

Student Notes

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Overview

This course specifies the outcomes required to undertake Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) induction training within the cleaning industry.

It requires the ability to demonstrate personal awareness of WHS legislative requirements, and the basic principles of risk management and prevention of injury and illness in the cleaning and building services industry.

All workers must take responsibility for their own health and safety and ensure their actions at work do not adversely affect the healthy and safety of other workers, contractors, customers or building occupants.

Course Outline

This course is broken into five (5) sections.

Section 1 - Legislation.

Section 2 – Identifying Risks and Hazards – Part 1

Section 3 - Identifying Risks and Hazards – Part 2

Section 4 – Managing Risks and Hazards

Section 5 - WHS Communication, Information and Documents

Section 1- Legislation

When you finish this section you will have an understanding of the following concepts and ideas:

- Key Terms and acronyms
- WHS Law;
- Duty of care for yourself and others;
- Working safely in the cleaning industry;
- Keeping your work room clean; and
- Storing your equipment safe.

Key Terms and Meanings

Used throughout this resource are a number of key terms (words) and acronyms (a word formed from the first letters of each word in a phrase). Their meanings are guided by WHS legislation.

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Term	Meaning
HSC	Health and Safety Committee
HSR	Health and Safety Representative
SDS	Safety Data Sheets
PCBU	Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (in other words, your employer or person responsible for the company)
WHS	Workplace Health and Safety
Worker	Employees, volunteers, contractors, sub- contractors, apprentices, work experience students and outworkers
Workplace	Any place where a worker goes (or may go to) while at work

Introduction

All Workers must take responsibility for their own health and safety at work, and to ensure they do not do anything that adversely affects the health and safety of other workers.

Workers should participate in three types of induction training to enable them to work safely in a workplace:

General WHS induction training	Gives people who are new (or returning) to the Cleaning and Building Services Industry a basic knowledge of Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) legislative requirements, risk management, WHS communication and incident response procedures.	Involves a formal online training program. Training records should be kept by worker and employer.
Site-specific WHS induction training	Aims to give people knowledge of WHS issues and safe work practices which are specific to a particular workplace or site.	This is not a formal training program; however training records should be kept.
Work activity WHS training	Aims to give people knowledge of WHS issues and safe work practices necessary for them to work in their particular occupation, and to safely carry out certain types of work.	This is not a formal training program; however training records should be kept.

WHS LAW

What is legislation?

Legislation is law passed by Parliament. It governs many areas, including health and safety at work.

Why do I need to know about WHS legislation?

You need to know the WHS legislation that covers your job and workplace. This means the WHS Acts, regulations, codes and standards which are relevant to you. Every worker must, by law, comply with these.

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You will also need to understand how these affect your work, and your workplace. You will then know your legal duties relating to health and safety at work (and that of others around you).

Act	Is a law passed by Parliament. Acts state the laws that apply to every workplace.	Example: Model Work Health and Safety Act 2011 Occupational Health and Safety and Welfare Act (1986)
Regulations	State the procedures, responsibilities and obligations to be followed to comply with the Act.	Example: Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011
Codes of Practice	Give practical guidance on how to comply with regulations and Acts	Example: Model Code of Practice: Hazardous Manual Task
Australian Standards	Set out specifications and procedures to ensure that products, services and systems are safe, reliable and perform as intended.	Example: AS 3661 Slip Resistance of Pedestrian Surfaces

What are WHS Acts, Regulations, Codes of Practice and Australian Standards?

Specific WHS Acts, Regulations, Codes of Practice and Australian Standards govern health and safety in your workplace. Some are national, and some are only relevant to individual states and territories.

You should find out which Acts, Regulations, Codes and Standards apply to your work. The PCBU (employer) or Health and Safety Representative (if available) may be able to help. Make sure you understand what you have to do to comply with them.

The differences between Acts, Regulations, Codes of Practice and Australian Standards are shown below.

DUTY OF CARE

What is duty of care?

Duty of care means a person has to do everything possible, within reason (i.e. acting responsibly at all times), to protect themselves and others from harm.

Why recognise duty of care?

A cleaning work place can be dangerous. Some of the potential hazards found in cleaning workplaces include machinery, chemicals, working at heights or on ladders, storing and using gas and petrol, poor lighting, movement of

people and vehicles, cleaning equipment and other potential hazards. You have a “duty of care” to yourself and others to work safely at all times and report hazards (potentially dangerous incidents, activities broken equipment etc.).

An example of duty of care would be cleaning up after spilling some chemicals and or notifying your supervisor of the spill so they can take action. Another example might be not packing containers too heavy if they have to be manually lifted. Other examples would include understanding how to correctly use your cleaning equipment and training new staff on the correct operation of cleaning equipment and safe work practices.

Duty of Care is the legal responsibility of everyone including:

- Persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU's)
- Supervisors
- Workers (other cleaning staff)
- General public and building occupants
- Manufacturers and suppliers
- Sub-contractors
- Inspectors

DUTY OF CARE RESPONSIBILITIES

What are workers' duty of care responsibilities?

Workers must:

- Take reasonable care for their own health and safety while at work. For example, understand and follow safe work procedures for using chemicals and cleaning equipment.
- Take reasonable care that their acts (things they do) or omissions (things they do not do) do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons.
- Comply as far as they reasonably can with any reasonable instruction given by the PCBU (employer) to ensure compliance with regulations.
- Cooperate with any reasonable policy or procedure of their organisation relating to work health or safety that has been notified to them.
- This means, keeping your work area safe and tidy, and telling other workers about hazards that you have noticed (such as equipment which needs repair).

What are the duty of care responsibilities of Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBUs - employers)?

To ensure that as far as is reasonably possible, workers are safe from injury and risk to health while at work. The PCBU (employer) should provide a safe working environment, facilities, systems and equipment. An example would be providing WHS information and training.

SAFE WORKING PROCEDURES

You need to work safely to protect yourself and others. Here are examples of safe work practices on a work site:

- Not taking any unnecessary risks – for example always following safe work procedures.
- Always looking out for potential hazards - for example broken equipment.
- Always using personal protective equipment – for example always follow manufacturers instruction of chemicals labels and Safety Data Sheets
- Using cleaning tools and equipment that are in safe working order in the way the manufacturer has instructed
- Entering and leaving the workplace using proper routes

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- Never being under the influence of drugs or alcohol at work, or bringing them to the workplace.
- If you must smoke, doing so only in designated areas keeping your work area clean and tidy
- Helping to prevent bullying and harassment.

The PCBU (employer) should provide you with information about safe systems of work. This means information about the workplace itself, (entry and exit points, cleaner's room, safe work methods, location of hazards and first aid equipment, emergency exits, etc).

You will also need to know about:

- Procedures for handling, storing and disposing of chemicals and waste (especially if it is hazardous)
- Procedures for emergency evacuations and any role you are required to perform during an emergency evacuation.
- Other safety systems, methods and procedures which will help you to work safely, including, manual handling, correct use of cleaning equipment, rotation of cleaning tasks etc.

KEEPING THE STORAGE AREA SAFE

One of your most important tasks is keeping a clean, tidy and secure cleaning room. Your job starts and finishes with the cleaners room so keep it clean: Keep it tidy! Keep it secure.

Your Storage Area Might Include:

- An equipment storage bay. This is where you put your polishing machines, vacuum cleaners, trolley and other large pieces of equipment.
- A slop sink. This is where you put the used water from buckets and other wet cleaning equipment.
- A chemical cupboard. This is where you keep all the chemicals you use. Do not store chemicals on the floor.
- A clothes rack. For your uniform & personal clothes.

Why do you need to keep your cleaning area secure?

Commercial cleaning equipment and chemicals can be very expensive and potentially dangerous. The public must not enter your storage area.

Make sure there is a lock on the door. Lock the door every time you leave the cleaning storage area. That includes when you are cleaning and when you finish work.

EQUIPMENT STORAGE

If not stored correctly, equipment can be damaged.

The area where equipment is stored must be maintained in a clean, dry and secure way.

