

*'It doesn't evaporate like (perchloroethylene), the solvent regularly used in dry cleaning. The green cycle is not toxic, and it doesn't harm the ozone.'*

DAVID FRISBEY, MONTEREY BAY UNIFIED AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel photos

Kwang Kim brought his traditional dry cleaning and laundry shop into the 21st century with the county's only environmentally-friendly dry cleaning machine at Mission Dry Cleaners in Santa Cruz.

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# CLEAN & GREEN



# Mission Dry Cleaners gives up carcinogens, follows an environmentally-friendly path

By **CAROLYN LEAL**

SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

SANTA CRUZ — Kwang Kim, owner of Mission Dry Cleaners, sniffed the sleeve of a jacket hanging on rack with other newly dry cleaned clothes.

"No odor," he said, a big smile spreading across his face.

Kim remembered the odor that used to envelop his plant when he used perchloroethylene, a chemical monitored closely by environmental agencies.

"At the time my health was not so good. I had to smell the vapors and sometimes I get a headache," he said, rubbing his forehead.

Kim is proud that his dry cleaning no longer has a chemical smell and that he is no longer releasing toxics into the air and the water.

"I am happy," he said, "even though the new machine was very expensive."

Kim is the first dry cleaner in Santa Cruz Coun-

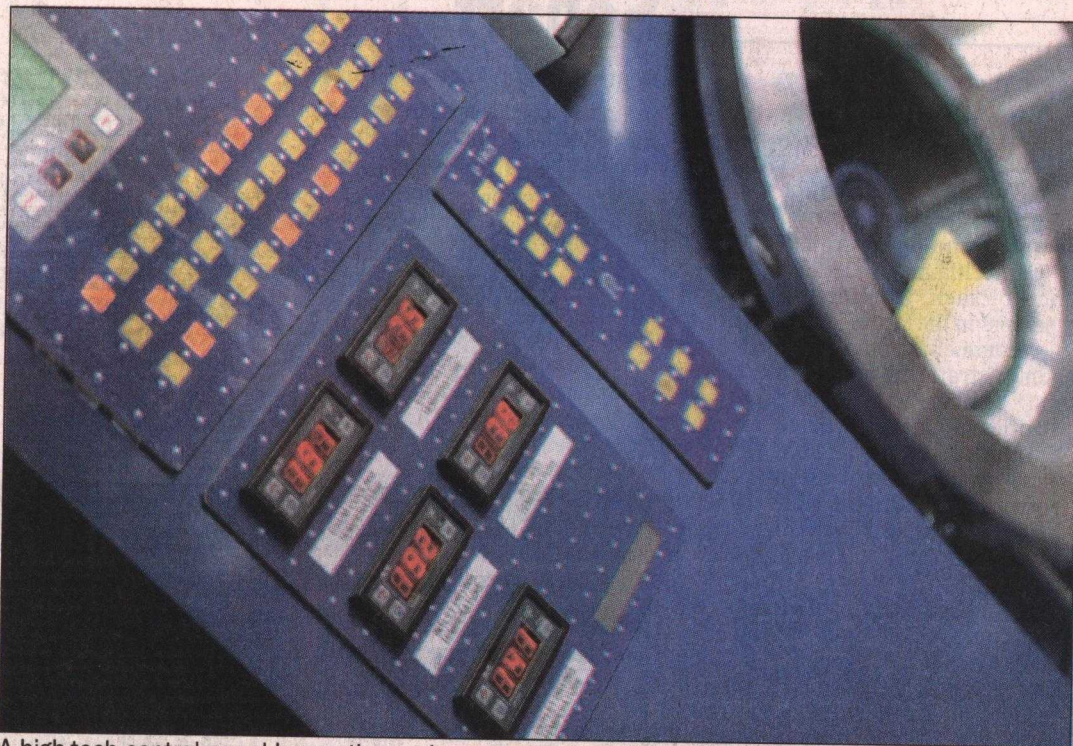
ty to convert from the solvent perchloroethylene to an environmentally-friendly silicone-based solvent and the GreenEarth method of cleaning. Perchloroethylene, or perc, is considered a carcinogen and its use is tightly controlled, although it is still used by most dry cleaners.

The shiny new machine at the rear of Kim's Mission Street dry cleaning establishment cost \$50,000, some \$15,000 more than a conventional machine using perc, but Kim is hoping that once news is out that he is an environmentally-friendly cleaner, customers will beat a path to his door.

The GreenEarth system was installed in October and already people are learning about it from their neighbors, Kim said.

One of his first customers was the air quality inspector who used to visit the dry cleaner to test for escaping perc vapors.

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A high-tech control panel keeps the environmentally-friendly GreenEarth dry cleaning machine functioning properly at Mission Dry Cleaners. Using a silicone-based solvent, the new GreenEarth system costs more than a conventional machine using perchloroethylene, but Kim feels that customers will flock to his store given the choice of having their dry cleaning help preserve the environment.





Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Kwang Kim prepares to take a load of laundry out of the GreenEarth dry cleaning machine.

## Green Clean

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"He took off his jacket and said, 'I want you to clean it and charge me for it.'"

"He was very pleased with the result," Kim said.

The revolutionary cleaning method is a joint venture between GreenEarth Cleaning, GE Silicone and Proctor and Gamble. According to GreenEarth Cleaning Chairman Jim Barry, the company has subjected itself to the scrutiny of regulators for the past two years to prove that GreenEarth has none of the environmental problems of perc.

Kim, for example, no longer has inspectors knocking at his door to run tests on air and water.

"No need to get a permit from air pollution. No need to test the waste water," he said.

David Frisbey, air quality inspector with the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, said the green cycle uses a solvent that is not

a regulated substance.

"It doesn't evaporate like perc, the solvent regularly used in dry cleaning," he said. "The green cycle is not toxic, and it doesn't harm the ozone."

"Because perc is a toxic air contaminant, there is a carcinogenic risk to people living and working nearby, so it is required that dry cleaners carefully maintain their equipment," he said.

**'It is nontoxic to the air, to the environment. I thought that would go over big in Santa Cruz.'**

JIM KELLY, MISSION  
DRY CLEANERS' LANDLORD

Frisbey said he doesn't do a lot of dry cleaning, but if he had an item to clean, he would use the green cycle as a personal choice.

"It doesn't remove spots quite as well as perc, but it's a lot better for the environment," he said.

Kim, originally from Korea, purchased Mission Dry Cleaners last year with his wife, Sung, who does alterations. He had worked in the dry cleaning business in Korea.

When it came time to replace an old machine using perc, his landlord Jim Kelly suggested that Kim look into

## Mission Dry Cleaners

**WHAT:** County's first environmentally friendly dry cleaner.

**WHERE:** 1224 Mission St., Santa Cruz.

**OWNER:** Kwang Kim.

**INFORMATION:** 426-4226.

GreenEarth.

"It is nontoxic to the air, to the environment," Kelly said. "I thought that would go over big in Santa Cruz."

The green solvent costs about three times more, \$5 a gallon compared to \$2 a gallon for perc, Kim said. And it takes slightly longer to run a cleaning cycle, but his prices have remained the same.

"Man's jacket cost \$6.50, same price," he said.

Kim said green cleaning works well on delicate fabrics like silk and rayon.

"It does not hurt the clothes. It looks nice," he said.

"Customers are very happy. Most important thing is this is environmentally good for health, for me and my workers and customers."

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