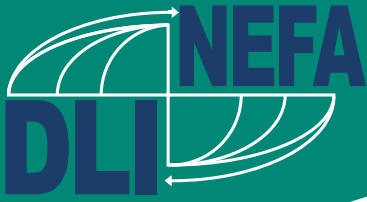


# Headlines & More



North East Fabricare Association  
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## NEFA Pressing Class a Great Success



NEFA STARTED THE YEAR OFF RIGHT WITH A GREAT DRYCLEANING FINISHING PROGRAM HELD IN QUINCY, MA.

“We are looking to make Education a cornerstone of our menu of membership benefits in 2019”, stated Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Director, “and this got us started on a very positive note. This is just the beginning of our program and we are looking to

having more classes, and more educational opportunities throughout our area. Next up are Professional Stain Removal 101 and then an Advanced Stain Removal program. Plans are underway to bring the pressing class to upstate New York in the near future. This is very exciting for us.”

### PROFESSIONAL DRYCLEANING FINISHING

This program was limited to only 12 attendees as the hands -on program was designed for maximum personal instruction. The sold-out program featured attendees from Massachusetts and Connecticut, and all of who raved about the program.

“This was terrific, just what we needed,” observed attendee Art Wald. “We certainly got a lot out of it, and really were impressed with the instructor and the program. We would definitely send more people to the next one, and would even like to host the program.”

The class was led by Training Expert David Grippi, who also had some assistance from long-time training expert Ken Grippi. The class focussed on speed, production -- and maintaining quality.

“This was a great class”, concluded Blake, “and David did an excellent job sharing his expertise and experience with the group. He was able to stress the importance of not sacrificing quality for production, while demonstrating ways to be more effective. It is amazing how just a few tips can increase overall efficiency.”

Dependable Cleaners was a perfect place to hold the program as there was ample space around the presses, and afforded attendees the ability to use the equipment and demonstrate the skills being taught. Keep watch for the next programs coming soon by visiting NEFA’s website: [www.nefabricare.com](http://www.nefabricare.com).

JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2019

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800-442-6848  
www.nefabricare.com  
peter@nefabricare.com

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

### Start The Year Off Right

AS THE NEW YEAR HEADS INTO FULL SWING, WE NEED TO LOOK AT WHAT WE WANT TO ACCOMPLISH THIS YEAR.

I like to view each new year as an opportunity to evaluate my business, see where we can improve, and determine where we can make some changes to keep improving.

Lets face it, we can always improve. We can do things to be more efficient, to produce higher quality, and to increase sales. I know we all struggle at times, but we need to look at these challenges with an open mind, and learn how we can overcome.

Last year I was able to install Solar power for my plant. That was a HUGE boon for my business. It saved me a lot of money, with very little cost and exposure. I learned of the program by attending and taking advantage of educational opportunities. The company was featured at Fall Fest last year, and I hope people are investigating the possible benefits for their plants. If you want to learn more, call me.

I am also concerned that numbers are flattening out for cleaners in terms of piece counts. NEFA and DLI have great programs to help members answer those challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities out there. Contact NEFA if you need assistance. NEFA is planning great classes in 2019, and we should all take advantage of the opportunity. Start 2019 off right, and look inward at your business. Identify areas you need help with, and let us know. NEFA is ready to help!



Larry Fish, NEFA President at NEFA's Fall Fest Management Conference

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## Worcester Drycleaner Fined \$84,000 by MA DEP



NEFA HAS BEEN WARNING MASSACHUSETTS CLEANERS TO BE VIGILANT IN THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE. MAKING SURE YOU ARE IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE TURA AND ERP PROGRAMS ARE VITAL TO KEEPING YOUR BUSINESS VIABLE.

Recently, a Main Street dry cleaning business in Worcester was ordered to pay almost \$84,000 in penalties for violating environmental regulations.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection assessed a \$62,000 penalty to Thuy Thi Tran, the owner and operator of White & Brite Cleaners. Her son, Tam Vuong, was also fined nearly \$22,000.

According to the DEP, a release of perchloroethylene (PCE) at the business was detected in 2007 and testing in 2014 discovered the vapors infiltrated a multi-family building on the property. The state ordered the business to take action to address the exposure, but the family business did not, the DEP said.

