

safety Retail matters

From your safety partners at Peabody Insurance Agency

Toxic Chemical Safety

Many cleaning products including bleaches, metal cleaners, graffiti removers, hard surface cleaners and toilet cleaners are hazardous to your health. While that sounds dangerous, avoiding illness and injury is simple if you know a product's potential hazards, how to best protect yourself and what to do if something goes wrong.

General Safety Precautions

The manufacturer's label and Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for each chemical you handle provide important information regarding hazards, the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), proper handling, transport, storage and disposal. Each time you use a chemical, read this information and take the appropriate precautions. In addition, the following basic recommendations apply.

- Wear the appropriate PPE when handling chemicals. The two most common ways that chemicals enter the body are through the skin and through

breathing in fumes. PPE such as gloves, coveralls and respirators are designed to protect you.

- Use the least hazardous chemical option for the task and prepare only the amount that is absolutely necessary for completing the job.
- Never eat, drink, smoke or apply cosmetics while working with chemicals.
- Make sure that the equipment used to apply chemicals is in good working order and does not have any leaks.
- Ensure proper ventilation in the area where you will be using the chemical.
- Do not store chemicals in unlabeled containers, or those that previously held food, drink or other chemicals. Unexpected chemical reactions that release potentially toxic fumes can result.

Wear the right gear for the job. Unhealthy exposure to cleaning products is usually by breathing a chemical's vapors or mists, or by skin or eye contact.



- Wash your body thoroughly after using chemicals and before eating, drinking, smoking or using the restroom.

Exposure

Exposure to cleaning products is usually by breathing in vapors or mists, or by skin or eye contact. The most common effect is irritation—pain and inflammation—of the skin, eyes or respiratory tract. The severity of the irritation depends on:

- The type of chemical used
- How the chemical was being used
- How the chemical came in contact with the body

If a co-worker is exposed to a toxic chemical, consult the SDS and the product label before taking action. The correct response to exposure is as important as immediate action. The best first aid for skin or eye contact is to wash the affected area with water for at least 10 minutes. For inhalation exposures, the person should be moved to an area of fresh air and medical attention should be sought if symptoms persist.

Call for Help

If the injured or ill person is having trouble breathing, is having convulsions or is unconscious, provide the necessary first aid and call 9-1-1.

If the injured or ill person does not have any of the symptoms listed above, contact the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222. When calling, keep the chemical container handy to accurately instruct the operator about the type of exposure the person has experienced. He or she will then be able to give you correct instructions.