



by Steve Castle

Central vacuums improve indoor air quality by removing vacuumed dirt, dust and allergens.

When Sucking is Good

Okay, so central vacuuming isn't the sexiest topic in the world. Central vacs don't have big color touchscreens, don't allow to you access iTunes, and are definitely not supposed to emit thunderous explosions in ear-piercing surround sound.

Then again, who doesn't like the idea of a central vacuum? It's convenient and doesn't require lugging a heavy upright or canister bound to Hoover up something and break—or spew a toxic cloud all over your family room because ... um ... you neglected to change its itsy-bitsy bag.

And what's central vac doing in the "green" feature, anyway? "They are a perfect fit for building green," says Greg Calderone, vice president of H-P Products, which makes Dirt Devil central vacuum systems. "Central vacuums improve indoor air quality by removing vacuumed dirt, dust and allergens from the living area."

Isn't that what all vacuums do, though? Actually, upright and canister vacuums recycle much of that dirt right back into the air, making for an unhealthy household. Central vacuum systems, with their collection receptacles located in basements, garages or other spaces away from the main living areas, help provide cleaner indoor air quality. And healthy indoor air is a very large part of being green.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that indoor air quality can be five to 100 times more polluted than outdoor air quality, making millions of people sick in their own homes. For the estimated 42.6 million Americans who suffer from hay fever, asthma or both, removing indoor allergens reduces the risk of serious health complications.

A study by Electrolux Central Vacuum Systems, which manufactures the Beam brand of central vacs and air filtration systems, found that hay fever sufferers reported significant improvements in symptoms when central vacu-

ums were used.

There are other green benefits to central vacuum systems as well. "A central vacuum system is going to last 15 years or longer, while the lifespan of a typical upright vacuum is two to three years, and that saves a lot on vacuums going into landfills," says Larry Hartley of Electrolux.

In January, Beam went a step further by unveiling its Green by Electrolux central vacuum, made with recycled and recyclable materials.

Central vacuum systems can be retrofitted into nearly any home, with costs ranging from under \$1,000 to \$2,000 and more. You'll need about one inlet valve per about 600 to 700 square feet of floor space—with a 30-foot-hose.

Yep, central vacuums may not be the sexiest appliance you can buy for your home, but they can sure be convenient, healthy—and green.

Steve Castle also writes our Green Tech Blog at electronichouse.com/green.



Who says central vacuum systems can't be high-tech? Dirt Devil's Hide-A-Hose (left) can retract a hose as long as 50 feet back into the wall, depending on your system. Above: MD Manufacturing says its high-performance Stealth vacuum brush is the quietest on the market, and that the Italian-engineered unit will "never break."