Other inspections continued to identify air quality and hazardous waste violations, and the business failed to submit required reports three times between 2016 and 2018.

The business is being ordered to address the air hazards in the residential building, resume the required assessment and cleanup activities and comply with all relevant regulations.

“This is a serious issue,” offered Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Vice President, “and it should serve as a warning for all drycleaners to check their compliance history and make sure they have done their annual filings. It is not uncommon for Environmental Agencies to focus on an industry in the wake of enforcement actions like this. I implore members to check their compliance and if there are concerns -- call me at the NEFA Office and I can help get you on the right track.”

In Massachusetts, all drycleaners who use PERC have to complete the ERP self-certification program every year. Reports are due by September 15. Additionally, all cleaners who use over 75 gallons of perc, and have 10 or more full-time equivalent employees must complete the Toxic Use Reduction Plan & Report.

Any member who needs assistance is invited to contact NEFA at 603-635-0322 or via email: [peter@nefabricare.com](mailto:peter@nefabricare.com).



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# NEFA Attends Sanitone Licensee Conference



NEFA WAS RE-  
CENTLY INVITED  
TO ATTEND THE  
74TH ANNUAL  
SANITONE LI-  
CENSEE CON-  
FERENCE HELD  
IN BOSTON, MA IN  
JANUARY.

"This was really a  
great conference", of-

fered Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Vice President, "and I was very appreciate of the invitation. It was a great chance to meet and socialize with our members, as well as make some great connections with some cleaners from different parts of the country."

The attendance is made up of Sanitone/Fabritec users from across the country. This year they drew cleaners from Florida, Virginia, and Michigan in addition to the more local participants.

The program started with an update from John Jordan on what lies ahead for Sanitone and some of the new products they are developing and advancements in chemistry. He also shared with attendees

some of their marketing assistance programs they provide to their customers.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

"I was really impressed with the structure of the program," continued Blake, "and with the quality of the session speakers. It is a unique opportunity to see a program developed and shaped by the attendees. It provided some great insight into what our members would like to hear about.

The highlight of the program was a presentation on building a positive Corporate Culture, and some of the common mistakes people make when trying to combat employee dissatisfaction.

"This was a great session," continued Blake, "and I really learned a lot. In this day and age, we continue to hear how important employee retention is, and building a positive culture is one of the most important. It was eye opening to learn how some of the 'expert advice' doesn't work. I hope we can bring this speaker to more of our membership in the Fall!"

The program also featured discussions of Environmental Remediation and Stress Management. The program wrapped up with a drycleaner sharing some of the unique ways he has adapted his business. His talk was an inspirational discussion on how we can adapt to the changes in the industry.



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## Minimum Wage Increases Take Effect

THIS TIME OF YEAR MANY OF YOU RECEIVE NOTIFICATIONS FROM LABOR POSTER VENDORS REGARDING CHANGES IN POSTING REQUIREMENTS DUE TO MINIMUM WAGE INCREASES AND OTHER REGULATION CHANGES.

In 2019, we have various state and local municipalities implementing hourly minimum wage increases effective January 1st and throughout the year. Some of these hourly rates are double the federal minimum wage rate.

Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, the current federal minimum hourly wage is \$7.25. If there is a state or local municipal regulation offering a higher minimum wage, the employer is required to pay the higher rate.

As of January 1, 2019, the hourly minimum wage for federal contract workers will increase to the rate of \$10.60 per hour. Tipped employees performing work on or in connection with covered contracts must be paid a cash wage at least \$7.40 per hour.

In conjunction with the rate increases there are requirements to display an updated minimum wage poster. In some cases the state or municipality will update the poster for the new year, even if there is no rate increase.

Posters are important not only because they are required by employment regulations, but also because they provide evidence and documentation of your good faith intent to comply with the government's regulations.

### OTHER POSTING REQUIREMENT UPDATES

Many states have revised their discrimination posters to include expanded coverage of the state regulation to apply to additional protected categories.

Several state and local municipalities have implemented paid sick leave, family leave and school/parental leave regulations. Employers should ensure this is reflected in current written policies and display corresponding notices as required.

