Clean Sweep

From research to regulation, the American Cleaning Institute strives to enhance consumer understanding and promote sound science for a safer, cleaner world.

When it comes to cleaning, Melissa Hockstad knows her stuff. An engineer with extensive experience in the chemical industry, she spent years in product development and in roles working for several trade associations representing chemical and plastics manufacturers. In 2017, she became president and CEO of the American Cleaning Institute (ACI), combining her knowledge of chemicals and leadership experience.

“We are constantly evolving. No two days are the same,” Hockstad says of ACI’s work. “The last few years have demonstrated on a global level that we’re much more than products on a shelf,” says Hockstad. “We are an industry that puts people first, and we want to make sure the users of our products have the information they need.”

Advocating for Innovation

With household names among its member companies, including Procter & Gamble, The Clorox Company, and SC Johnson, ACI is a liaison between consumers, industry, and government. It’s a relationship the organization continues to strengthen with a sustained push for transparency and regulation.

“Currently, our No. 1 legislative priority is a federal standard governing cleaning product ingredient communication so consumers know the ingredients in our products and their function,” Hockstad says. “For us, it’s all about consumer understanding, and a federal standard would help to alleviate confusion, ensuring all 50 states are not doing 50 different things.”

Working with the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, as well as nongovernmental agencies, has furthered ACI’s agenda to ensure effective, sustainable, safe products while also allowing member companies to innovate.

“Especially during COVID, we’ve demonstrated on a global level that we’re much more than products on a shelf,” says Hockstad. “We are an industry that puts people first, and we want to make sure the users of our products have the information they need.”

Changing the World

For Hockstad, the future of both the cleaning products industry and ACI is bright, with a dual focus on consumer and industry needs. But revolutionizing everyday cleaning tasks through enhanced packaging, products, and communication, she notes, will require an eye toward sustainability.

“With our 1.5°C Challenge, we’re encouraging our members to make a commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions across the cleaning products industry by 2050,” she notes. “We are also striving for all cleaning product packaging to be circular by 2040.”

As consumers’ needs evolve, so too will the industry, and with it, ACI. “Knowing our products keep people safe, and seeing how one industry can have such a tremendous impact on the collective, makes me so proud,” Hockstad concludes.

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