

# International Hazard Datasheets on Occupation



## Cleaner (industrial premises)

### 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 cleaners (industrial premises) 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.

This datasheet consists of four pages:

- Page 1: Information on the most relevant hazards related to the occupation.
- Page 2: A more detailed and systematized presentation on the **different hazards** related to the job with indicators for preventive measures (marked as and explained on the third page).
- Page 3: Suggestions for **preventive measures** for selected hazards.
- Page 4: **Specialized information**, relevant primarily to occupational safety and health professionals and including information such as a brief job description, a list of tasks, notes and references.

### Who is a cleaner (industrial premises)?

A worker who keeps working areas in an industrial establishment in clean and orderly condition.





### What is dangerous about this job?

- Cleaners often work dangerously close to moving machinery, conveyors and in-plant vehicles which may result in serious accidents.
- During cleaning, the floors are often wet and slippery, and cleaners may slip, trip or fall.
- 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.

### Hazards related to this job

Specific preventive measures can be seen by clicking on the respective in the third column of the table.

<b>Accident hazards</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Falls from ladders, unguarded elevated platforms, etc.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slips, trips and falls on wet and slippery floors</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall of heavy objects on the feet or other limbs</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hazard of striking against, being struck by, or being caught in/between stationary or moving objects (incl. machine tools, conveyors, in-plant vehicles, etc.) [See Note 1]</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burns caused by hot parts of equipment, vapors, etc.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electric shock caused by defective equipment (esp. portable) and installations, or contact with live wires</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cuts and pricks caused by sharp objects, scrap metal, broken glass, etc.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bites, stings, etc., by snakes, rodents, insects, etc.</li> </ul>	
<b>Physical hazards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to high levels of noise (ambient and produced by cleaning equipment)</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exposure to high levels of relative humidity</li> </ul>	
<b>Chemical hazards</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exposure to certain types of dusts, suspended flour dust, spices, soot particles and aerosols during cleaning</li> </ul>	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exposure to extensively used chemicals (solvents; cleaning, rinsing, and sanitizing agents, potentially causing such effects as: primary irritation dermatitis; allergic sensitization; irritation of nose, throat, lung and eyes, etc.</li> </ul>	5
<b>Biological hazards</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exposure to fungi, potentially causing hypersensitivity reactions due to fungal antigens inhaled with dusts, which usually involve pneumonitis with asthmatic symptoms</li> </ul>	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exposure to mold (particularly when emptying dust collectors, filters, etc.), potentially causing allergic skin conditions</li> </ul>	
<b>Ergonomic, psychosocial and organizational factors</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 (bent, on one's knees, etc.) postures [<a href="#">see Note 3</a>]</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problems related to frequent work in night shifts (sleep disturbances, family problems, etc.)</li> </ul>	8
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk of being assaulted when working alone [<a href="#">see Note 3</a>]</li> </ul>	9

## Preventive measures

- 1 Inspect ladder before climbing. Never climb on a shaky ladder or a ladder with slippery rungs
- 2 Wear safety shoes with non-skid soles
- 3 Do not handle or touch hot (or those that may be hot) articles or surfaces with bare hands; if needed, wear heat-protective gloves
- 4 Wear a respirator if working in a dusty area
- 5 Protect hands with chemical-resistant gloves; if impractical, use a barrier cream
- 6 Do NOT use hydrochloric acid, except with extreme caution. Do not allow skin contact; do not expose eyes to vapors and do not inhale or ingest. Receive instructions on how to handle safely, if necessary and what to do if spillage occurs
- 7 Control pests through periodic visits of pest exterminator, or special visits in case of heavy infestation
- 8 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
- 9 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.

## Specialized information

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**Synonyms** Clean-up worker; janitor; scrubber; sweeper; trash collector; vacuum cleaner; waste collector

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**Definitions and/or description**

Keeps working areas in production departments of industrial establishment in clean and orderly condition. Arranges boxes, material, and handtrucks or other industrial equipment in neat and orderly manner. Cleans lint, dust, oil, and grease from machines, overhead pipes, and conveyors, using brushes, airhoses, or steam cleaner. Cleans screens and filters. Scrubs processing tanks and vats. Cleans floors, using water hose, and applies floor drier. Cleans, waxes, and polishes floors by hand or machine. Cleans and polishes chromium or nickel plated articles with cloth and liquid cleanser. Washes metal, glass, rubber, or plastic objects. Picks up reusable scrap for salvage and stores in containers. May remove paint or other foreign matter adhering to surface of article with solvent, knife, or steel wool. May start pumps to force cleaning solution through production machinery, piping, or vats (acc. to DOT)



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**Related and specific occupations**

Cleaner, industrial; cleaner and polisher; washer; waxer, floor

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**Tasks**

Arranging; burning (waste); classifying (waste); cleaning; clearing; 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

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**Primary equipment used**

Airhoses; brooms; brushes; floor drier; household tools; knife; pails; pumps; rags; rubber wiper; scrapers; spatulas; steam-cleaner; steel wool; water hose

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**Workplaces where the occupation is common**

All industries, trades, services and institutions

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**Notes**



1. Excessive zeal may lead a cleaner to work in close proximity to machinery in motion, normally safe by position. This is believed to be the most severe risk to persons engaged in housekeeping activities in industry.
2. Hydrochloric acid is highly corrosive and may produce burns, ulceration, and scarring on skin and mucous membranes, as well as dermatitis, on repeated exposure. Eye contact may result in reduced vision or blindness.
3. These ergonomic and psychosocial problems may be especially severe in the case of female cleaners, who in some countries constitute a large proportion of workers engaged in this occupation.
4. Industrial cleaners may be exposed to the whole range of hazards present at a corresponding workplace.

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**References**

Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety, 3rd Ed., ILO, Geneva, 1983, Vol. 1, p. 235-236, 839-891.



Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety, 4th Ed., ILO, Geneva, 1998, Vol. 3, p. 100.2 - 100.5.

Key M.M., et al. (Eds.): Occupational Diseases. A Guide to Their Recognition. US Dept. of HEW, 1977.

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