

Protect Yourself:

Cleaning Chemicals and Your Health



Working with cleaning chemicals can cause:

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Red, Itchy Eyes
- Skin Rashes
- Skin and Eye Burns
- Shortness of Breath
- Sore Throat
- Headaches or Dizziness
- Nosebleeds
- Asthma

If you have health problems that you think are caused by using cleaning chemicals, tell your supervisor and ask to see a doctor.

What You Need to Know

Do not mix cleaning products that contain bleach and ammonia. Dangerous gases can be released and can cause severe lung damage.

Your employer is required to provide a safe workplace that includes:

- Sufficient ventilation (airflow) when using cleaning chemicals.
- Protective clothing, gloves, and safety goggles, when needed.
- Labels on containers of cleaning chemicals.
- Training on the hazards of cleaning chemicals you are using and safe work practices.

Your employer must train you to:

- Know the hazards of cleaning chemicals BEFORE using them.
- Know how to use and store cleaning chemicals safely.
- Know how and when to dilute cleaning chemicals you are using.
- Know what to do if there is a spill or other emergency.
- Know how to obtain and use hazard information on labels and material safety data sheets (MSDS).
- Know how and when to use protective clothing, gloves, and safety goggles.

Remember

- Wash your hands after using cleaning chemicals and before eating, drinking, or smoking.

Green Cleaners

What are they?

- Cleaning products certified by independent organizations as safer to use and less harmful to your health and the environment.
- Cleaners with “green” in their name do not mean it has been certified.

Are Green Cleaners Effective at Cleaning?

- Many have met performance standards for its intended use.
- Also, many green cleaners are “fragrance-free” but still clean effectively. “Clean” does not have an odor!

Safety Reminder

- You may need to use protective clothing, gloves or safety goggles with some certified green cleaners. Ask your employer.

This guidance document is not an OSHA standard or regulation but it contains recommendations that are advisory in nature and intended to assist employers and workers in providing a safe and healthful workplace. The mention of any nongovernmental organization in this document does not constitute an endorsement by NIOSH or OSHA of that organization, its products or services.

