

Is it Clean Yet? - Cleaning Chemicals in the Workplace

We all encounter chemicals designed for cleaning every day, both at home and at work. While some of them may be harmless, many are not – particularly if they are mixed with other ingredients. Consequences of misuse can be serious, including rashes, burns, coughing, asthma, and sometimes even death.

All cleaners are not equal – some are much more dangerous than others. Here are some factors to consider to choose an effective cleaner that is not toxic!

- **What Is It Made Of?**

What kind of chemical ingredients are in it? Check your Safety Data Sheet for reliable information.

- **How Should It Be Handled?**

How is it being used, stored, and disposed of? What are the manufacturer's recommendations? Will it meet your purpose being used as it was intended?

- **What Are the Ventilation Requirements?**

Ventilation requirements are important. Does your environment match the manufacturer's recommendations?

- **What Risks Are Associated With The Cleaner?**

What kind of personal protective equipment is needed? Will it damage the skin if it comes in contact? Does it release vapors? If so, are there other cleaners available that are less likely to injure the user?

Never, ever mix anything containing bleach and ammonia together! The consequences are serious as this mixture can cause serious lung damage or death!



A lot of research has been done in recent years. Safe and ecologically friendly cleaners are available. Choose the least hazardous cleaning chemical that will accomplish the job at hand. Here a few tips to consider:

- Cleaners, sanitizers, and disinfectants all accomplish different purposes. Choose only what you need. If a cleaner is all you need, skip the sanitizer and disinfectant. In general, they contain more dangerous chemicals than cleaners.
- If you need to disinfect and sanitize, choose a product effective for the microorganisms you are targeting.
- Check out the Safety Data Sheet for factual information including:
 1. Chemical ingredients
 2. First-aid measures for workers exposed
 3. Recommended personal protective equipment needed
 4. Proper procedures for cleaning up spills

Safety Training

Safety training is important! Every employee must be trained regarding proper use of any chemical they are exposed to in the workplace. Training must include health and physical hazards of the cleaning chemicals, proper handling, use, and storage of all cleaning chemicals being used, including dilution procedures for products that should be diluted, spill procedures, personal protective equipment to be used, and how to obtain and use information on labels and safety data sheets.

You should NEVER:

- ✘ Mix different cleaning chemicals together
- ✘ Wash your hands with cleaning chemicals not intended for that purpose
- ✘ Use any chemicals at work not provided by your employer



Sources: <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3512.pdf>

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