Keep your equipment in good condition by:

- Emptying wet cleaning equipment every time you use it.
- Clean and dry all equipment after use. Equipment can corrode (rust) if it is left damp or wet.
- Equipment also smells unpleasant if it is damp.
- Keep electrical cords neatly wound-up and stored with equipment
- You should clean the floor every day. A dirty floor looks bad, but it is also dangerous! Wipe up any spills as soon as they happen. You, or someone else, can slip and fall on a wet or dirty floor.
- Keep the floor space clear and uncluttered. Cluttered and untidy areas can be a trip hazard.
- Your storage area shows that you are a professional. It should be clean and tidy so that you are proud to show it to your client.

THE CLEANING ROOM

The cleaning room should be maintained to a very high standard so that you, and others, can find and use the following with ease:

1. Consumables;
2. Personal Protective Equipment; and
3. Information and workplace documentation

Consumable materials:

Consumables (also known as **consumable goods**, are goods that are used regularly and consumed or disposed of after use.

- bin liners/rubbish bags
- toilet paper
- hand towels
- disposable cloths
- hand soap.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) refers to protective clothing, goggles, or other garments or equipment designed to protect the wearer's body from injury. PPE is covered in detail later in this course. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should include:

- Uniform/aprons
- Safety glasses/goggles
- Gloves
- Respirators
- Dust masks
- Ear muffs/plugs.

Information and workplace documentation should include:

- Safe work procedures
- Safety data sheets (SDS)
- Work schedules
- Equipment manuals
- WHS (Workplace Health and Safety) guidelines
- Colour-coding charts (equipment and chemical)
- Communication books.

Section 2 Identifying Risks & Hazards – part 1

What do the terms "risk" and "hazard" mean? What is the difference between the terms? When you finish this section you will have an understanding of the following concepts and ideas:

- Managing Risk;
- Risk assessment
- Common Cleaning Hazards;
- Physical Hazards;

- Electrical Hazards

You have probably heard the words ‘hazard’ and ‘risk’ used in relation to workplace health and safety without giving very much thought to what the difference is between them.

A **hazard** is a situation with the potential to harm life, health or property i.e. an injury or damage waiting to happen.

A **risk** is a measure of how likely it is that injury will occur in a given hazardous situation

Examples:

Situation	Hazard	Risk (of death per million per year)
Travelling in a car	Car accident	300
Standing in an electrical storm	Being struck by lightning	0.5

In the workplace, the major cause of accidents, incidents and ill health is:

The inability of people to identify hazards because of lack of information or failure to comprehend information (understand what they are told).

Inadequate training and poor follow up of comprehension.

We can improve this situation by providing suitable OHS WHS training and involving everyone in the management of OHS WHS.

We can also minimise the risk of accidents by implementing preventative or pro-active management processes to identify and eliminate hazards before they cause injury to workers.

How do we manage risks and hazards in the workplace?

There are five basic principles to manage risks and hazards in the workplace. The five principles are:

1. Identify hazards (find, see, hear, smell)
2. Assess the risks involved (think about and check)
3. Consult and report ensuring the involvement of relevant people (talk and tell)
4. Control the hazard (stop or prevent it)
5. Review to identify change or improvement (check and reflect).

1. Identify hazards (find, see, hear, smell)

- Who will be harmed and how?
- Do a regular walk around the work place
- Talk to fellow employees about work place safety
- Review past accident and ill health records
- Think about long term hazards such as long term exposure to noise.

2. Assess the risks involved (think about and check)

- For each hazard and or risk think about who potentially could be harmed. For example people with disability maybe more prone to injury or a pregnant mother more susceptible to injury.
- How does your work affect others?

3. Consult and report ensuring the involvement of relevant people (talk and tell)

- Having spotted the hazards, you then have to decide what to do about it.
- Compare the situation to best practise. Is your work up to standards?

4. Control the hazard (stop or prevent it)

- Do you have the capacity or the authorisation to control the hazard?
- Are you trained to control a particular hazard?
- Best efforts must be made in all situations to limit the affects of hazards in the work place

5. Review to identify change or improvement (check and reflect).

- Few work places stay the same over long periods of time.
- Constantly assess risk in your workplace
- Set dates for risk reviews

RISK ASSESSMENT

What is risk assessment?

You will need to be able to assess risks (or potential risks) when hazards are found. This is part of the risk management process. Risk assessment means gathering information so that you can make a clear and educated decision about what needs to be done to lower the risk as far as possible.

Risk assessment is based on these three factors:

- The "likelihood" that it will do harm (probability) – What are the chances of something happening. This could be reflected as a percentage e.g. there is a 70% chance/likelihood that someone will cut themselves when handling rubbish in the cleaning industry.
- The "severity" of the harm it could do (consequence)- With the cuts from handling rubbish in the above example one would normally have the potential to require medical assistance; however, it would not normally result in long term health effects or potentially fatal injury
- The "number" of times people could be affected by it (frequency).How many times and or number of people will receive cuts when handing rubbish.

It is important to think about and check:

1. Whether a hazard is likely to cause harm to a person or property.
2. How severe the harm could be, or what the consequences would be.
3. How often people or property could be affected by the hazard.

Once you have done this, you will be able to make an accurate decision about which controls (if any) will be needed. This is an important part of risk management.

COMMON CLEANING HAZARDS

What is a hazard?

A **hazard** is a situation with the potential to harm life, health or property i.e. an injury or damage waiting to happen.

Describing hazards:

There are many ways you can describe hazards. These descriptions will depend on whether a hazard is chemical, physical or electrical/mechanical in nature. Some hazards associated with cleaning are described below. You should think about what else could you add to this list?

How are hazards identified?

Hazard identification means that you recognise that a hazard exists, or may exist. It involves finding all hazardous activities situations, plant and equipment, products and processes. Everyone should be involved in hazard identification.

Hazard identification mostly requires you to be observant and aware (look around for anything that may pose a danger to your health or the health of others). Methods for identifying hazards also include:

- Frequent inspection of the workplace
- Talking to people to find out about hazards, or letting them know about hazards you have found
- Checking workplace records of previous hazards, injuries and accidents to give you ideas about potential hazards.

Common Hazards associated with cleaning

Some hazards associated with cleaning are described below. Can you think of anything else to add to this list?

Chemical hazards	Physical hazards	Electrical and mechanical hazards	Biological hazards
<ul style="list-style-type: none">o no label on cleaning producto incorrect labelo incorrect storageo excess fumeso poor ventilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uneven floor• sharp objects• heavy objects to be lifted• excess dust• o excess noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o frayed electrical cordo damage to the plugo bent pins on plugo burning smello exposed wires	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Needles/syringeso Body fluids including; Blood Urine & faeces Vomit Saliva

Remember, if you see a hazard or dangerous situation, you must report it so that all workers can be safe.

PHYSICAL HAZARDS

Manual Handling:

Manual handling is any activity that requires you to use force (energy) to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move any load or object. Some example of manual handling include; lifting and moving chemical containers, buckets of water, emptying and moving waste, pushing or pulling cleaning trolleys, repetitive use of equipment including back-pack vacuum cleaners, swing polishers, scrubbing machines, mops and buckets.

Incorrect manual handling is a common cause of injury. It can often result in serious and long term injury, which could affect you for the rest of your life.

Shoulders, hands, neck, back and knees are the most common areas of manual handling injury. You can break bones, fracture vertebrae in your neck or back, twist and sprain muscles and ligaments. You can also pinch nerves. These injuries are costly to you and your workplace.

When carrying out new manual handling activities for the first time make sure you consider:

- Using mechanical aids if possible
- How often you will need to lift
- The distance the object is to be carried your physical capacity for the lift
- Obstacles and clothing that could interfere when you are lifting and carrying heavy objects
- The height you are lifting to and from for example placing heavy objects on lower shelves
- Surface conditions (e.g. slippery, wet or uneven floors)
- That you can clearly see where you are walking when carrying any type of load.
- If you need to move an awkward or heavy load, do not try to do it by yourself. Organise others to work as a team to shift the load. One person should take charge of the lifting. It is also best to use people of similar heights.

MANUAL HANDLING

Back Injuries:

The most common type of injury in the cleaning industry is back injury.

Many back injuries tend to be the result of cumulative damage suffered over a long period of time. Certain actions, motions and movements are more likely than others to cause or contribute to back injuries...

Any time you find yourself doing one of these things, you should think:

DANGER! My back is at risk!

Heavy Lifting:

especially repetitive lifting over a long period of time...

Twisting at the waist:

while lifting or holding a heavy load...

