

Learn More About Cleaning Products Risks

Be Healthy – Clean Safely #1

By Tom Barron

Did you Know?

Each year about six out every hundred professional janitors are injured by the chemicals that they use. Burns to the eyes and skin are the most common injuries, followed closely by inhalation of toxic fumes.

Two thirds of the cleaning chemicals used today have ingredients that can harm you. These ingredients are in products for cleaning glass, restroom fixtures, metal, kitchens, carpets, and hard floors, to name only a few.

Are your cleaning products safe? There are three things that you can do to find out:

- 1 **Read The Label** – Avoid products that have the words “Danger”, “Poison”, or “Warning”. Sometimes you must use a particular product to get the job done. In that case, protect yourself by wearing gloves & goggles, and be sure that your work area has plenty of fresh air.
- 2 **Call Customer Service** – Most products have an “800” number to call with questions. Ask the customer service people to tell you if the product you are using has hazardous ingredients that may harm you. If there is no number on the container, ask the store where you bought the product.
- 3 **Read The Safety Data Sheet** – The customer service staff can send you a Material Safety Data Sheet, or “MSDS”, for the product. This sheet explains what is in the product, how these ingredients might harm you, and how to protect yourself while using it. Many companies also include MSDSs on their web site.

Interested in learning more about cleaning chemical safety? Contact the Janitor Safety Project. This is a public service effort co-sponsored by the City of Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara County, and the US Environmental Protection Agency. The local contact is Steve Clark at the Community Environmental Council (805) 963-0583.

<http://www.westp2net.org/janitorial/jp4.htm>