### MORE INFORMATION

A printable PDF list of the current state and local minimum wage increases is available through the NEFA office upon request.

Additionally, If you would like assistance in receiving an update of an applicable minimum wage poster, please email us at [peter@nefabricare.com](mailto:peter@nefabricare.com). If you have a question regarding the many important areas of HR compliance, please contact Seay Management Consultants. Initial inquiries are a member benefit of NEFA/DLI.

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# Are All Cleaners Essentially the Same? Does Price Alone Indicate Quality?

Written by Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Vice President



THERE HAS BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF DISCUSSION AND DEBATE OVER THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY AND THE PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION OF OUR PROFESSION LATELY.

At the heart of the discussion were recent reports that aired on television news stations about recent "investigative reporting" efforts on different cleaners in the Houston, TX area. There have been numer-

ous similar reports throughout the country that seem to show there is little difference between cleaners, and yet a great deal of pricing discrepancies. The consumer is left with an impression that there is no difference in levels of services. The reports were based largely on surveys of customers. While the methodology is distinctly flawed, as an industry, we can take some lessons from the reports.

Drycleaners, like all small businesses, are faced with the basic pricing question: What level of service and quality will I deliver, and how much will that level of service cost.

Think about Starbucks who charges up to \$6.00 for a latte, and contrast that with the local corner donut store who charges \$2.00. Is there a difference? If you are a coffee drinker, and a frequent customer of Starbucks-- you bet there is. But if you don't go out for coffee much, or are used to the corner donut store, I bet you would not see the value in going to Starbucks.

There is a direct correlation to our industry. What market share are you trying to attract? Who are your primary customers? They probably understand the differences. But to the one and done customers, or the very infrequent drycleaning customer they probably fail to understand the difference between concepts. Packaging, pressing, inspection, level of finishing, are all factors that can affect the price of the garment. Some cleaners will prioritize speed over quality. In order to keep the costs down to a one-price structure, or low-cost/high volume plant, you need to make decisions on what level of service you can produce, and your customers expect.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Reports like this one can be very damaging to the industry. When they base conclusions on surveys and feedback, you will not get the typical consumer of a high end drycleaners. You will be much more likely to get feedback from consumers who tend to chase price and don't use a specific drycleaner.

What we as an industry need to do is to continue to educate our consumers. We need to keep promoting the industry and the quality we deliver. There should be a difference between drycleaners and the products we deliver. If you are a higher priced drycleaner,

you need to be able to demonstrate the difference. You need to educate your customers, and potential future customers, what "Quality Drycleaners" are, and what they deliver.

We need to look at the dramatic change that has taken place over the past 10 to 15 years. Many consumers really don't know the difference in quality. In many cases they have not been educated, nor have they experienced true high-quality cleaning and service. They may accept a lesser product because that is what they have come to expect from their limited experience. It is up to the industry to modify and adapt -- and engage new consumers. We also need to help these consumers see the value we bring.

There are a number of discount cleaners that do a great job, and there is room in the industry for all pricing strategies. We as an industry can embrace them all, but we can also make sure the public and consumer knows what quality drycleaning is and what to look for. NEFA is looking to develop more tools and information for our members to use to help educate the public and to understand the benefits of professional drycleaning. Please contact Peter Blake at [peter@nefabricare.com](mailto:peter@nefabricare.com) and let us know your thoughts!

A yellow background advertisement for Cleaner's Supply. At the top is the logo "cleaner's SUPPLY" with a crown over the 'i'. Below the logo are four promotional sections: 1. "GREAT PRICES." with a piggy bank icon and the text "Low prices on every product... every day." 2. "AMAZING PRODUCTS." with a starburst icon and the text "Huge selection and more added each week!". 3. "EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE." with a person icon and the text "We're always here to offer expert advice!". 4. "FAST DELIVERY." with a truck icon and the text "Place your order by 5:00PM (your time) and we'll ship it SAME DAY!". At the bottom, it says "20,000 PRODUCTS IN STOCK." and provides contact information: "Product Order Line: 1-800-568-7768 Korean Speaking 1-800-368-7768 www.cleansupply.com ©2016 Cleaner's Supply, Inc."