Reaching and lifting:

- over your head, across a table, or out the back of a truck...
- Lifting or carrying objects with awkward or odd shapes...

Working in odd, uncomfortable positions:

- Kneeling tasks that require you to bend over for long periods of time...
- Sitting or standing too long in one position.
- Sitting can be very hard on the lower back

Mind your step:

It is also possible to injure your back slipping on a wet floor.

Dangerous sleeping:

Some people suffer back pain because they sleep in a bad position, or because their mattress is too soft

Preventing Back Injuries

The best way to prevent back injuries is to develop habits that reduce the strain placed on the back.

There are some basic things you can do to help:

- Avoid lifting and bending whenever you can.
- Where appropriate, ask a colleague for assistance.
- Place objects up off the floor.
- That way you won't have to reach down to pick them up again.
- Raise / lower shelves.

- The best zone for lifting is between your shoulders and your waist.
- Put heavier objects on shelves at waist level, lighter objects on lower or higher shelves.
- Use trolley and dollies to move objects, instead of carrying them yourself.

Which is better for your back—pushing a cart or pulling a cart?

It is better to push a cleaner’s trolley, cleaning equipment, trolley, lawnmower, wheelbarrow, etc. than it is to pull it. However, if you do have to pull it, consciously force yourself to tighten your stomach muscles and try to maintain good body posture.

What to Avoid When Lifting:

- Try to avoid lifting objects of more than 15kg where possible.
- If in doubt about the weight of any object, test the weight before trying to lift the object.
- Make sure you can clearly see where you are going. Do not allow objects you are carrying to obscure your vision.

PHYSICAL HAZARDS

Slips, Trips & Falls

Slips, trips, falls and bumps are accidents that can happen in a workplace. Most accidents happen when people are careless, in a rush or not paying attention and watching where they are going.

Other reasons that accidents might happen to you are because:

- You are tired.
- You don’t have enough time to do the job properly.
- You don’t listen to or don’t understand instructions.
- You are not using the right materials or equipment or you are not using them correctly.
- You are not paying attention.

The risk of slips, trips and falls can be reduced by:

- Wearing SLIP RESISTANT FOOTWEAR with rubber soles
- Keeping floors clean and dry
- Keeping all work areas clean and tidy
- Lighting is adequate for people to see where they are walking
- Checking flooring surfaces for wear and damage
- Flooring materials are appropriate for the area – for example slip resistant tiles are used in toilets and wet areas.

To prevent slips, trips & falls you must:

- Look out for hazards.
- Report any hazards.
- Put things away after use.
- Clean up any spills or litter (loose rubbish) quickly.

HOTSPOTS AND SOLUTIONS

Back, shoulder and abdomen

Incorrect lifting and handling of equipment and waste can cause injuries to the back, shoulder and abdomen.

To avoid these injuries:

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- Ensure building layout/design limits the need to push, pull or carry equipment, bins or waste e.g. pathways are clear of obstructions; provide goods lift; ducted vacuum systems.
- Waste/rubbish dumping systems should work to eliminate manual handling or lifting of waste and bins e.g. mechanical lifters, waste chutes, waste conveyors, disposal units, bins designed for unloading over skips.
- If this can't be done, provide mechanical aids to assist lifting e.g. mechanical wheelie bin lifters or use smaller bins, steps and ramps to minimise lifting. Ensure bins have wheels or provide a trolley.
- Provide storage and duplicate equipment on each floor to eliminate carrying rubbish up or down stairs.
- Minimise lifting by using backpack vacuum cleaners and selecting the lightest equipment.

Forearm/wrist, knee, elbow

Incorrect lifting and handling of equipment and waste can also cause injuries to the forearm, wrist, knee and elbow

To avoid these injuries:

- Use powered equipment in place of manual cleaning tasks; e.g. scrubbing machines, wet vacuums, and ride-on equipment.
- Select appropriate equipment to improve ease of use for the operator when performing repetitive work e.g. use high speed in-line polishers for polishing large areas instead of slow speed swing polishers
- Carry out repetitive tasks between shoulder and waist height e.g. use platform ladders to clean at height.
- Rotate tasks so work includes a variety of postures. That is rotate cleaning tasks such as vacuuming large areas or mopping large areas with other cleaning tasks.
- Use tool extensions and platforms to eliminate kneeling, awkward postures and work in restricted spaces. For example, use scrubbing brushes such as deck scrubbers with extension poles to avoid working on your knees.

Shoulder, forearm, wrist, knee leg

Slips, trips and falls can cause injuries to the shoulder, forearm, wrist, knee and leg. To avoid slips, trips and falls:

- Ensure level footing throughout work areas, and no temporary or permanent obstructions. Report any unsafe flooring surfaces or broken tiles to your supervisor or building manager.
- Ensure good housekeeping on the premises includes removing unnecessary items and putting items away.
- Make sure you wear good quality slip-resistant footwear.
- Ensure procedures are in place to handle spills and wet cleaning (e.g. place warning signs and/or barriers around spills, and clean-up the spills immediately).

Hands and fingers

Incorrect handling of chemicals can cause injuries to the hands and fingers. To avoid injuries to the hands and fingers:

- Treat all chemicals as potentially dangerous to your health unless the Safety Data Sheet or chemical label states otherwise.
- Eliminate or minimise any health risk by using a safer (non-hazardous) chemicals, designing the work or the workplace to prevent contact with hazardous substances or handling the substance in a safer manner.
- While cleaning, workers should wear personal protective equipment to prevent exposure to chemicals, hazardous waste and biological hazards such as body fluids (urine, faeces, blood, vomit, needles)
- Cuts, grazes and lacerations can also cause hand and finger injuries. To avoid these injuries:
- Provide sufficient 'sharps' containers so needles are not disposed of in bags.

- Use a 'clean-in-place' system to eliminate manual cleaning (e.g. dishwashers, factory floor systems).
- Use tools and protective equipment to clean machines with sharp components/edges (e.g. brushes, scrapers); provide gloves that cannot be pierced (cut).
- Ensure equipment is isolated and locked out before cleaning, and is handled on trolleys adjusted to waist height.

Ears

Injuries to ears are the result of noise. To avoid ear injuries:

- Use the quietest powered equipment available (e.g. scrubbers, vacuum cleaners).
- Ensure hearing protection is supplied and worn when using powered equipment and place warning signs on mobile cleaning equipment as appropriate.
- Noise controls should be implemented if employees are exposed to excessive noise (e.g. workers have to raise their voices to communicate over a distance of one metre).

ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

Every year, many Australians are killed or injured by electrical hazards at work. Fires that are caused by electrical faults destroy many workplaces. By being able to identify and control electrical hazards, you can help prevent injury and death through electrocution or electrical faults.

To Reduce Likelihood of an Electric Shock:

- Use dry hands when you use electrical machinery.
- Electrical equipment should be regularly tagged and inspected by an electrician.
- Check your electrical equipment every time you use it.

The test tag must show:

Date of the test; date when the machine must be re-inspected and tested; and the certificate number of the electrician.

- **When using Electrical Equipment:**
Never pull a socket out of the wall by the cord
- Always support the electrical cord when using electrical equipment.
- Never perform any equipment maintenance before removing the power cord from the outlet.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

Keep electrical cords loose-

It is important that you never wind or loop the electrical cord of an appliance when it is in use. You should keep the cord loose, otherwise it may overheat and catch fire.

Keep power cords and extension cords out of the way-

Workplace accidents are frequently caused by extension cords and power cords. People can easily trip over them or run into them as they walk through an area.

When using an extension cord, it is important to place it out of the way of foot traffic. Run it along the wall and corners of the room and, if possible, behind furniture to reduce the risk of anyone tripping and hurting themselves.

Replace worn cords and faulty equipment

Electrical machinery and equipment wears out with age and can become faulty, at which point it becomes an electrical hazard. You should always check any electrical appliances for faults or worn cords before you use them. If you detect a fault with a piece of electrical equipment you should turn it off, return it to the cleaner's room, attach an "out of order" tag to the machine and notify your supervisor.

