



Health and Safety Checklist

Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health

Check this list before you use chemicals. Do you follow some or all of the advice below? To find out more about federal and state laws that protect you on the job, visit www.osha.gov.

Know what is in the product

You have a right to know what hazardous chemicals are in the products you use and how to use them safely. Your employer must have a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for each product and let you read it. Your employer must give you training about how to use chemicals safely.

Find a safer product

There are many products that are safer (for the environment and for you!) than the usual cleaning products. Make sure to use the right product for the job. Not all surfaces need a heavy duty cleaner or disinfectant.

Use as little as possible

Using more does not mean the product will work better. Less exposure to chemicals is better. Dis-

pense the product using a “stream” instead of a spray. This reduces the amount of chemical that gets in the air around you.

Get the right personal protective equipment (PPE)

Use the right PPE for the type of work you are doing and the particular chemical you use. The MSDS will tell you what PPE is needed (for example: a respirator, gloves, or goggles).

Set up good ventilation

Chemicals can build up in enclosed areas with little or no air movement (like bathrooms, hallways, and storage closets). If you can't get good ventilation, use a fan to move fumes away from you. If you work outside, stand so the wind is blowing the chemical fumes away from you – not toward you.

Give people nearby a warning

Post notices to warn people when you are using chemicals. Block off the work area or use the chemical when there are fewer people around.

Protect your family from work hazards

Change your clothes right away if they get wet with chemicals or covered with dust. Don't bring contaminated clothes or shoes inside your home. They can expose your family to chemicals. When working around chemicals or dust, wash your hands before you eat or drink. No one hand cleaner is best for all chemicals – the best thing is to prevent them from getting on your skin in the first place!

Custodians, Chemicals, and Kids

A single custodian uses an average of 194 pounds of chemicals each year.

25% of these are hazardous substances.

Custodians experience one of the highest rates of occupational asthma.

Asthma is the #1 chronic illness of children attending public schools and the #1 reason why kids stay in the hospital.

Interview a custodian you know and ask him or her if s/he has experienced any health problems related to their work.

MassCOSH is a non-profit organization that brings together workers and allies to organize and advocate for safe, secure jobs and healthy communities throughout eastern Massachusetts.