

Loss Control



FARMERS

Information Bulletin

Hazardous Chemicals in the Food Service Industry

The food service industry exposes workers to potentially hazardous chemicals such as oven cleaners, floor cleaners, pesticides, disinfectants, drain cleaners, soaps, detergents, and latex.

Soaps and detergents may cause allergic reactions and skin irritations. Irritations and broken skin from these chemicals may provide an avenue for infections or injury if exposed to chemical hazards.

Drain cleaner, oven cleaner, and grill cleaner solutions and sprays can be caustic and can cause skin burns and skin irritations.

Ammonia, used as a cleaning agent, and chlorine solutions, used as a disinfectant in dishwashing, can cause skin, eye, and nose irritations. Mixing chlorine and ammonia solutions will result in a chemical reaction and may release deadly chlorine gas.

Latex gloves, worn to protect hands from chemicals, may cause skin irritations or allergic reactions in some workers. All employees should be warned about the potential of latex allergic reactions.

Employers can take a number of steps to reduce the potential of injuries to employees that may result from hazardous chemicals in the workplace.

- *Read the product label and follow instructions and recommendations list on the label.*
- *Use the least toxic cleaning products possible.*
- *Require employees to use any personal protective equipment such as gloves, eye protection, or special aprons.*

- *Train employees on the proper use of personal protective equipment.*
- *Require employees to use appropriate gloves to protect their hands from chemicals and sharp objects.*
- *Instruct employees that after removing gloves, wash hands with mild soap and water, and dry thoroughly.*
- *Avoid latex gloves if possible or provide alternative hand protection for employees with latex allergy.*
- *Train employees on the location, on how to read, and how to use Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) for all chemicals used in the workplace.*
- *Instruct employees not to mix chlorine bleach and ammonia products together and inform them that this will produce a toxic gas.*

Each place of business must have a written Hazard Communication Program implemented at each work location. This ensures that employees are aware of hazardous chemicals to which they are exposed and how to prevent exposure. This program will include an MSDS for each chemical used in the workplace.

Additional precautions that can be taken by management are:

- *Use non-hazardous chemicals.*
- *Automate the dispensing of chemicals where possible.*
- *Limit the number of employees that must use chemicals.*
- *Ensure that chemicals that are not compatible with each other are not stored together.*
- *Accurately label all chemical containers.*
- *Store chemicals on lower shelves.*

Use chemicals responsibly and safely to protect your workers. It's management's responsibility.