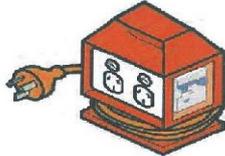
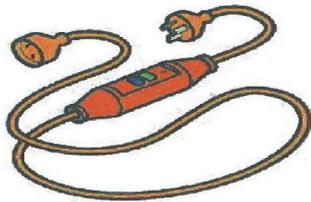
- Never try to repair electrical cords yourself
- Never use electrical equipment with damaged and exposed wires
- Never use equipment with broken wheels
- Never use electrical equipment with broken and damaged housings
- Never use vacuum cleaners or other suction devices with damaged hoses – they will not work
- Never repair damaged suction hoses with electrical, masking or duct tape – they will not work

Use circuit breakers

Electrical surges or overloads are often the cause of electrocution or fire. These can be prevented by the use of a circuit breaker, called a residual current devices or RCD. If an electrical surge occurs, the circuit breaker (RCD) automatically switches off the power to the problem circuit. All electrical cleaning equipment sold in Australia is now fitted with circuit breakers to prevent electrocution.



Fixed RCD's - switchboard and socket



Portable RCD's

THE TAGS AND TESTS SYSTEMS

All electrical equipment in the workplace must be regularly tested and tagged to determine whether the appliance is electrically safe for use.

Test tags

These are attached to electrical equipment by an authorised person after it has been tested. The tag indicates that the equipment was safe for use at the time of testing. Colour coding and/or date stamping/crimping is used to show when the testing was done.

Out of service tags

These are used to identify equipment that is faulty or is being serviced. The tag can be placed by anyone. It should ONLY be removed by the person who has fixed the equipment. These tags serve as a warning system only - they offer no protection.

Safety tags

These are also known as danger tags. They are needed when more than one person has control or access to an isolation or activation point. They may be required on equipment, valves, electrical supply switches, and taps. Safety tags must be signed and dated by the person carrying out the isolation. A tag can only be removed by the person who placed it there. Otherwise, only a supervisor can remove a tag before the equipment, valve or switch is

energised again.

Lockout

This is a system used with safety tags to prevent operation of equipment by an unauthorised person. It can be part of the isolation control within the hierarchy of control.

The lock prevents the isolation switch or valve from being activated. Master clips allow each worker to attach their own lock to the switch. Each worker then has to remove their lock and tag to activate the switch.

Remember, the only person who can remove a danger tag or personal lockout device is the person who placed it.

GOOD POINT

Working with electricity

- Use licensed electricians for electrical work.
- Keep electrical equipment and leads away from water.
- Secure and protect extension leads from damage.
- Check equipment and leads for damage before using. Don't use equipment that is damaged and label it with an "Out of Service/Order" tag.

Section 3 Identifying Risks & Hazards – part 2

Physical and electrical hazards are not the only hazards found in the workplace. Biological and chemical hazards present risks to workers.

When you finish this section you will have an understanding of the following concepts and ideas:

- Personal protective equipment and its role in managing risks posed from chemical and biological hazards.
- Biological Hazards
- Chemical hazards
- Controlling hazards

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is designed to give protection for individual workers. It is not designed to prevent injury, but simply to help to limit or avoid damage. It is your duty to use or wear required PPE (as far as you are reasonably able to). You must not deliberately misuse or damage PPE.

Why is PPE important?

PPE is the lowest control method in the hierarchy of control, so you still need to think safely and act safely in your work and actions. You need to observe all other systems to reduce and eliminate hazards and risks. PPE simply offers another level of protection.

Listed below are the most common types of PPE

-Eye protection

Should be fit for the purpose and job and must be worn where potential damage to the eyes could occur, or where safety signage specifies that eye protection must be worn.

-Hand protection - gloves

Gloves prevent your hands from being damaged. They can also prevent hazardous substances from entering your body through skin contact.

Care must be taken that gloves do not get tangled in machinery or moving objects. If this happens, the gloves

themselves can become a risk to your safety.

-Respiratory (lung/breathing) protection

½ mask respirators – where potentially hazardous dust, mites, fibres, or vapours exist, respiratory equipment must be worn.

For ½ mask respirators, the mask must fit your face correctly. Sealing is critical for proper use.

Gas type cartridges or scuba equipment may be required when handling chemicals - you will need to check the relevant SDS.

-Hearing protection

Ear plugs and muffs are required where noise is a risk to health and safety. Industrial noise is a major factor in partial or permanent hearing loss. The danger can be lessened by using proper ear protection.

-Feet protection

It is important to wear slip resistant and water resistant shoes when cleaning. Some industrial sites may require footwear **needs** to meet Australian Standards and be right for the workplace and weather conditions. Non-slip footwear should be worn when working at height.

BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS



Biological hazards, also known as biohazards, refer to biological substances that pose a threat to the health of living organisms, primarily that of humans. This can include medical waste or samples of a microorganism, virus or toxin (from a biological source) that can affect human health. It can also include substances harmful to animals.

The term and its associated symbol (pictured above) is generally used as a warning, so that those potentially exposed to the substances will know to take precautions, generally by wearing PPE or using recommended safe handling equipment such as long

handled tongs for picking up used needles. The biohazard symbol is used in the labelling of biological materials that carry a significant health risk, including viral samples and used hypodermic needles (syringes).

Cleaning environments pose a risk of transmitting infectious diseases such as HIV, hepatitis and viruses found in the blood and other body fluids. Where there is a chance that workers could be exposed to blood or other body fluids, there is potential for transmitting viruses. Workers cleaning toilets may be exposed to needles, urine, faeces, vomit, blood and other contaminants. People working in hospitals, medical centres and aged care homes may be exposed to similar biological hazards.

Some work activities have an increased risk, for example a cleaner might be exposed to a syringe left in a toilet. Other risks relate to workers who use sharp instruments or tools that might penetrate their skin, or poor housekeeping or personal hygiene.

Transmission or infection through biological hazards may occur in the following circumstances:

- Hypodermic needles or other sharp instruments contaminated with infected blood or body fluids penetrate the skin
- Infected blood or body fluids splash into your eye or other mucous membranes, or onto broken skin.

Handling Sharps and Needles

Standard procedures for handling sharps (contaminated needles) include:

- Syringes must not be picked up by hand.
- If a syringe is found it must be picked up using tongs and placed in a sharps container with a secure cap.
- Do not place your hands in areas that you cannot see—such as behind toilet bowls, washbasins, cupboards etc.
- When a sharps container is three-quarters full, a new sharps container should be issued.

If any person touches or is spiked by a syringe, you must report this to your supervisor IMMEDIATELY and seek IMMEDIATE medical advice.

CHEMICAL HAZARDS

A chemical hazard is any substance that can cause harm, primarily to people. Chemicals of all kinds are stored in our workplace and can result in serious injuries if not properly handled.

Chemicals can come in solid, liquid or gas form. You will use a lot of different chemicals in your cleaning tasks, and it is important that you know how to use them correctly. Contact with chemicals through your skin, eyes or by breathing in the fumes can cause serious health problems.

Classify cleaning chemicals

Chemicals used in the workplace can be classified into three overlapping groups:

- (i) hazardous substances;
- (ii) dangerous goods and
- (iii) scheduled poisons.

Hazardous substances

Hazardous chemicals are harmful to your health. This includes short-term effects such as skin irritation, as well as long-term effects such as cancer. Chemical labels for hazardous substances contain the words "CAUTION, HAZARDOUS, or POISON" at the top of the label.

Dangerous Goods

Dangerous goods/chemicals have an immediate physical risk such as fire or explosion, or an immediate health risk such as rapid poisoning. Dangerous goods are identified by the words "FLAMMABLE, CORROSIVE, TOXIC and OXIDISING materials.

Scheduled poisons

This classification is used for domestic chemicals, pesticides and solvents that are usually sold in retail outlets. These chemicals may also be used in your workplace.

Health and safety information about each cleaning chemical is provided on labels on the chemical container and packaging. More detailed health and safety information is found in safety data sheets (SDS).

Labelling of workplace hazardous chemicals

For workplace hazardous chemicals, labels include information on the hazards, plus instructions and information on the safe storage, handling, use and disposal of the chemical. For more detailed information on the labelling of hazardous chemicals do to the web site <http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/whs-information/hazardous-chemicals/labelling/pages/labelling>.

The label and Safety Data Sheets (SDS) are important sources of information that may be used to evaluate hazard in the workplace, and establish appropriate work practices and processes to control risks posed a by a hazardous chemical during use.

