

International Hazard Datasheet on Occupation

Housekeeper, Hotel

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 hotel housekeeper 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.

Who is a housekeeper?

A housekeeper is a hotel worker who cleans and stocks guest rooms and public areas and supplies laundry services to guests.

What is dangerous about this job?

- They may suffer from repetitive strain injuries (RSIs) as a result of repeated lifting, pushing, bending, reaching, and wiping.
- They may be exposed to various dangerous chemicals in cleaning agents including solvents and disinfectants.
- Housekeepers may sustain needle-stick injuries from hypodermic needles that have been disposed of improperly by hotel guests.
- They may suffer from heat stress, especially when completing laundry work.
- They may endure psychological stress due as a result of interpersonal conflict in the workplace.

Hazards related to this job

Accident Hazards 	Slips, trips, and falls on wet floors especially when working quickly and falls from tubs and other higher surfaces while cleaning and tripping over cords, sheets, and debris	1 2 3
	Cuts and punctures from sharp objects, including broken glass and hypodermic needles, when handling linens and/or waste	4 6 7
	Electrical shock from outlets or faulty equipment when using electronic cleaning equipment and when handling light fixtures	5 8
	Acute poisoning resulting from chemical reaction caused by a mixing of chemicals in cleaning agents or after accidental ingestion of cleaning products	5
Physical Hazards 	Heat stress in high temperature environments created by heat from machinery combined with poor ventilation, especially while washing, ironing, and folding laundry	9
Chemical Hazards 	Accidental exposure to chemicals in cleaning products that are unlabeled or have been stored in leaking containers	10 11
	Irritation of eyes, nose, and throat by chemicals in cleaning agents during regular use or in the case of accidental spills	10 11
	Acute poisoning due to accidental mixing of cleaning products leading to a chemical reaction (i.e. mixing ammonia containing products with bleach)	11
	Dermatitis caused by skin contact with cleaning agents containing irritating and corrosive chemicals	10 12
	Allergies and asthma exacerbated by sensitizing agents found in cleaning products	10 13
Biological Hazards 	Infection with blood borne pathogens possibly including HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C following needlestick injury, cut by a razorblade, or contact with other bodily fluids left by guests in linens or wastebaskets	4 5 6 7
	Hazard of contracting communicable disease, such as influenza, as a result of contact with infectious agents when handling soiled bed linens, waste, or other contaminated surfaces or contact with infected guests	6 7
	Respiratory irritation caused by aerosolization of biological agents (i.e. mold) during vacuuming	13
Ergonomic, Psychosocial and Organizational Factors 	Repetitive strain injuries resulting from repeated lifting, pushing, bending, reaching, and wiping during cleaning	5 14
	Psychological stress commonly resulting from interpersonal conflict and work overload	15
	Acute back pain after holding awkward body positions while cleaning high, low, or hard to reach surfaces	14

Preventive measures

1	Wear sturdy shoes with non-slip soles
2	Clean up spills as soon as they occur/immediately after they are discovered
3	Keep all hallways and corridors free of clutter
4	Provide sharps containers in each guest room to promote proper disposal of hypodermic needles and other sharps and use proper practice when handling such disposal
5	Provide new hire education for staff regarding safe workplace practices
6	Wear gloves and any other necessary personal protective equipment when handling soiled linens and waste and treat all such materials as potentially infectious
7	Wash hands if skin comes into contact with bodily fluids or other possibly infectious material
8	Ensure proper electrical grounding. Do not use equipment with frayed or damaged cords and do not utilize visibly damaged outlets
9	Install air conditioners in laundry rooms; implement job rotation for laundering tasks
10	Ensure all chemicals and products are properly labeled; follow directions for each product as they are listed on the label and ensure they are stored as directed
11	Provide eye flushing fountains or bottles
12	Routinely use barriers (gloves) when using cleaning products containing chemical agents
13	Provide effective ventilation in guest rooms and work areas
14	Follow proper lifting techniques and ergonomic guidelines
15	Prioritize job tasks and organize a plan for action for conflict resolution

Specialized Information

Synonyms	Cleaning person; housekeeping aide; room attendant; suite attendant; environmental services technician
Definitions and/or description	Cleans room floors by sweeping, mopping, scrubbing and vacuuming; changes bed linens and makes beds; collects and empties trash cans; cleans bathroom floors, tub, shower, sinks, toilet, and mirrors; restocks supplies such as linens, toiletries, towels, drinking glasses, etc.; dusts bookshelves, nightstands, windows, dressers, etc.; uses cleaning products containing solvents and acids; washes soiled linens and folds and organizes clean linens
Related and specific occupations	Maids; domestic workers; housekeepers in other settings including: hospitals, offices, penitentiaries, long-term care facilities, cruise ships, resorts, etc.; Janitorial workers
Tasks	Making beds; tidying rooms; cleaning; polishing toilets, sinks, showers, and mirrors; washing floors; removing stains; vacuuming; laundering linens; standing or walking; stooping; squatting; kneeling; stretching; reaching; bending; twisting; crouching; lifting
Primary equipment used	Vacuums; brooms; dusters; cleaning cloths; trash bags; supply cart; solvents; detergents; disinfectants; floor cleaners; bleaches; fabric softeners
Workplaces where the occupation is common	Hotels; motels; casinos; cruise ships; resorts; private residences who subscribe to regular cleaning services
References	- Brown, Nellie (1990) <i>Health Hazards Manual for Custodians, Janitors and Housekeepers</i>. Manuals and User Guides: ILR Collection, Cornell University. - Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (1998, July 27). <i>Hotel Housekeeping</i>. Retrieved from http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/occup_workplace/hotel_housekeeping.html - Lee, Pam Tau (2011) <i>Encyclopedia of Occupational Health and Safety</i>, International Labor Organization, Geneva. - O'Neill, John & Davis, Kelly (2011) Work Stress and Well-being in the Hotel Industry. <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>. 30(2): 385–390. - Veillette, Marc. Et al. (2013) <i>Microbial Contents of Vacuum Cleaner Bag Dust and Emitted Bioaerosols and Their Implications for Human Exposures Indoors</i>. doi:10.1128/AEM.02746-13.