

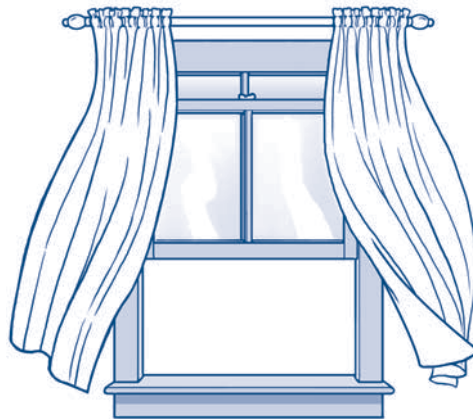
Chemical Hazards

Janitors can become sick if exposed to toxic chemicals contained in products like floor strippers or cleaning solutions.

Look at the pictures below. Which of these activities are safe? Which are unsafe? Why?



A. Using an unlabeled container.



B. Opening windows while using chemicals.



C. Diluting floor stripper with water.

Answers:
A. Unsafe. All containers should be clearly labeled.
B. Safe. Opening windows and doors improves ventilation.
C. Safe. Full-strength chemicals are more toxic. Follow the manufacturer's directions.

Discussion Questions for Management & Employees

1. What chemicals do you work with?
2. Which chemicals are you most concerned about? Why?
3. What can management and employees do to protect everyone from chemical exposure?
 (Flip this page over for tips on reducing chemical exposure. →)

Chemical Hazards

Management Can Make the Workplace Safer

- D Provide less toxic cleaning products when possible. See a list of janitorial cleaning products certified by Green Seal at www.greenseal.org.
- D Make sure all containers are properly labeled. When chemicals are transferred into a different container, the new container must be labeled, according to law.
- D Train employees about hazardous chemicals and how to safely use them. Employers are also required by law to train workers on how to read labels, how to read the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), and where the MSDSs are kept.
- D Check with the building owner about keeping the heating, ventilating, and air conditioning system on during cleaning hours to keep air moving.

Employees Can Follow Safe Work Practices

- D Use mild cleaners for regular cleaning. Save stronger chemicals for stubborn stains. Specialized chemicals (such as metal or window cleaners) are often the most toxic.
- D Dilute chemicals (such as disinfectant) with as much water as possible while still getting the job done. Follow the manufacturer's directions.
- D Open windows and doors, if possible, when using chemicals.
- D Do not mix chemicals unless instructed to by the manufacturer.
- D Close all containers, especially spray bottles, when not in use.
- D Pour chemicals (such as toilet bowl cleaner) from a low height to avoid splashing.

Employees Can Use Protective Clothing & Equipment

- D Use gloves and goggles when appropriate.

Stripping Floors Can Be Very Hazardous

- Strip the floors less often by keeping floors clean. Use floor mats at all entry ways to catch dirt.
- Properly dilute the floor stripper to make it less toxic. Often, a concentrated solution is meant to be mixed with water. Follow the manufacturer's directions.
- Wear gloves and goggles.