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Under the Work Health and Safety (WHS) Regulations, the manufacturer or importer of a hazardous chemical must ensure that it is correctly labelled. Also, a supplier must not supply hazardous chemicals to a workplace if the hazardous chemicals are not correctly labelled.

Required Information

Hazardous or dangerous chemicals have labels that must include specific information.

Symbol or key word indicating the relevant hazards:

- a key word providing a warning, e.g. 'Dangerous', 'Caution' or 'Hazardous'
- The diamond symbol that indicates dangerous materials.

Product name:

Trade name of the product and, if relevant, its common chemical name.

Ingredients:

List of each chemical the product contains.

Risk information:

- a general description of the hazard, e.g. 'Toxic if swallowed'
- The 'diamond' symbol that shows the hazard, e.g. 'Flammable'.

Directions for use:

Detailed directions on how to use the chemical.

Safety information:

Information to ensure safe use, e.g. 'Keep container dry', 'Wear suitable protective clothing'.

First aid directions:

Directions for immediate treatment if exposure to or contact with the chemical occurs.

Emergency procedures:

- instructions in case of emergencies, such as spillage, fire or leakage of the chemical
- Information about the type of equipment to be used, e.g. type of fire extinguisher.

Manufacturer or supplier details:

- name, address and Australian emergency telephone number of the manufacturer or supplier initially responsible for distributing the chemical
- Contact details for obtaining safety data sheet (SDS) for the product.

A quick guide to Dangerous Good signs

It is important to be familiar with and to easily recognise the hazard signs that might be found on your cleaning products and in your workplace. Some of the most common HAZCHEM labels include:

<p>Flammable liquids</p> <p>Shape: diamond</p> <p>Colour: red</p> <p>Text:(written in capitals) flammable liquid</p> <p>Symbol: flame</p> <p>Flammable liquids are liquids that can burn. Once flammable liquids catch fire, they can cause other substances to burn. Examples include: petrol, alcohols; methylated spirits; solvents.</p>	
<p>Flammable solids</p> <p>Shape: diamond</p> <p>Colour: red and white stripes</p> <p>Text:(written in capitals) flammable solid</p> <p>Symbol: flame</p> <p>Flammable solids burn very easily. They come in powdered, granular or paste form. Exposure to a heat source or even friction can cause these solids to burn. Examples include: safety matches; camphor; naphthalene.</p>	
<p>Corrosive substances</p> <p>Shape: diamond</p> <p>Colour: white (top half) and black (bottom half)</p> <p>Text:(written in capitals) corrosive</p> <p>Symbol: two test tubes pouring liquid over a hard surface and a hand</p> <p>Corrosive substances are materials that can damage or destroy things they come into contact with, including skin. Examples include: hydrochloric or sulphuric acid; sodium hydroxide; chlorine and ammonia gases.</p>	
<p>Toxic substances</p> <p>Shape: diamond</p> <p>Colour: white</p> <p>Text:(written in capitals) toxic</p> <p>Symbol: skull and cross-bones</p> <p>Toxic substances can cause illness or even death. Many substances found in workplaces are toxic (also known as poisonous substances). Examples include: pesticides (but not most herbicides); products containing heavy metals; rat</p>	

<p>poison.</p>	
<p>Oxidising agents</p> <p>Shape: diamond</p> <p>Colour: yellow</p> <p>Text:(written in capitals) oxidizing agent</p> <p>Symbol: flame</p> <p>Oxidising agents are chemicals that yield oxygen and can contribute to the combustion of another material. They are not particularly hazardous on their own, but become dangerous when mixed with other hazardous chemicals. Examples include: hydrogen peroxide; calcium hypochlorite (pool chlorine); ammonium nitrate.</p>	
<p>Non-flammable and non-toxic gases</p> <p>Shape: diamond</p> <p>Colour: green</p> <p>Text:(written in capitals) non-flammable and non-toxic gas</p> <p>Symbol: gas cylinder</p> <p>Non-flammable and non-toxic gases are gases that do not catch fire easily and are not poisonous.</p> <p>Examples include: nitrogen; oxygen; medical air.</p>	
<p>Flammable gas</p> <p>Shape: diamond</p> <p>Colour: red</p> <p>Text:(written in capitals) flammable gas</p> <p>Symbol: flame</p> <p>Flammable gases can burn when they come into contact with oxygen or a source of heat. In some conditions they can even explode. Since these gases can burn, they cause other normally non-hazardous materials to burn.</p> <p>Examples include: propane (for gas burnishers), methane; acetylene;</p>	
<p>Toxic gases</p> <p>Shape: diamond</p>	

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<p>Colour: white</p> <p>Text:(written in capitals) toxic gas</p> <p>Symbol: skull and cross-bones</p> <p>Toxic gases are dangerous because they can mix with air and easily enter the lungs, which can cause illness or even death. Some toxic gases can also be absorbed through the skin. They are also called poison gases.</p> <p>Examples include: carbon monoxide; chlorine; ammonia; hydrogen sulphide.</p>	 A diamond-shaped hazard label with a white background and a black border. At the top is a skull and crossbones symbol. Below the symbol, the text "TOXIC GAS" is written in bold, black, uppercase letters. At the bottom, the number "2" is written in bold, black, uppercase letters.
<p>Dangerous when wet</p> <p>Shape: diamond</p> <p>Colour: blue</p> <p>Text:(written in capitals) dangerous when wet</p> <p>Symbol: flame</p> <p>Substances labelled dangerous when wet give off flammable gases that can explode when they come into contact with water. Examples include: calcium carbide; sodium.</p>	 A diamond-shaped hazard label with a blue background and a white border. At the top is a white flame symbol. Below the symbol, the text "DANGEROUS WHEN WET" is written in white, uppercase letters. At the bottom, the number "4" is written in white, uppercase letters.
<p>Miscellaneous dangerous goods</p> <p>Shape: diamond</p> <p>Colour: black and white stripes (top half) and white (bottom half)</p> <p>Text:(written in capitals) miscellaneous dangerous goods</p> <p>Symbol: no symbol</p> <p>Miscellaneous dangerous goods are products, substances or organisms that do not fit in any other category, but may be dangerous to life, health, property or the environment. Examples include: solid carbon dioxide (dry ice); aerosols.</p>	 A diamond-shaped hazard label with a black and white striped top half and a white bottom half. The text "MISCELLANEOUS DANGEROUS GOODS" is written in black, uppercase letters across the bottom half. At the bottom, the number "9" is written in black, uppercase letters.

SAFETY DATA SHEET (SDS)

What is a Safety Data Sheet?

A Safety Data Sheet (SDS), previously called a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS), is a document that provides information on the properties of hazardous chemicals and how they affect health and safety in the workplace. For example an SDS includes information on:

- the identity of the chemical,
- health and physicochemical hazards,
- safe handling and storage procedures,
- emergency procedures, and
- disposal considerations.

The SDS should always be referred to when assessing risks in the workplace.

Duties under the WHS Regulations

The Work Health and Safety Regulations (WHS Regulations) require the manufacturer or importer of a hazardous chemical to prepare an SDS for the chemical. Additionally, a supplier must provide the manufacturer or supplier's current SDS for the hazardous chemical on first supply to a workplace and upon request.

Interpret the Safety Data Sheet

The safety data sheet (SDS) provides detailed information about a chemical. It contains more information about the chemical than what you will find on the label.

The SDS:

- Is prepared by the manufacturer of the chemical.
- Identifies any potential health and safety effects and the precautions to follow when using the chemical.
- Provides information on safe handling, storage and disposal, and first aid instructions in the event of exposure.

Interpret the SDS

The information on an SDS is grouped into sections.

Section 1 - Identification of the material and supplier:

Section 2 - Hazards identification:

Section 3 - Composition / Information on ingredients:

Section 4 - First aid measures:

Section 5 – Fire fighting measures:

Section 6 - Accidental release measures:

Section 7 - Handling and storage:

Section 8 - Exposure controls / Personal protection:

Section 9 - Physical and chemical properties:

Section 10 - Stability and reactivity:

Section 11 - Toxicological information:

Section 12 - Ecological information:

Section 13 - Disposal considerations:

Section 14 - Transport information:

Section 15 - Regulatory information:

Section 16 - Other information:

HOW CHEMICALS AFFECT THE BODY

Chemicals can enter the body through:

- Inhalation (breathing);
- Ingestion (swallowing or eating);
- Skin contact (touching).

