – 89%	90 – 100%
Water removal	≤ 8 oz / yd ² remaining			
Texture retention	No more change in the deterioration of the carpet pile surface than Standard CRI Photographic Reference Scale.			

Periodic deep cleaning can help restore carpets to like-new condition, and the CRI Seal of Approval helps identify extractors that meet the highest performance standards for deep-cleaning effectiveness.



DEEP-CLEANING SYSTEMS

If a deep-cleaning system is being used—that is, a machine used in combination with a particular cleaning solution following a set procedure—testing criteria in addition to standards used to evaluate machines apply. These additional criteria include:

- **Rate of re-soiling** as measured by the AATCC Gray Scale. This ensures that the cleaning solution does not attract dirt to a cleaned area faster than the rest of the carpet.
- **pH** measurement of the carpet. Neutral pH levels signify that carpet fibers have not been adversely affected by cleaning.
- **Optical brighteners** in the cleaning solution, which are tested for using fluorescence. Optical brighteners are not allowed in products under the program, as they can leave some patches on carpets lighter than the rest.
- **Colorfastness**, as determined by comparing a control and a test sample that have been exposed to accelerated light. Cleaning products should not be so aggressive that they change the carpet color.

TESTING CRITERIA FOR DEEP-CLEANING EXTRACTION SYSTEMS

	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Platinum
Soil removal	55 – 69%	70 – 79%	80 – 89%	90 – 100%
Re-soiling	Equal to or better than water-only extraction			
Residual moisture*	≤ 8 oz / yd ² remaining			
Surface appearance	No more than one step appearance change in the deterioration of the carpet pile surface			
Colorfastness	No color change			
pH	pH between 4 and 10			
Optical brighteners	No optical brighteners			

*Allow up to 20 oz / yd² when using pre-spray

Compared to machine-only certification, the Seal of Approval program for deep-cleaning systems offers added context for when machines are intended for use with specific cleaning solutions and processes.



**CRI Seal of Approval
Advance Products**

- Adgility™ 6XP
- Adgility™ 10XP
- ReliaVac® 12, 12DC, 12HP, 16HP
- VU500™ Series – (Certified Silver)
- Spectrum™ 12H
- Spectrum™ 12P, 15P
- Spectrum™ 15D, 18D
- CarpeTrier™ 28
- AquaClean® 12ST
- EX300™ ST
- EX300™ XP
- EX400™ XLP
- AquaPlus™ AXP™
- Adphibian™
- ES4000™ Total Carpet Care System
- ET600-100H, 400H

SMARTER CRITERIA FOR SMARTER EQUIPMENT STANDARDS.

Stringent standards and controlled scientific testing protocols make the CRI Seal of Approval programs some of the most highly regarded equipment-certification programs in the commercial cleaning industry. Newer testing methods like the use of x-ray fluorescence technology (XRF) to test soil removal and the program's adherence to respected ASTM testing protocols reinforce the legitimacy of the Seal of Approval. When combined with the benefits that cleaning equipment certified with the CRI Seal of Approval provide, cleaning professionals and facility managers can use the program as a reliable benchmark for selecting high-performance commercial vacuums and carpet extractors.



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