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# How Clean is Clean Enough? Pt. 1

Written By Jeff Carnahan, LPG President, EnviroForensics



MANY YEARS AGO, WHEN I WAS A YOUNGER MAN JUST WAITING FOR LIFE TO TEACH ME THE LESSONS I'D NEED, I HAD A BROWN, FOUR-DOOR 1976 FORD MAVERICK.

This thing wasn't pretty, and it certainly wasn't cool, but it got me to school and to work,

and occasionally it would deliver a brave girl and I to the movies on a Saturday night. I spent the time needed to change the oil and replace the filters, but for the most part I took for granted how important it was to me. One day on my way to somewhere, I heard an awful clunk and it just died. The first thought through my head was, "Oh no! How much is this going to cost me?" After a \$50 tow to the shop and following several hours of waiting, the mechanic asked me this question, "Well son, do you want it to run, or do you want it fixed?"

I'm sure you can figure out the rest of the story. Since I was counting pennies at the time, I chose to have the minimum amount of work done to get my car running and back on the road immediately for the cheapest amount possible, rather than investing the time and money into getting it fixed correctly. I won't bore you with the details but be assured that when that old Maverick died for good soon after, I was left high and dry with no transportation and wishing I'd have made a different decision a few months prior. That was an important lesson for me, and one that I keep with me.

**Tip: Fix things right, and the investment will more than pay for itself.**

I'd love to say that it only took that one incident for me to learn this lesson. It's funny how life keeps giving you opportunities to learn.

Most of us have an example of how we've experienced this situation in the past, but when these types of decisions must be made in business it's even trickier. In your experience, was it during a dry cleaning machine repair job or when fixing a leaky roof, or even as you tried to put yet another quick fix on that temperamental boiler? Environmental cleanups probably don't come to mind for most folks, but the exact same thing applies for them. There are three components to dealing with an environmental contamination problem:

1. Immediately halting any human exposure to chemicals that may be occurring;
2. Cleaning up the contamination on-site and off-site; and
3. Getting a Closure, or No Further Action, Letter from the state regulatory agency.

Once the necessary work has been conducted to stop human exposure, the question then becomes, "Now, do you want it clean, or do you just want a regulatory closure?" This may be putting the cart before the horse a little bit, but let's leave the discussion about why immediately halting human exposure is top priority and non-negotiable for a later edition, and let's focus on the interplay between cleaning up and getting regulatory closure.

## WHAT DOES "CLEAN" MEAN IN AN ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANUP?

When performing an environmental cleanup, there is very little basis to involve the word clean. True clean never really occurs. There are only various levels of not quite clean, and at some point, it's clean enough. In the world of environmental contamination there are numerous people setting the standard for when a property can be called clean enough. Most regulators worry mainly about two things beyond the current human exposure component; (1) ensuring that the contamination problem is getting better rather than worse and (2) ensuring that there is no threat of future human or ecological exposure. Believe it or not, your property doesn't have to be very clean at all for these boxes to be checked. Other parties who will be deciding if your property is clean enough are future purchasers and their financial lenders. They will not only be looking at whether you have a regulatory closure, but they will also be using the general environmental health of the property to help determine its practical value. This is a component that often gets overlooked when deciding how clean is clean enough. If the money isn't spent during the first crack at environmental remedy, it could cost a significant amount of money later in the form of a lower property value when its time to sell, or a requirement for additional environmental work to be performed to even attract qualified purchasers.

**Tip: The trick is to strike just the right balance between spending money on active environmental cleanup, and the future costs that could arise. This will be a little different for most everyone facing these decisions, but the fundamental thought process remains the same.**

In part 2 in the next issue, we will focus on "What Regulatory Closure Means for Drycleaners".

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Carnahan is a Licensed Professional Geologist (LPG) with over 20 years of environmental consulting and remediation experience and is currently serving EnviroForensics® and our clients as President. Jeff has contributed to the success and growth of EnviroForensics through strategic market analysis and corporate risk management, as well as encouraging and upholding the superior level of technical expertise found at EnviroForensics. Jeff focuses on controlling risk and costs to all of our clients.

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