Protective clothing such as gloves and facemasks can stop chemicals from entering the body.

The Lungs:

Chemicals can enter the body through the lungs. In fact inhalation is the main way that chemicals enter the body. For this reason, it is very important that you don't sniff cleaning products.

The Skin:

The Skin protects the body from damage. Chemicals can be absorbed into the body through the skin. Solvents can affect the skin. They can cause dry and cracked skin. Chemicals can also be absorbed through the skin.

FOLLOW PROCEDURES AND DIRECTIONS

Manufacturers of cleaning chemicals and equipment spend a lot of money testing their products. Failure to follow their directions for the correct use of the product may lead to serious injury.

Manufacturer directions for cleaning products come in the form of:

- labels on containers and packages
- leaflets
- Wall charts.

Preparing Chemicals

1. Always decant the chemicals in the cleaning storage area.
2. Check the smaller container for cracks and leaks. Use the container supplied by the manufacturer for the chemical — other containers should not be used.
3. Check both containers for correct and clear labelling before decanting takes place. If necessary, make a new label for the smaller container.
4. Wear the correct personal protective equipment. At a minimum this will always include gloves and protective eyewear.
5. Make sure that the small container is on a stable surface. If necessary, use a funnel to direct the chemical out of the bulk container into the smaller container. Bulk containers that are too heavy to lift may have taps. In this case, place the small container under the tap of the bulk container.
6. Fill the smaller container with chemical at a rate that you are able to manage.
7. As the container reaches two thirds full (2/3), slow down the flow rate.
8. Seal the now full container according to manufacturer's instructions.
9. Wash down the outside of the sealed container of any excess or overflow chemical. Make sure that the water does not enter the container. This could be a hazard.
10. Store the chemical in the correct location.
11. Wash your hands and make sure any chemical has been removed from your skin and clothing.
12. Clean and store any personal protective equipment according to manufacturer's instructions.

GOOD POINT

Working with chemicals

Use the least hazardous chemicals for the job.

Make sure Safety Data Sheets (SDS) are available for chemicals being used.

Read the label and SDS and follow instructions.

Store chemicals safely and securely when not in use.

Do not store chemicals in food and/or drink containers (e.g. do not store bleach in drink bottles).

Make sure chemicals are correctly labelled.

Section 4 Managing Risks and Hazards

CONTROLLING HAZARDS

What is hazard control?

Hazard control means limiting the dangers of a hazard. It involves finding the best way to eliminate or minimise the risk caused by a hazard using what is called the hierarchy of control.

What is the hierarchy of control?



The hierarchy of control is a risk management process. It is a system used in industry to minimize or eliminate exposure to hazards.

The hierarchy of hazard controls are, in order of decreasing effectiveness:

- Elimination
- Substitution
- Engineering
- Administration
- Personal protective equipment

Elimination

When a hazard is identified, the best option is always to eliminate the risk it poses if reasonably practicable. The hierarchy of control is used when it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate risks to health and safety caused by a hazard.

This may sound complicated but all it means is the when we identify a hazard in the work place the best thing we can do it remove/ eliminate or substitute the hazard from the workplace. This is a logical first step. An example in the cleaning industry may be to remove a toxic chemical from the workplace and substitute it with a non-hazardous chemical.

Substitution

Substitution, the second most effective hazard control, involves replacing something that produces a hazard (similar to elimination) with something that does not produce a hazard. For example, using safer equipment or less hazardous materials. To be an effective control, the new product must not produce another hazard.

Isolation - isolating the hazard from any person exposed to it, e.g. erecting physical barriers, or putting a time or distance restriction in place; removing a dangerous chemical from the site.

If we are unable to change the chemical because less hazardous chemicals do not work then we may try to isolate the risk. We could do this by making sure people not involved in the cleaning are not exposed to the chemical. In other words make sure there are no other people around when perform this cleaning activity. Some examples may include using a solvent to remove stains for a carpet; using a solvent to remove graffiti; using a caustic chemical to clean kitchen equipment.

Engineering - creating a safer environment by making improvements to equipment or processes, e.g. using equipment guards and providing ventilation. These do not eliminate hazards, but rather isolate people from hazards. This is generally not applicable to the cleaning industry. However, cleaners working in an industrial or manufacturing environment will be familiar with engineering control such as safety guards and lock-out procedures.

Administrative

Where the risk still remains, then administrative measures have to be used to limit the risk. Administrative controls do not remove hazards, but limit or prevent people's exposure to the hazards. Examples of these are minimising the number of people in contact with the hazard, reducing periods of exposure, providing training, using warning signs etc.

Personal Protective Equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is used to minimise the remaining risk so far as is reasonably practicable by providing personal protection. PPE can include safety helmets, ear protection, gloves, and high visibility vests. PPE is the least effective means of controlling hazards because it relies on the PPE to protect the worker and if the PPE fails the worker could be injured or harmed.

HOW HAZARDS ARE CONTROLLED

As already discussed, eliminating a risk is always the best option. Where this is not possible, the hierarchy of controls is used as outlined in the above example for a hazardous chemical. A risk assessment should be always be conducted before any steps are taken to control a **risk** hazard.

If a single control is not enough to manage the risk, a combination of controls may be used. For example, exposure to a hazard can be limited by; warning signs, training, emergency procedures, and personal protective clothing can all be used at the same time. It is important that the highest control in the hierarchy is the starting point for safety.

Maintain your equipment

Equipment that is poorly maintained can cause serious injuries including manual handling injuries and electrocution. It is your responsibility to make sure that equipment is kept in a proper working condition.

Equipment may be hazardous if:

- there are sparks
- there are smells of burning
- there are loose or worn parts
- it vibrates more than usual
- It is noisier than usual.

How to maintain your equipment:

- Check at the beginning of your shift for any obvious signs of damage.
- Check the electrical cords on all electrical equipment for damage, before and after use.
- Only use the equipment according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Clean the equipment at the end of every shift.
- Put the equipment away at the end of every shift — wind the cord and store the equipment away from dust and moisture.
- Report any equipment that does not work properly to your supervisor and/or if you have the authority, repair (authorised repairer) or replace faulty equipment.
- Equipment that is not safe to use should be tagged as unsafe. Complete a hazard form and give it to your supervisor.

CLEAN YOUR EQUIPMENT

Another way to reduce hazards is to maintain you equipment in the best possible working order. You can do this by cleaning your equipment at the end of each shift, check your equipment for damage before and after use and ensure regular servicing of equipment by a licensed technician.

Poorly maintained and dirty equipment:

- Looks very unprofessional and is a sign of poor quality cleaning.
- It breakdown more often meaning you cannot clean properly
- It poses a safe risk if damaged or broken
- Is can smell and attract bacteria and germs

The methods to clean your equipment will depend on the piece of equipment you need to clean. Some equipment items such as buffing machines and mop buckets only need to be wiped with a damp cloth. Other items such as cloths, scouring pads and mop heads need to be cleaned in detergent, rinsed with water and dried.

Vacuum cleaners need to be emptied at the end of your shift or even during your shift if it becomes full.

Buckets need to be rinsed out and waste water must only be emptied into the designated drain.

Scourers and scrubbing brushes: Wash scourers and scrubbing brushes in detergent and hot water, then place them in a position where they can dry evenly.

Floor Pads: Wash pads in detergent and hot water, rinse pads then place them in a position where they can dry evenly.

Mops: Wash the mop head in hot water and rinse. Some mop heads may also be laundered in a washing machine

(launder mops). Hang mop to dry. Do not leave mops in buckets. Note: In Health & Aged Care facilities mops are laundered after use.

Buckets: Wipe buckets and rinse them with hot water to clean and remove soil. Store upside down on drain or sink in your cleaners' room.

Dust Mops: Use the vacuum cleaner to clean your dust mop.

Spray bottles: Wipe spray bottles with a cloth and detergent to remove soil marks, and then rinse with cold water. Change cleaning solutions daily. Do NOT use old cleaning solutions, they may contain harmful bacteria.

Self-management skills - Putting your cleaning induction safety skills into practice

This section discusses the plans you make when you clean a site or an area. Whether you are cleaning a shopping centre, factory, office or school, it is important to know the best and safest way to clean.

