

International Hazard Datasheet on Occupation

Housecleaner

What is a Hazard Datasheet on Occupation?

This datasheet is one of the international Datasheets on Occupations. It is intended for those professionally concerned with health and safety at work: occupational physicians and nurses, safety engineers, hygienists, education and information specialists, inspectors, employers' representatives, workers' representatives, safety officers and other competent persons.

This datasheet lists, in a standard format, different hazards to which house cleaner may be exposed in the course of their normal work. This datasheet is a source of information rather than advice. With the knowledge of what causes injuries and diseases, is easier to design and implement suitable measures towards prevention.






Who is a house cleaner?

A worker who was employed to manage a household and keeps a house area clean and orderly condition.

What is dangerous about this job?

- Cleaners extensively use cleaning, rinsing and other chemicals, which may cause irritation and other problems in their eyes, nose, throat, and skin.
- The cleaner's work is often done in uncomfortable postures, involves handling of heavy loads, and includes continuous repetitive movements (e.g., scrubbing). All these may lead to serious problems of the back, hands and arms, etc.
- During cleaning the bathroom, the floors are often wet and slippery, and cleaners may slip, trip or fall.
- Cleaner may be exposed to certain bio agents, such as molds and fungi from damp places and vermin from droppings and bites of animals and insects.

Hazards related to this job

Accident Hazards 	Slips, trips and falls on wet and slippery floors and bathtub	1
	Falling heavy objects on feet or other limbs	2
	Falls from ladders and stairs	3
	Electric shock caused by defective equipment and installations, or contact with live wires	4
	Cuts and pricks caused by sharp objects, scrap metal, or broken glass	4
	Bites or stings by pests, rodents and insects	4
	Burns caused by hot parts of equipment and vapors	5
Physical Hazards 	Exposure to high levels of noise (ambient and produced by cleaning equipment, such as vacuums)	6
Chemical Hazards 	Exposure to certain types of dusts, such as suspended flour dust, spices, soot particles, and aerosols during cleaning	7
	Exposure to extensively used chemicals (solvents, cleaning, rinsing and sanitizing agents), potentially causing such effect as primary irritation dermatitis, allergic sensitization, irritation of the nose, throat, eyes and lungs	7 8
	Exposure to hydrochloric acid	8
Biological Hazards 	Exposure to fungi, potentially causing hypersensitivity reactions due to fungal antigens inhaled with dusts, which usually involve pneumonitis with asthmatic symptoms	7
	Exposure to mold, particularly when emptying dust collectors and filters, potentially causing allergic skin conditions	8
	Exposure to rodent droppings and encounters with various types of disease carrying rodents and pests	7 9
	Bites and stings by pests, rodents, and insects with various types of diseases	4
Ergonomic, Psychosocial and Organizational Factors 	Repetitive strain injury (RSI) and other musculoskeletal problems as a result of continuous repetitive movements (e.g. scrubbing), overexertion during lifting and moving of heavy loads, work in awkward position (bending and kneeling)	12
	Psychological stress due to dissatisfaction at work as a result of alleged low social status, boredom, monotony, low salary, problematic personal relations with peers and/or superiors	10
	Evening or night shifts which may result in the suffering of the effects related to shift work (biorhythms) and family problems	10
	Risk of violence if they work along and/or in isolated areas	11

Preventive measures

1	Wear safety shoes with non-skid soles
2	Carefully place heavier objects closer to the ground or make sure the objects are solid fixed
3	Inspect ladder before climbing. Never climb on a shaky ladder or a ladder with slippery rungs
4	Wear adequate gloves with certain thickness
5	Do not handle or touch hot (or those that may be hot) articles or surfaces with bare hands; if needed, wear heat-protective gloves
6	Wear a earplug when the noise was occurred
7	Wear a respirator if working in a dusty area
8	Protect hands with chemical-resistant gloves; if impractical, use a barrier cream
9	Control pests through periodic visits of pest exterminator, or special visits in case of heavy infestation
10	Select a shiftwork schedule that would have the least harmful effect on the employee's health, family and personal life - consult employees and a specialist in shift scheduling
11	Do NOT work alone on premises on which a danger of assault exists, in particular on an evening or night shift. Determine how to summon help, if needed
12	Adequate trainings on lifting heavy objects to prevent physical strain

Specialized Information

Synonyms	Clean-up worker, janitor, housekeeper, custodians, chars
Definitions and/or description	Cleaning consists of dusting; washing and polishing surfaces; washing walls; mopping, sweeping and polishing floors; as well as disposing of waste and wastewater
Related and specific occupations	Domestic workers, servant, maid
Tasks	Arranging; burning (waste); classifying (waste); cleaning; collecting (garbage); controlling; cutting; disposing; draining; drying; dusting; exterminating (insects); fencing; holding; keeping; installing; lighting; loading and unloading; maintaining; mending; moving; observing; operating (machines); organizing; painting; placing; planning; polishing; recording; removing; repairing; scrubbing; spraying; starting; storing; tending; transferring; transporting; using; washing; waxing; wiping
Primary equipment used	Airhoses; brooms; brushes; floor drier; household tools; knife; pails; pumps; rags; rubber wiper; scrapers; spatulas; steamcleaner; steel wool; water hose
Workplaces where the occupation is common	Offices, public and commercial buildings, apartment buildings, homes
References	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Karen Messing, Indoor Cleaning Service, Services and Trade, Encyclopaedia contents Part XVII, ILO Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety, 2011• International Hazard Datasheets on Occupations – Cleaner (industrial premises), International Labour Organization, 2000, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/publication/wcms_185864.pdf• Cleaning Industry—Hazard and Solutions, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 2013. https://www.osha.gov/dcsp/products/topics/cleaningindustry/hazards_solutions.html#falls