

Domestic work and prevention of risks posed by dangerous substances

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OSH and Domestic Work: making the invisible visible

- Globally, domestic workers are a large and growing labour force that still face important decent work gaps, including OSH conditions.
- Sociodemographic characteristics of DW involve social and cultural factors that challenge the efforts to make decent work a reality for domestic workers.
- Occupational hazards to which domestic workers are exposed have been underestimated and hardly assessed.
- Private homes and domestic work expose workers to common work-related hazards:
 - Psychosocial hazards
 - Ergonomic hazards
 - Physical hazards
 - Chemical hazards

ILO C189-Domestic Workers Convention, 2011

- ✓ Every DW has the **right** to a safe and healthy working environment.
- ✓ Members shall take (...) **effective measures** to ensure the occupational safety and health of DW.

Use of chemicals in domestic work: safe and sound?

- the term **chemicals** means chemical elements and compounds, and mixtures thereof, whether natural or synthetic (Cf. Article 2.a. of the ILO Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170))
- **Use of chemicals at work means any work activity which may expose a worker to a chemical**, including: production; handling; storage; transport; disposal and treatment; release of chemicals resulting from work activity; maintenance; repair and cleaning of equipment and containers for chemicals (Cf. Article 2.c. of the ILO Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170))

Common hazardous substances: bleach, ammonia, insecticides, glues and medications

Routes of exposure: inhalation, ingestion or skin absorption

Health effects: allergies, suffocation, cancer and death by intoxication.

Physical and environmental effects: flammability and contamination

What is the substance used?
How the task is performed?
What is the frequency of the exposure?
What is the intensity and time of exposure?
Characteristics of the area of work?
Information and training?
PPE?

Sound management of chemicals at work

ILO Convention on Safety in the Use of Chemicals at Work, 1990 (No.170):

- Provides a **blueprint for the sound management of chemicals**
- Determines: employers' responsibilities, suppliers' responsibilities and workers' duties and rights (right to information about chemicals)

Elements of the programme	Aspects to be considered for DW
Identification, labelling and safety information	Access to information from the provider Labelling and safety data: Clear and simple, cultural adapted, language pertinence
Operational Control Measures	Elimination first Substitution: use of alternative options with low toxicity level. “Green” products
Work Design and Practices	Ensure local and general ventilation Performance of the task: ergonomic aspects, handling (use of tools to prevent direct skin contact), transport and storage of chemicals Ensure sound areas for rest and food consumption

Elements of the programme	Aspects to be considered for DW
Personal Protection	Provided free of charge Training on correct use Ensure systematic use
Information and Training	DW and households Simple and cultural adapted Correct use of chemicals: target of myths and common practice. More doesn't mean cleaner!
Emergency Procedures and First Aid	Ensure access Clear and available procedures

Seize the opportunities

- ✓ Create incentives for the use of safer substances
- ✓ Based on labelling and safety data information, identify and choose the substances to be used and provide the substances (collective agreements)
- ✓ Ensure continuous improvement by checking effectiveness
- ✓ Partner with environmental policies and programmes
- ✓ Work with and at the community level: safety and health for all!
- ✓ Take advantage of technology for improving training and information availability

Thank you

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