There are many things that you must think about before you clean an area. You will learn the method for working out how to clean an area. Your supervisor/workplace training supporter will develop and tell you the methods you must follow.

Methods for carrying out cleaning should take into account:

- ◆ the best way to clean a site or an area
- ◆ the safest way to clean a site or an area
- ◆ the best times to clean a site or an area
- ◆ how problems can change the way that an area is cleaned
- ◆ working to preferred company procedures
- ◆ working to client specifications

Assessing a cleaning job

Your supervisor decides on the methods for you're cleaning jobs. The usual methods that you follow are decided by:

- ◆ health and safety hazards and precautions
- ◆ availability of working areas
- ◆ the type of work
- ◆ the available equipment
- ◆ work skills of the cleaning team
- ◆ preferred company and client procedures
- ◆ *effective routines* (ways of doing jobs that work well) that are *developed* (changed and improved) over a period of time

Workplace health and safety procedures must follow health and safety guidelines. Some examples of workplace health and safety procedures

- ◆ It is not safe for people to work in high noise areas all day because it can damage their hearing. The supervisor must rotate staff in this area so that no-one stays in the area too long.
- ◆ Different staffs have different skills so the supervisor chooses people with different skills to work as a team.
- ◆ The supervisor knows what areas are available to be cleaned at different times of the day and plans the cleaning activities for staff around these times.

- ◆ There are a limited number of cleaning machines available on worksites. The supervisor must match the machines to the jobs and to the skills of available staff.

Identifying possible work restrictions

You must identify the special requirements of the area you will be cleaning so that you can use the most appropriate cleaning method and equipment and carry out the task at a suitable time. To do this:

- ◆ confirm when the area to be cleaned will be available
- ◆ identify any risks or hazards and immediately report them for further action
- ◆ check with your client about priorities or special requirements and include these in your cleaning plan
- ◆ take into account written notices, warning symbols and room conditions
- ◆ confirm who is responsible for which cleaning tasks, based on client requirements.

Best ways for safe and efficient cleaning practices

Read the case study below about Gina, and the methods for cleaning her work area.

Case study

Gina is a cleaner in a large shopping centre. Before she starts cleaning she must make sure she has the following things on her trolley:

- ◆ disinfectant, detergent, a damp cloth, a dry cloth, a scraper, a scissor mop, a long-handled dust pan and dust brush, a dozen rubbish bin liners, a dozen toilet rolls and a bag on the end of her trolley to put full rubbish bags in.

Gina must check the area that she looks after every 15 minutes to make sure it is clean and tidy.

It must be clean and tidy and she must constantly be looking for spills and litter on the floor to prevent accidents, for example someone slipping on an ice-cream that has been dropped

As part of her role Gina must:

- ◆ scissor-mop around skirtings to collect dust and rubbish
- ◆ while scissor-mopping, use the scraper to loosen chewing gum and squashed food
- ◆ sweep up dust and rubbish that has been collected with the scissor mop
- ◆ pick up the rubbish with the long handled dust pan and brush
- ◆ look for spills and mop up with the damp cloth, then dry with a dry cloth
- ◆ put back any pot plants, chairs, etc. that have been moved from where they should be
- ◆ check the toilets
- ◆ wipe around the hand basins and soap dispensers if they are messy
- ◆ replace empty toilet rolls with new ones
- ◆ if she sees toilets which need to be cleaned, she must tell her supervisor (another cleaner cleans the toilet).

In Gina's area there are nine rubbish bins. She must:

- ◆ empty the rubbish bins if they are more than half full
- ◆ tie up the rubbish bags in the bins then lift them out and put them in the bag on the end of her trolley
- ◆ put new rubbish bin liners in the rubbish bins
- ◆ spray rubbish bin lids with disinfectant, wipe them with a damp cloth, then polish with a dry cloth.

You will see from this case study that Gina's work methods are logical and methodical and are selected to ensure that her work can be completed efficiently and safely with little disruption to the activities of the area to be cleaned.

Section 5 WHS Communication, Information and Documents

Consultation /communication (discussing WHS at team meetings) is the most important fundamental element of a positive approach to health and safety in the workplace. By clearly communicating and discuss WHS, managers and supervisors can become more aware of hazards and health and safety issues experienced by workers. Workers can also provide suggestions about how to solve health and safety problems.

Consultation is about sharing work health and safety information with workers and providing them with an opportunity to respond and contribute to work health and safety issues that affect them. Consultation is about encouraging cooperation and partnerships between management and workers to ensure health and safety in the workplace.

It means:

- Sharing information about health and safety issues with workers
- Giving workers the opportunity to express their opinions about resolving WHS issues
- Valuing the opinions of workers and taking them into account when making decisions or changes to do with health and safety.
- Remember, consultation is an important way of finding out information, and telling people of any concerns you may have about health and safety at work.

Where can I get WHS information?

You can get information on health and safety from many places. Talking with your workplace supervisor is always a good place to start.

You can find out information about health and safety by:

- Reading (SDS, safe work method statements, workplace and industry newsletters, policies and procedures, manufacturer's instructions for equipment and tools, hazard reports, job safety analyses etc.)
- Listening (WHS meetings and team meetings)
- Asking questions (supervisor, other workers, Health and Safety Representatives, first aiders, suppliers, inspectors etc.).
- You can also talk to people who are not at your workplace, for example your state or territory workplace safety authority.

When identifying source of health and safety information, workers should consider whether:

- The source is likely to be accurate
- The information is occupation or site specific
- The source has relevant or personal knowledge of workers or sites.

SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

Having a safe place to work is a fundamental legal right for all people working in Australia. Put simply IT'S THE LAW. The cleaning industry has many aspects that can be dangerous. Dangerous conditions are sometimes referred to as being hazardous. If tasks in the cleaning industry are done incorrectly, for example, with equipment in need of repair, equipment used in the wrong conditions, equipment used by untrained workers, can all lead to potential accidents and injuries.

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To help keep the workplace safe, safe work procedures (SWPs) and safety procedures must be followed. These are step-by-step instructions on how to do a task in the safest way. Workplace health and safety laws should also be followed. These apply to everyone: both employers and employees!

It is important to discuss all aspects of safety related to your job with your supervisor. Make sure you also discuss safety with anyone else in your workplace that has the responsibility to make sure safety laws and procedures are followed.

SWPs should be kept in a place where you can refer to them easily. For example, hand-washing instructions should be displayed near a sink, and procedures for storing hazardous cleaning chemicals should be kept in the cleaning storage area.

Cleaning information and paperwork

There are a number of pieces of information and paperwork that should be in your cleaning storage area. The most important are:

- Safe work procedures
- Safety Data Sheets (SDS)
- Colour-coded charts for chemicals;
- Cleaning company's procedures, policies (how your company does things) and work instructions (how the company wants you to work);
- Client specifications (the work they need you to do) and schedules (when you must do your work);
- Workplace health and safety regulations (laws);
- Job descriptions (list of the jobs you do);
- Time sheets (fill in with your working times);
- Operating manuals for cleaning equipment.

Policies and Procedures

The cleaning company's procedures, policies and work instructions and the client's procedures, specifications and schedules should be in a book in the storage area.

How can I raise WHS issues?

It is important that you have an opportunity to raise issues about health and safety in your work place, and that you take the opportunity to do so.

You can raise WHS issues verbally (e.g. by speaking to your supervisor or Health and Safety Representative), or in writing if you wish (see the next section (3.2) for more information on Health and Safety Representatives and Health and Safety Committees).

Simple ways to raise a WHS issue may be during:

- Regular team meetings
- Tool box talks (an informal briefing or short talk on WHS issues)
- WHS meetings (formal meetings which usually aim to provide workers with specific information about WHS)
- Discussion with a Health and Safety Representative (this could be face-to-face, by telephone or by email)
- Workplace consultation relating to WHS issues and changes (this would generally be organised by the PCBU)
- You can also ask that your concerns or issues be included in WHS notices, newsletters, bulletins and other communications. Make sure that your information is clear and understood, and can be backed up by evidence or proof.

WHS PERSONNEL

There are a number of people involved in WHS.

Health and Safety Committee

A Health and Safety Committee brings together workers and management to assist in the development and review of health and safety procedures for the workplace.

The Committee meets at least every three months to discuss and make decisions on workplace safety issues. It also looks at ways to improve health and safety in the workplace. It can make recommendations for improvements to work practices and procedures, types of equipment or the way equipment is used, training etc.

It is important to know who the representative for your workplace is on the Health and Safety Committee. This is the person to whom you can speak about health and safety problems or concerns.

Health and Safety Representative

Health and Safety Representatives are appointed by the PCBU to represent your workplace and its workers. They can help you to raise any WHS issues or concerns that you may have.

Their responsibilities include:

- to consult with management and workers, and provide information on WHS
- to assist workers to raise WHS issues
- to encourage the participation and involvement of workers in health and safety matters
- To cooperate with the PCBU about WHS.

Other important WHS people

Many people are involved in WHS communication and processes. Other key people (besides the HSR) include:

- Your supervisor(s)
- Your Health and Safety Committee
- Emergency services staff
- First aiders.
- Sometimes the designated Health and Safety Representative for your workplace will be the PCBU or the person with management control.

REPORTING HAZARDS, INCIDENTS AND INJURIES

Reporting hazards, incidents and injuries is vital for a healthy and safe workplace. hazards can prevent repeated incidents and injuries. It can lead to improvements in health and safety for all workers.

All incidents, regardless of whether there is an injury or not, must be reported to the correct person in your workplace (e.g. supervisor, or the next most senior manager, HR .etc.) This includes near misses or dangerous incidents even if there is no injury.

Reporting cleaning hazards

You have a duty of care to immediately report to your supervisor any type of hazard you see in your workplace.

Failure to do so may result in someone being seriously hurt. If your supervisor is not available, you may have to write up a formal hazard report.

It is your supervisor's job to attempt to remove the hazard. If they are not able to do this, they will put in place strategies to remove any risk of you being hurt. It is important that you are provided with a safe work environment; however, you also need to take some of the responsibility for making and keeping it safe.

Sometimes there are legal requirements to report serious WHS issues to people or authorities outside the workplace, e.g. where:

- There is the death of a person
- There is a serious injury or illness of a person
- There is a dangerous incident

- These are called 'notifiable incidents'. In these cases, a report must be made to the correct authority (e.g. the state or territory regulator). The PCBU, supervisor or HSR can help.

GENERAL RESPONSE PROCEDURES

What is an incident?

An incident is an accident resulting in death, personal injury or damage to property, or a dangerous incident or near miss which does not cause injury, but may pose a risk to people or property.

What is an emergency?

An emergency is a sudden unforeseen crisis (usually involving danger) that requires immediate action. An emergency presents (or may present) a risk of serious injury or death to people in the workplace.

Emergencies in a workplace can result from events such as:

- Life and death emergency – Immediate danger to life (e.g. heart attack, breathing difficulties)
- Health emergency – Immediate (but not life-threatening) implications for the health and well-being of the person (e.g. broken bones)
- Property emergency - Immediate threat to property (e.g. fire in a building that has been evacuated)
- Environmental emergency - Immediate or potential damage to the natural environment (e.g. chemical spill)

What is the basic emergency response?

You should know the emergency response procedures for your workplace before an emergency happens. This information will be in documents such as the emergency plan, evacuation plan and procedures, and incident notification procedures. Check with your HSR or PCBU if you are unsure.

In an emergency situation, it is important to KRO:

- Keep calm
- Raise alarm
- Obtain help

You must stay within your abilities and authority (this means, don't do anything you are not authorised to do, or are not capable of doing). Also do not move people who are injured unless they will be in further danger if you do not move them.

How are emergency authorities notified?

Notification of emergency authorities will depend on the type of incident or emergency as well as other factors such as legal responsibilities, the emergency plan, and access to communications.

In an emergency it may be your responsibility to ring or contact emergency services. You will need to quickly decide who needs to know: Fire Brigade, Police or Ambulance, or workplace emergency personnel such as your supervisor or first aider.

If you need to contact emergency services personnel, you will be asked to give this information quickly and clearly:

- The type of emergency (what has happened)
- The location (where the emergency is - this will include the street address, organisation name etc.)
- What action has been taken by persons at the scene (what is being done)
- If there are any injuries to persons (including information on the type and nature of the injuries if known)
- Whether relevant emergency services have been contacted
- Your name (who is calling)
- How they can make further contact with you if needed

Remember not to hang up without receiving instructions on what to do next!

EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS

An emergency evacuation is the immediate and rapid movement of people away from the threat (i.e bomb threat) or actual occurrence of a hazard (i.e. toxic chemical spill). Examples range from the small scale evacuation of a building due to a bomb threat or fire to the large scale evacuation of a district because of a flood,-bushfires or approaching weather system (cyclone).

Emergency situations that might occur in the cleaning industry include:

- fire
- chemical spill of a hazardous substance
- gas leak
- bomb threat
- serious injury.

Deciding if the situation is an emergency:

Is there an immediate threat to life, health, property or the environment?

Has there already been damage to property or the environment or loss of life?

Will the situation worsen if you do not take action?

If you can answer yes to any of these questions, you must treat the event as an emergency and act immediately.

Emergency evacuation procedures

Every worksite is required by law to display building evacuation maps. The map is a simple diagram that must show:

the basic layout of the building

the location of the map, usually marked 'You are here'

the nearest emergency exits

safe evacuation routes

assembly area (this is where you go once you have exited the building)

fire extinguishers

First aid kits.

When asked to evacuate, you must:

- Stop all work.
- Be observant of other staff who may not have heard the alarm and the direction to evacuate.
- Leave immediately by the nearest and safest exit.
- Follow the directions of designated fire wardens.
- Walk quickly and calmly.
- Go directly to the assembly area.
- Stay in the assembly area until you are told it is safe to return to the building.

Do not:

- stop to get your personal belongings
- run
- use lifts
- panic
- Evacuate by crossing through the area of the emergency.

FIRE SAFETY

When you have finished this section you will have an understanding of the following:

- What is fire safety?
- Common causes of fire
- Prevention
- Action
- Categories

Fire safety refers to precautions that are taken to prevent or reduce the likelihood of a fire that may result in death, injury, or property damage, alert those in a structure to the presence of an uncontrolled fire in the event one occurs, better enable those threatened by a fire to survive in and evacuate from affected areas, or to reduce the damage caused by a fire.

Threats to fire safety are referred to as *fire hazards*. A fire hazard may include a situation that increases the likelihood a fire may start or may impede escape in the event a fire occurs.

What are the common causes of fire?

There are many causes of fire. Fires can be:

- Bushfires
- Chemical
- Electrical
- Started by explosion
- Started by friction
- Caused by flammable materials
- Caused by mechanical/welding.

Most fires can be avoided by careful planning and thinking about safety. Fire hazards can be reduced by:

- Regularly removing accumulated waste materials and dust
- Safe keeping and handling of flammable materials
- Using and obeying warning signs
- Working safely (e.g. Not welding near chemicals or flammable materials)
- Not smoking in areas other than those designated for smoking
- Regularly inspecting electrical equipment
- Avoiding and preventing friction and combustion opportunities.
- Fire safety equipment must be assessed for suitability. It must also be maintained in good working order by a properly trained person.

What should I do if there is a fire?

As with any other emergency, if there is a fire you need to follow emergency procedures and plans for your workplace. Try to limit the danger to yourself and others by acting quickly. If quick containment is an option, take swift and appropriate action to do so.

Always remember to KRO:

- Keep calm
- Raise alarm
- Obtain help

What should you do if you discover smoke or a fire in your workplace?

You will need to act quickly and make some important decisions. The decisions you make will depend on the type of fire you discover. If it is safe to do so, find out what type of fire it is.

Types of Fires

Fires can be categorised as either minor or significant

Minor fires

If the fire is a minor one, extinguish the fire if it is safe to do so.

Once the fire has been extinguished, you must follow up by:

- notifying the fire department
- advising your supervisor of the incident
- completing an incident/accident report form.

If you are unable to, or it is not safe to extinguish the fire, you must:

- start fire evacuation procedures
- notify the fire department.

Significant fires

If the fire is a significant one, you must:

- start fire evacuation procedures immediately
- notify the fire department.

Notify appropriate personnel and cooperate in evacuations as required. Follow the instructions of people delegated as fire wardens or those with the authority to take control if there is a fire at your workplace.